INTRODUCTION

Stress is a well-established concept in the psychological literature, and teaching, in particular, is recognized as a highly stressful profession (Hartney, 2008). Recent research shows that teacher training does not typically include stress management (Harris, 2011) and, as a result, teachers often feel poorly prepared to respond appropriately to the stressors of the job (Kerr, Breen, Delaney, Kelly, & Miller, 2011). Teachers' ability to manage professional stress impacts their teaching effectiveness and can lead to burnout, which in turn, impairs teacher effectiveness (Steinhardt, Jaggars, Faulk, & Gloria, 2011). Evidence indicates that poorer stress management results in lower quality teaching (Clunies-Ross, Little, & Kienhuis, 2008), and, in turn, that effective stress management leads to improved teaching competence (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Despite a promising growth in evidence-based professional development approaches, focused on both stress management for teachers and improvements in teaching quality by addressing the key sources of teacher stress, these approaches have yet to be brought together into a comprehensive framework. The objective of this chapter is to fill this identified gap in the literature, and to provide recommendations for specific, tailored, and context specific professional development activities devoted to stress management.

The objectives of this chapter are: firstly, to review teacher-specific stressors, which impair teaching quality and effectiveness; secondly, to identify evidence-based professional development approaches to reduce teacher stress, improve teaching quality, and enhance teaching effectiveness; and thirdly, to provide a framework of professional development approaches that can be used proactively for teacher stress management, or that can address problems as they arise.

BACKGROUND

The term “stress” has entered our everyday language and taken on a variety of meanings. For the purposes of this chapter, therefore, it is helpful to define what the discipline of psychology defines as stress. The term “stress” is commonly used to describe an unpleasant internal state, often triggered by external sources or “stressors;” for example, occupational stress arising from a difficult work environment. This description fits with early definitions of stress based on the body's response to threat or danger, known as the “fight or flight” response (Cannon, 1932), through a process of alarm and exertion to escape or fend off an attack (Selye, 1956). Although Selye’s early work identified two types of stress -- distress (negative stress) and eustress (positive stress) -- the overwhelming focus of the stress and stress management literature to date, has been on the consequences, avoidance, and reduction of distress.

As research into stress and its effects has accumulated, so has the negativity with which stress is viewed. Not only does physiological research frame stress in terms of a response to imminent harm, it also evidences that stress causes direct and indirect
damage to physical health. Numerous studies have confirmed Selye’s original hypotheses concerning the harmful effects of stress on the body. As a result, stress is implicated as a cause or a precipitating factor in numerous diseases, ranging from everyday health problems such as the common cold (Cohen, Tyrrell, & Smith, 1991) and the healing of wounds (Marucha, Kiecolt-Glaser, & Favagehi, 1998) to life-threatening conditions, such as coronary heart disease (Kivimaki et al., 2002) and cancer (Laudenslager, Ryan, Drugan, Hyson, & Maier, 1983). Additionally, the evidence shows that stress directly or indirectly triggers a variety of mental health problems, ranging from common conditions such as depression (Shu Mi et al., 2015) and anxiety (Wiegner, Hange, Björkelund, & Ahlborg, 2015), to rare mental illnesses such as bipolar disorder (Weiss et al., 2015) and schizophrenia (Corcoran et al., 2003). Over the longer term, exposure to stress is implicated in the majority of physical and mental disorders (Sapolsky, 2004).

The field of stress studies eventually gave birth to concept of burnout (Maslach, 1978), defined as a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors at work. There are three central dimensions to burnout: exhaustion; depersonalization, defined as a cynical or indifferent attitude towards others; and inefficacy or reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Burnout typically occurs in human services work, when individuals are overloaded within a professional culture that exerts a high pressure to express or repress emotion. The concept of burnout became a major focus of studies on stress, and illustrates the overwhelming psychological damage suffered by professionals who are over-exposed to stressors.

To summarize, early formulations of stress presented the phenomenon as a harmful process, albeit essential to survival. Stressors were typically understood to be external to the individual who experienced stress. This led to a rather passive and simplistic approach to managing stress that promoted the avoidance of stressors and the reduction of emotional, mental, and physical responses to those stressors.

Yet this prevailing understanding of stress is radically incomplete. Firstly, it does not explain why many of the very same physiological responses involved in the stress response, such as increased heart rate and muscle tension, are also involved in exercise, which is known to be beneficial to health. Secondly, the conventional approach to stress fails to account for the fact that people living without obvious stresses may, nonetheless, become depressed or frustrated. And, finally, this perspective does not adequately explain why some individuals actively seek out professions that involve high levels of stress, and even thrive under such conditions.

A minority of authors and researchers proposed a different approach to understanding stress. Gmelch (1983), a pioneering researcher of stress in teachers, developed a model of performance based on a stress continuum. He proposed that while too much stress reduced performance, and caused burnout at one end of the continuum, at the other end of the continuum, too little stress equally reduced performance and caused rustout, a state of under-stimulation, resulting in boredom, fatigue, frustration, and dissatisfaction. According to Gmelch’s model, the ideal level of stress is between
burnout and rustout. The result of this ideal middle level of stress is optimal performance, and the associated benefits of creativity, rational problem solving, progress, change, and satisfaction. Similarly, Hanson’s (1986) pioneering book, *The Joy of Stress*, overcomes the shortcomings of earlier negative approaches to stress management. Rather than a one-dimensional, purely harmful aspect of life, Hanson proposes that stress stimulates the body and brain either positively or negatively, and that the qualitative outcome depends on the interpretation and temperament of the individual experiencing stress. Finding the right level of stressful stimulation, Hanson argues, rather than avoiding stress completely, is fundamental to effective stress management. More recent studies demonstrate that approaches to stress management which enhance eustress (positive stress) are indeed most effective (Le Fevre, Kolt, & Metheny, 2006).

This is good news for teachers. Teaching has consistently been found to be one of the most stressful professions, and numerous studies show that teachers across the world are exposed to constant stressors from a variety of sources (Hartney, 2008; Kyriacou, 2001). Yet, although stress is inherent in teaching, effective stress management can transform the teacher’s experience into a positive and rewarding contribution to the growth of individual children and the larger society. Furthermore, the techniques of stress management can be taught efficiently, and with profound consequences for the instructional professional and for the children being educated. As the qualifications for teaching do not usually include stress management training (Harris, 2011), teachers entering the profession have either thrived or failed depending on their own inherent stress management abilities and their informal support networks (Maring & Koblinsky, 2013). As teaching is an inherently stressful profession, those who do not have the awareness or self-discipline to manage their stress often suffer burnout, ruminating about work during their personal time (Cropley & Purvis, 2003), becoming unable to switch off (Tucker, 2010) or becoming depressed (Steinhardt et al., 2011). The wasted potential of early career teachers is reflected in statistics: nearly half of American teachers leave the profession in the first five years (Ingersoll, 2003).

With the right professional development approach, however, this trend could potentially be reversed. A range of evidence-based professional development approaches exists to avoid these outcomes. This chapter presents the first framework that provides educational leaders with the professional development tools to equip teachers with essential skills that manage stress effectively as part of ongoing professional development.

Clearly, it is a misguided assumption, based on an outdated and incomplete understanding of stress, that all teachers simply need to eliminate stress, or to avoid work-related stressors. To perform at their best, teachers must be properly informed, at the onset of their training, of the stressors to expect in teaching; to understand how to reduce the physical and emotional impact of stress; and to use evidence-based approaches to address the source of their stress to improve teaching effectiveness and teaching quality, both at an individual and school level.
Professional development is defined here more broadly than the traditional “sit and get” approach, which depends on a one-time, expert-driven, in-service methodology. This inadequate method relies on implementation by the individual teacher, which may not be sustained or penetrate the school system (Nishimura, 2014). In contrast, best practices in the professional development of teachers, which include individualized and school based approaches, utilize coaching, other follow up procedures, and promote collaboration, embed an effective and efficient approach into enhancing the daily practice of teaching (Bull & Buechler, 1995; Desimone, 2009). Such approaches are fundamental to the framework presented in this chapter.

STRESS IN TEACHING

In recent years, the research on teacher stress and burnout has exploded. The scholarly findings show a consistent pattern of stressors affecting teachers across a variety of cultures (Montgomery & Rupp, 2005; Hartney, 2008), including the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Scotland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Israel, Japan, Korea, China, Sweden, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Spain, Greece, Portugal, and Italy. These teacher-specific stressors are reviewed in this section. The next section elucidates evidence-based professional development stress management strategies to address each of these stressors, and mitigate the stress that teachers experience, with the intention that they will be applied in practice to improve teaching effectiveness and quality.

Teacher stressors can be grouped into four major categories: individual teacher stressors, student-related stressors, team-related stressors, and role-related stressors. While the division of these stressors into categories is somewhat arbitrary, it reflects the reality of how teachers describe the stressors of teaching. In actuality, there is considerable overlap between these groupings, and teachers have to become skilled at responding to and managing multiple stressors simultaneously, adding to the overall demands of the teaching situation.

Individual teacher stressors refer to specific characteristics and circumstances of individual teachers, which increase their vulnerability to, and management of, stress (Jepson & Forrest, 2006; Klassen & Chui, 2010; Coleman & Stevenson, 2013). These highly personal stressors originate from such factors as personality, temperament, and early life experiences, which can lay down habitual ways of responding to demanding circumstances. They can also include the circumstances themselves; it should come as no surprise that early career teachers, who are learning the profession in often challenging circumstances, tend to find teaching more stressful than those who have been teaching for years (Chaplain, 2008; Rieg, Paquette, & Chen, 2007). In addition, trainee and novice teachers are rarely informed of the stressful nature of the job, and learn through experience, often feeling that the difficulties they are faced with are a reflection of their personal shortcomings, rather than a lack of adequate professional preparation. However, it is the interaction between personal characteristics and circumstances that results in a unique experience of stress for each teacher. Patterns of
individual teacher stress vary across schools, and across teachers within the same school.

Student-related stressors include specific characteristics of the student population, which create stressful circumstances for teachers. Like many other stressful careers, teaching requires the ability to form and manage relationships with many other people, and the capacity to conduct relationships with large numbers of students is crucial to teaching effectiveness. However, while teachers choose to participate in the educational process, students do not. It is not unusual, therefore, for many students to be resistant to the process of teaching, and the culture in which it takes place, at some point in their education. The process of maturing involves a certain amount of opposition to authority figures, including teachers, particularly during adolescence (Graça, Calheiros, & Barata, 2013). In addition, students bring myriad complexities and personal experiences with them, into the classroom. This results in the most pervasive category of stressors for teachers – student-related stressors. Examples include disruptive (Klassen, 2010; Kerr et al., 2011), and even violent students (Kerr et al., 2011; Maring & Koblinsky, 2013), children exposed to trauma (Alisic, 2012), and students with disabilities (Williams & Poel, 2006; Cancio, Albrecht, & Johns, 2013). While the stress of dealing with disruptive students is common among most teachers to some degree, students with violent behaviors only occur with great frequency in some communities (Maring & Koblinsky, 2013). Although students may be challenging and confrontational with their teachers, for those who are exposed to abusive relationships at home, or have escaped oppressive life situations, school may be their only “safe haven” (Dutton, 2008). Therefore, the application of the professional development framework is context-specific, and the relevance of training to address atypical stressors affecting individual teachers and communities, as well as universal stressors, must be taken into account for its application to be effective.

Team-related stressors for teachers encompass relationships-based stressors, which arise from teachers’ interactions with people other than students. Despite the expectations that novice teachers may have, that adult professionals will behave in an appropriate, supportive manner, research indicates a significant scatter in the degree to which school cultures promote and enable collegial support. As a result, teachers may find that the relationships that could be their greatest source of stress relief can actually be significant stressors in and of themselves. Furthermore, they may be surprised to find that parents can also be intimidating, argumentative, and resistant to working collaboratively with the school. Team-based stressors include problematic relationships with colleagues and unsupportive administration (Steinhardt, et al., 2011), unsupportive or antagonistic parents (Tucker, 2010; Kerr et al., 2011; Lambert, Ullrich, McCarthy, & O'Donnell, 2008), and the bullying of teachers (Allen, 2010; Korkmaz & Cemaloglu, 2010). Although relationship difficulties are expected, to some degree, in any environment involving professionals working together for a common goal, the extent to which these difficulties are exacerbated or resolved results in the teacher’s experience of team-related stress. When poor role modeling in relationships, and a lack of support for collaboration exists, it can result in a negative school climate (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009).
Task-related stressors relate to aspects of the profession, which may be beyond the teacher’s control, or the school’s control. These stressors are among the most highly publicized of the challenges that teachers face, although responses in the media and the broader community that teachers are faced with such difficulties vary from sympathetic to judgmental and blaming (Hansen, 2009). They include teachers’ roles being excessive, ambiguous, or conflicting (Klassen, 2010; Kerr et al., 2011; Brunsting, Sreckovic, & Lane, 2014), increased bureaucracy and organizational change (Tucker, 2010), increased use of standardized testing (Berryhill, Linney, & Fromewick, 2009), and stress related to professional evaluations (Steinhardt et al., 2011). While many of the stressors in this category originate from political decisions that aim to improve education, they may not take into account the workload implications for teachers. Nor are they implemented with adequate consideration of the need for change management at a school level, in order for significant shifts in the type of work teachers are expected to conduct, to be carried out effectively. In addition, some of the task-related stressors that teachers face are a result of poor management practices at the school level, for example, teachers being overloaded with administrative tasks, or taking on a carer role for vulnerable students who reach out to them for help.

**STRESS MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

The scholarly literature on reducing teacher stress overall proposes a variety of evidence-based approaches to the individual teacher and the school-based community. However, this approach is fragmented and has no coherent unifying structure. Furthermore, the inherent dichotomy between individual teacher stressors and role-related stressors has hindered an integrated approach to professional development that links the teacher’s individual context with the school culture.

Applying a holistic professional development approach to teachers’ stress management and resilience will have a dramatic impact: the reduction of teacher burnout, and consequent improvements in teaching quality and effectiveness, as well as teacher retention. Drawing on existing research, this section classifies and synthesizes various professional development approaches: stress management training programs (Harris, 2011), mentoring (Paris, 2013), coaching (Nishimura, 2014), action research (Hartney, 2007), effective administrative support (Cancio, et al., 2013; Hamama, Ronen, Shachar, & Rosenbaum, 2013), collaborative problem solving (Schaubman, Stetson, & Plog, 2011), team work (Lhospital & Gregory, 2009), and school-wide approaches that address stress management for teachers (Ross & Horner, 2007; Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012). The solutions proposed here will also include strategies that teachers can deploy informally to enhance their resilience (Howard & Johnson, 2004; Quinn, 2011). This framework is the first to propose a comprehensive professional development program to combat teacher stress.

The organizing and unifying structure of this framework supports both generic curricula at the teacher training level, and continuing professional development at the school
level. It can also be applied to support the positive growth of individual teachers and improve student learning outcomes, which are a focus of this book. The framework can therefore be used to develop a range of professional development plans tailored to the needs of individual teachers, specific groups of teachers, or to whole schools.

The design of a professional development plan should be based on the context of its application, and grounded in an assessment of all four categories of stressor. Thus, professional development plans will be different for individual teachers experiencing stress or burnout (in this instance, the specific stressors the individual teacher has been experiencing); groups of teachers (such as teachers in training, or special education teachers); and whole schools (for example, schools serving vulnerable populations or with high levels of student violence, teachers working in problematic school climates, or schools undergoing intensive bureaucratic processes).

The framework provides an overview of the major stressors affecting teachers, as identified in the research literature, alongside corresponding professional development approaches which address each of these stressors, and which, if implemented, result in improved teaching effectiveness and quality.

**Managing Individual Teacher Stressors**

Teacher stressors affect the personal experience of teaching on an individual level. Some stressors are due to personal circumstances, which would typically be stressful for any teacher, such as being new to the school (Ullrich, Lambert, & McCarthy, 2012), while others relate to characteristics of the job, such as classroom demands (McCarthy, Lambert, & Reiser, 2014; Ullrich et al., 2012). Other stressors in this category are more psychological, and affect different teachers in different ways, depending on their individual personality characteristics. These include low self-efficacy (Berryhill et al., 2009; Lambert et al., 2009), which refers to the teachers’ low self confidence and lack of belief that they have the ability to control a situation, or that they can bring about their intended outcome. It also includes teachers’ low self acceptance (Lambert et al., 2009), which reflects the extent to which teachers hold negative attitudes about themselves, particularly when things go wrong in the classroom.

As individual teacher stressors are largely related to the individual teachers’ ability to handle the demands of the job effectively, the most important strategies in this category relate to each individual teacher’s skills in coping with day-to-day stress. These skills are well developed in some fortunate individuals, but can be taught to others and even to those with relatively high anxiety. They include relaxation training (Kaspereeen, 2012), mindfulness training (Roeser et al., 2013), and exercise (Austin, Shah, & Muncher, 2005), all of which are demonstrably effective in reducing teacher stress.

Resilience is the ability to manage difficult circumstances, and teachers who cope well with the stresses of the job have appropriate resilience strategies (Howard & Johnson, 2004). Some of the protective factors that lead to resilience in teachers include a sense of agency, a strong support group (including a competent and caring leadership team),
pride in achievements, and competence in areas of personal importance. Teachers who self-report these protective factors claim they are learned through life experience, quiet reflection (especially when things go wrong), or trial and error. Being mentored by a more experienced or senior colleague is an important aspect of learning resilience. Mentoring is addressed in more detail below, in relation to team-related stressors.

Development of an individual stress management curriculum for new teachers has been proposed (Gardner, 2010; Harris, 2011). Although this cannot be developed by individuals, the applicability to future cohorts of teachers is relevant to this section, so it is included here.

Whole school strategies are particularly effective in that they foster a school culture where stress management is valued and stressors are proactively addressed. Whole school strategies that support the stress management of individual teachers include regular teacher assessment using the Classroom Appraisal of Resources and Demands (CARD), to identify and support the balance of classroom demands and the provision of adequate school resources (Lambert et al., 2009). Schools can also provide opportunities for teachers to develop collective efficacy (Klassen, Usher, & Bong, 2010), or the teachers’ belief in the capability of the school staff as a group. Higher collective efficacy helps individual teachers to manage stress effectively.

Finally, training in action research (Harding & Haven, 2009; Hartney, 2007) helps teachers systematically improve their stress management and, as a consequence, improves their practice, through documenting and reflecting on stress-inducing situations, trying out solutions, and then evaluating the outcome. While this can be conducted on an individual teacher level, whole schools developing regular practice in action research can collaborate on finding solutions, and greatly improve teaching quality and teaching effectiveness.

Managing Student-Related Stressors

Student-related stressors are well recognized within the literature on teacher stress. The incredible diversity of children in today’s classrooms makes student-related stressors extremely challenging for teachers. They range from dealing with students who are disruptive (Kerr et al., 2011; Klassen, 2010; Steinhardt et al., 2011) to those who are violent (Howard & Johnson, 2004; Kerr et al., 2011; Maring & Koblinsky, 2013); from those with emotional-behavioral problems (Adera & Bullock, 2010; Cancio et al., 2013) to those with significant disabilities (Brackenreed, 2011; Williams & Poel, 2006), such as autism. These students must now be educated in integrated classrooms alongside their typically developing peers. Often the most stressful situations for teachers to address are supporting students who have experienced trauma (Ailsic, 2012), or who are the victims of neglect or abuse (Kerr et al., 2011), bullying or cyberbullying (Allen, 2010; Hymel & Swearer, 2015; Williamson, 2012).
A central component of an effective response to student-related stressors is clarity on what is or is not acceptable or appropriate for a teacher to be doing, coupled with the teacher developing the necessary skills to do their actual job. All too often, the teacher stress literature refers to teachers taking on responsibilities for which they are untrained, and which fall well outside of the scope of their role as educators. These include providing students with emotional support, ranging from helping them to cope with everyday problems, such as bullying, to addressing significant challenges at home, including mental illness, physical and sexual abuse, rape, abortion, and suicide (Kerr et al., 2011). Teachers report feeling inadequately prepared to cope with these responsibilities, and clearly they should not have to. Teachers, to be effective as educators, need adequate support in referring such serious issues to specialized professionals who are delegated with significant non-teaching responsibilities, and can take appropriate action.

Those stressors which clearly fall within the scope of the teachers’ duties can be addressed by developing the appropriate skills required through professional development. Many teachers would benefit from formalized training in classroom management skills (Dicke, Elling, Schmeck, & Leutner, 2015). Jackson, Simoncini, & Davidson (2013) provide a breakdown of the component skills to manage a classroom effectively, along with a training approach to build competence and confidence in this area. If teachers are frequently exposed to physical violence at work, and are able to tolerate working in such an environment, they would benefit from training in non-violent crisis intervention, to enhance their own safety, and the safety of others, through reducing the escalation of aggression (Torem, 2000).

Although teaching children with emotional-behavioral problems and developmental disabilities is challenging, such a task clearly falls within the teachers’ responsibilities; basic knowledge of how to teach children with these challenges is, therefore, important. As most teachers do not have an entry-level grounding in special education, continuing professional development can be planned to focus on the teachers’ immediate classroom needs. Evidence-based practices that can help prepare teachers to work with children with special needs include:

- Social-emotional learning, which teaches children to manage their emotions and interact appropriately with others (Collie et al., 2012);

- Collaborative problem solving, a cognitive-behavioral model that explains challenging behavior as the result of underlying deficits in the areas of flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance, and problem solving, and promotes a proactive, positive approach to responding to misbehavior (Schaubman et al., 2011);

- Mental health literacy, which improves the mental health knowledge and attitudes of teachers, and provides the background for teachers to provide mental health education, and pathways into mental health services for children and youth (Kutcher, Wei, McLuckie, & Bullock, 2013);
• Autism training, which helps teachers understand a complex, increasingly prevalent spectrum of conditions, which profoundly affect learning, social functioning, and behavior. Professional development for teachers in autism spectrum disorder (ASD) knowledge and evidence-based teaching and learning strategies has been shown to be successful (Higginson & Chatfield, 2012);

• Trauma informed practice, an approach which emphasizes safety and compassion, and a corresponding curriculum that has been developed to specifically address childhood trauma (Layne et al., 2011);

• Identification and reporting of abuse and neglect guidelines, to help teachers recognize and respond to their responsibilities to child welfare. A manual has been developed to guide teachers through this process (Sandau-Christopher & Colorado State Dept. of Education, 2000).

Whole school strategies both support individual teachers and the whole school. Pre-referral intervention teams (consisting of specialists, administrators, fellow teachers, and parents), receive referrals of high-needs children from teachers, plan and implement student interventions, and monitor students’ responsiveness. Through this process, the teams mitigate or eliminate the need for special education evaluation or placement. They have been found to have positive outcomes for children, and to reduce teacher stress (Lhospital & Gregory, 2009). School-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) is a prevention-focused alternative to student support that blends socially valuable outcomes, research-based procedures, behavioral reinforcement, and a systems approach to reduce problem behavior and improve school climate, and has been found to improve social and academic outcomes for students, and to reduce teacher stress (Ross & Horner, 2007).

Given the level of stress teachers report due to student neglect and abuse outside the school, it would be advantageous, and indeed urgent, to develop an effective reporting policy at the school level. Dombrowski and Gischlar (2006) provide a framework for establishing a child maltreatment protocol, and offering an emotionally supportive climate for teachers and school professionals. Similarly, development of school level bullying and cyberbullying guidelines would assist teachers in managing this significant stressor (Smith et al., 2012).

Finally, specific support from school administrators has been found to mitigate student related stressors in special educators (Cancio et al., 2013; Hamama et al., 2013). The types of support that are crucial in sustaining teachers include:

• Opportunities for growth, particularly information and experiences that they can use to improve classroom practices, such as information on instructional and behavioral techniques, opportunities to learn from fellow teachers, and support to attend workshops and conferences.
• Appreciation, showing teachers that they are respected and worthy of concern, for example, noticing the teacher’s efforts, giving the teacher a sense of importance in making a difference for students, and showing appreciation for the teacher’s work.

• Trust, demonstrated by having confidence in the decisions teachers make, trusting their judgment in making decisions, and supporting reasonable decisions.

Managing Team-Related Stressors

The category of team-related stressors encapsulates all relationship-based stressors which arise in the teachers’ work life, other than with students. While the school-based team is often thought of as consisting of other teachers and administrators, both of whom can be sources of stress for individual teachers (Steinhardt et al., 2011), increasingly parents are considered part of the team responsible for the children’s learning (Lambert et al., 2008), particularly parents of children with special needs who are themselves often highly stressed (Benson & Karlof, 2009; Safe, Joosten, & Molineux, 2012). School teams increasingly include additional staff, such as educational assistants or aides for children with special needs, counselors, speech-language pathologists, physiotherapists, and other supportive professionals, all of whom can potentially be a source of relationship stress for teachers. Furthermore, evidence concerning the bullying that teachers may be subjected to by both pupils and other staff is emerging (Allen, 2010; Korkmaz & Cemaloglu, 2010). Taken collectively, if left unchecked, these relationship stressors may create a negative school climate, affecting everyone who is part of the school community (Cohen et al., 2009).

There is considerable research showing the benefit of professional development approaches based on support and guidance from a mentor (Desimone et al., 2014) or coach (Bull & Buechler, 1995; Nishimura, 2014). Reciprocal mentoring is an approach that pairs two equal, though differently skilled, experts who act in the role of mentor and mentee to each other for mutual benefit, and is effective in supporting and retaining new teachers facing challenges at work (Paris, 2013).

Parent engagement can be a difficult prospect for teachers; however, an excellent resource developed by Howe and Simmons (1993) provides guidelines for proactive leadership by teachers, as they cultivate collaborative, mutually respectful relationships with parents. Despite being over twenty years old, this resource continues to be relevant, and its wider dissemination would be of great value to the teaching profession. Key strategies include:

• Accommodating communication with parents, while recognizing this often occurs at times of frustration or concern about the child (details on effective communication are included);
• Conceptualizing the parent-teacher relationship to everyone, including the child, as an alliance of concerned adults whose focus is the growth, development, and well-being of the child;

• Assuming goodwill, competence, and shared responsibility.

Whole school strategies which support teachers in addressing team related stressors revolve around creating an open and mutually supportive school based team. Opportunities to develop a school climate strategy are beneficial (Cohen et al., 2009), and help to promote healthy relationships between peers and with administrators, which reduce teacher stress. While some research indicates that teachers are subject to bullying at work, the learning organization approach is incompatible with organizational bullying (Korkmaz & Cemaloglu, 2010), and may be effective in shifting a school culture of bullying in a positive direction. Learning organizations adapt to change, value knowledge and professional development, and foster a collaborative, trusting climate. Guidance on transforming a school into a learning organization is provided by Williams, Brien, and LeBlanc (2012).

Parent involvement strategies can be implemented at the school level, and are effective across different demographics when they are based on the belief that parental involvement is essential to student success. Other important factors are that they are open, approachable, and a resource to parents, and that they address problems as a team, rather than as individuals (Robbins & Searby, 2013).

Managing Task-Related Stressors

The category of task-related stressors includes political or bureaucratic factors; expectations and tasks that have been imposed on teachers by external forces, such as the No Child Left Behind legislation in the United States, and OFSTED in the United Kingdom. These stressors can also result from more localized political moves that affect the working lives of teachers. Several key stressors for teachers have been identified in the literature, along with individual and whole school strategies to mitigate the stress on teachers.

The major task-related stressors affecting teachers include ambiguity regarding the role of the teacher, as well as role overload, the feeling that teachers need to fill too many different roles (Berryhill et al., 2009; Brunsting et al., 2014; Kerr et al., 2011; Klassen, 2010; Renshaw, Long, & Cook, 2015). Managing large class sizes is also a well-documented stressor for teachers (Nichols & Sosnowsky, 2002). The overall bureaucratic stress discussed above (Berryhill et al., 2009; Tucker, 2010), including teacher evaluations (Steinhardt et al., 2011) and an increase in standardized testing (Berryhill et al., 2009; Steinhardt et al., 2011) have also been identified as major stressors for teachers.
As discussed in the section on student-related stressors, clarification on the teacher’s role is important to effective stress management. While many of the tasks in this category are well within the scope of the teacher’s role, historically teachers have acquired numerous tasks that are not. This was recognized and addressed by a collaborative document in the UK, which provided clear direction on many tasks that fell outside of the scope of the teacher’s role, with legislation to support teachers in refusing such tasks (ATL et al., 2003). While this document does not have the same weight in other jurisdictions as it does in the UK, it provides teachers with a starting point for negotiation, if they feel burdened by inappropriate, non-educational tasks. Similarly, Mazzer and Rickwood’s (2015) research showed that teachers need clear role delineation within the school to help them to feel better prepared to effectively and appropriately support student mental health.

Large class sizes are a well publicized stressor on teachers, and although much has been done to advocate for the reduction of class sizes, strategies for managing large classes have also been developed, such as those developed by Adams (2011), which include:

- Setting the tone as positive;
- Simplifying and streamlining;
- Working on social skills and procedures;
- Previewing content to keep students engaged;
- Projecting one’s voice to the back of the class;
- Giving students tasks, such as passing out papers;
- Using small group work rather than lectures;
- Arranging desks in small groups so all students can see the teacher;
- Limiting homework assignments.

Giving students feedback can be stressful for teachers as well as students (Stough & Emmer, 1994, 1998), as students can react with negative expectations, negative emotions, and challenges to the feedback (Hartney, 2007). Teachers who have inadequate social support at work have been found to provide biased, inaccurate, and ultimately unhelpful feedback (Harber et al, 2012). Providing feedback in terms of an action plan can reduce stress an improve accuracy and learning outcomes (Hartney, 2007).

The increase in student testing has been a major stressor for many teachers. Although research indicates that the majority of students are not, in fact, unduly stressed by assessments, and that stress in their teachers does not impact students’ performance on tests, the negative impact on teachers deserves attention (Mulvenon, Stegman, & Ritter, 2005). One antidote that has been suggested as indispensable in addressing this problem is formal instruction for teachers on the processes and benefits of testing, measurement, and assessment, also referred to as assessment literacy (Popham, 2009). By developing a good understanding of different types and uses of assessments, teachers can be empowered in ways that could mitigate the stress that such assessments cause them. In addition, best practices, such as those documented by
Higgins, Miller, and Wegmann (2006), can meet the dual purposes of high quality teaching, and effective exam preparation.

Collaborative planning and decision making is an approach by which teachers in the same school can work together on teaching, and can provide each other with support and experiential knowledge. The example documented by Riley’s (2000) research illustrates how novice teachers, in particular, can both learn from veteran teachers, and alleviate the stress of teaching through peer support.

While the prospect of evaluation is highly stressful for teachers, evaluation processes are becoming more refined, and are providing more opportunity for teachers to gain true insight into their professional development needs. For example, the TAP System for Teacher and Student Advancement uses a comprehensive approach to teacher evaluation that considers several measures of performance, including student achievement gains and teachers’ instructional practices. Recent analyses have shown that TAP’s evaluation system produces much more valid performance ratings than do traditional teacher evaluations. The observational measure of classroom instruction, which is included in the TAP, represents a true distribution of teacher performance even before “value-added” student learning gains are calculated (Jerald, Van Hook, & National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2011). While evaluation will always be a stressful aspect of teaching, such an approach transforms the distress teachers feel concerning the fairness and accuracy of evaluation into the eustress of identifying areas of strength and necessary improvement, ideally with the support to obtain professional development opportunities in response to identified need.

Positive feedback from supervisors has a significant effect on teachers’ attrition (Albrecht, Johns, Mounsteven, & Olorunda, 2009). Research by Russell, Altmaier, and Van Velzen (1987) demonstrated that as the level of supervisor support increased, the strength of the relationship between job-related stress and feelings of depersonalization, a key symptom of burnout, decreased. As noted earlier, in the section on student-related stressors, opportunities for growth, appreciation, and trust are the most impactful aspects of administrator support (Cancio et al., 2013).

As noted above, training in assessment literacy is helpful to individual teachers in managing stress related to increased assessment requirements. In-service training in assessment literacy has also been highly effective when provided at the school level (Mertler, 2009).

**Recommendations for Applying the Framework**

The stress management professional development framework is intended to be used as a tool to identify the professional development needs of individual teachers, and groups of teachers sharing certain characteristics (e.g. special education teachers), as well as across teachers within school experiencing specific challenges (e.g. increased bureaucracy; violent communities). It is recommended that the framework be used to
assist in determining specific professional development needs (Williams & Poel, 2006; Lambert et al., 2009; Renshaw et al., 2015), and to tailor professional development offerings depending on individual teacher and school factors.

It would not be feasible, and would not be likely to be helpful, to provide all approaches to all teachers. Therefore, the relative merits of generic stress management training, and specific approaches, such as reciprocal mentoring and school wide positive behavior support in addressing teachers’ reactions to complex issues such as managing violent students, and shaping the school climate, should be considered in terms of meeting the stress management needs of individual teachers.

It is recommended that stress management approaches be integrated into the teacher-training curriculum, so that new teachers are better equipped to manage the inevitable stress of teaching. Professional development opportunities should also be offered to existing teachers, to enhance their effectiveness. Offerings should be tailored to meet the needs of individual teachers and schools.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Stress management is not incorporated consistently into teacher training or continuing professional development, and so it will be important to evaluate the effectiveness of this stress management framework, both in mitigating teachers’ stress, and in enhancing teachers’ effectiveness and teaching quality. The role and efficacy of assessment tools in accurately identifying the stress mitigating professional development would be a valuable contribution to teacher stress research, particularly if applied in a longitudinal manner, following teachers over time, and charting the course of their stress levels and teaching effectiveness in areas they find challenging.

Reducing stress and burnout indicators among teachers generally, and among specific groups of teachers and whole schools, warrants further attention. Moving forward, it will be important to explore the effects of stress management provision on measures of job satisfaction, and to track to impact of stress management on teacher retention and attrition. It would also be helpful to correlate stress management provision with measures of teaching quality and teaching effectiveness.

Finally, it must be noted that the stressors that teachers are consistently exposed to exceed what can realistically be managed, even with extensive planning and professional development provision. While stress management professional development approaches are focused on enabling teachers to cope with the demands of the profession, the weight of evidence that teachers are overworked, and are being expected to perform beyond their capacity, is clear. For policies to change, and society’s expectations of teachers to become realistic, it would be helpful to establish appropriate workload levels for teachers to be able to perform optimally. This does not mean that the stress arising from teaching will be eliminated, but rather, that teachers are able to effectively respond and adapt to stressors at work, without becoming burnt out, and without the quality of their work suffering.
CONCLUSION

The stressful nature of the teaching profession should not be underestimated, either by trainee or novice teachers, or by those developing training and continuing professional development programs for teachers. The literature review on which this chapter is based indicates that teacher stress is a real phenomenon, affecting every aspect of teachers’ personal and professional experiences. Yet little has been done to provide the adequate knowledge and tools for teachers to not only withstand, but also to thrive in this challenging profession. This is essential if the high attrition rate of new teachers is to be reversed.

Stress remains an elusive process, with a historical emphasis on the harmful nature of stress, yet clear evidence existing that a moderate amount of stress results in optimal professional performance, enhanced well-being, and ultimately, in career satisfaction. Given that the stress of teaching is inherent, and has been recognized cross-culturally, little can be done to eliminate stress for teachers. However, the stressful nature of the job could be better communicated to prospective trainees, prior to them committing to a career path that may turn out to be more demanding than they originally anticipated. In addition, unnecessary occupational stressors, that are superfluous to the teacher’s true role of educator, could certainly be reduced, and potentially eliminated, leaving teachers free to focus on learning the skills to enable them to provide the highest quality teaching they are capable of.

To function effectively as educators, teachers need to be taught a fundamental suite of skills to manage the stressors that are intrinsic to the teaching profession, including management of their own individual stress management skills, clearer boundaries and processes for supporting students, and more sophisticated and collaborative approaches to relationship development with colleagues and parents. In addition, they need access to professional development opportunities and supports which will allow them to develop competencies to both conduct their teaching work effectively, and to provide students with accurate and timely informal and formal feedback, including testing and assessment processes, which are central to enabling individualized learning to take place. The development of these skills can be facilitated through a variety of approaches, at the individual and school levels. Many of these approaches benefit from school-based strategies, that improve teaching effectiveness and quality, and contribute to the well-being of the whole school community. Application of the stress management professional development framework presented in this chapter will facilitate this process.

REFERENCES


Harber, K. D., Gorman, J. L., Gengaro, F. P., Butisingh, S., Tsang, W., & Ouellette, R. (2012). Students' race and teachers' social support affect the positive feedback bias in...


**KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Burnout**: A state of exhaustion, loss of concern for others, and reduced performance resulting from extended exposure to professional stressors beyond the individual’s capacity to cope.

**Distress**: An internal state of negative stress, which is unwelcome, uncomfortable, or exceeds the capacity of the individual experiencing it to cope.

**Eustress**: An internal state of positive stress, which promotes creativity, problem solving, and optimal performance.

**Rustout**: A state of boredom, fatigue, frustration, and dissatisfaction resulting from under-stimulation at work.

**School Climate**: A holistic term, capturing the essential qualities and character of a school, including its norms, goals, values, relationships, teaching quality and effectiveness, organization and environment. A positive school climate promotes learning and supports students and staff in performing optimally, through strong leadership and inclusion of parents, experts, and the community.

**Stress**: An internal state of physical and psychological stimulation, which may be harmful or beneficial, depending on the interpretation and response of the individual experiencing it.
**Stressor:** A source of stress.