Leadership and Culture Climate:
Exploring how School Principals Support Teacher Wellbeing

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A research paper submitted in conformity with the requirements
For the degree of Master of Teaching
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Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

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Abstract

If a teacher is stressed out, they risk altering their wellbeing and capacity to teach effectively. Inevitably, this can impact lesson delivery and student engagement. This study explores teacher wellbeing in the context of administrative support from school leaders. As an under researched area in the literature, this study hopes to contribute findings on what effective school leaders do to maintain the wellbeing of their staff. Although stress is a personal matter, this study explores occupational stress in the context of factors that are attributed to the workplace of a school. This qualitative research project examines how two elementary school principals manage their school-and most importantly their teachers-to ensure staff are in the right mental state to be effective teachers. Data was collected via a semi-structured interview protocol. Audio recordings of these interviews were transcribed, coded, and analysed. Results of this study suggest that there are two broad methods to maintain teacher wellbeing and a positive school climate. These are: proactive strategies and reactive strategies. The data suggest that proactive strategies, such as authentic communication, building a foundation of culture management and professional development can aid in maintaining teacher wellbeing in their workplace. The data further supports the notion of reactionary measures, where the participants described methods such as internal school support (such as mentorship) and external school support (such as board-level policy).

Key words: culture climate, school leadership, teacher wellbeing
Acknowledgements

I would first like to acknowledge and thank the participants of my study. Without their time and invaluable insight, this research study would not have been the same. I also want to extend my acknowledgments and thank Professor Angela MacDonald and Professor Eloise Tan for their support and guidance during this process. I especially want to thank my family- Danila, Rocco, Sarah- and Alessandro, for their unconditional support and encouragement on my educational journey. Finally, I must extend my deepest thanks to cohort J/I 252, whom made all the difference in this experience.
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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction to the Research Study

Teaching is a profession that is often noted as being a demanding occupation with multiple stakeholders, from parents, to colleagues, and of course students. Sure, teachers have a fairly structured workweek and enviable hours, but within the school day they are combated with many stresses that cause teaching to be a profession with one of the highest occupational burnout rates. Occupational stress and burnout among teachers must be addressed in order to ensure quality education for students and teacher well-being, which many argue are hand in hand (Kyriacou, 1987). Kyriacou (2001) distinguishes ‘stress’ and ‘burnout’ by stipulating that burnout is the result of unsuccessful coping with stress over long periods of time.

In many ways, burnout can be avoided if the right supports are in place within the school environment to assist teachers as a preventative measure. In the teaching profession especially, teachers face incredible demands, which include increased workload, students with behavioural problems, problems with the parent-teacher relationship, conflicts in cooperating with colleagues, lack of support from the school, and lack of autonomy. (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009). These factors can create a detriment to a teacher’s perception of fulfillment and overall success in their career. As Schwab (2001) states, most educators do not enter the field for financial gain, but instead they strive to make a positive difference in children’s lives. The demands of the profession often foster stresses that inadvertently affect the teacher, students and working environment. If a teacher is stressed out, they risk altering their wellbeing and capacity to teach effectively. Inevitably, this can impact lesson delivery and student engagement. This study explores teacher wellbeing in the context of administrative support from school principals.
The purpose of this research is to focus on the underdeveloped aspect of the role of the administration in supporting teachers with stress. Prolonged occupational stress can lead to physical and mental illness, impair working relationships, and alter quality of teaching (Kyriacou, 1987). As novice teachers are burning out more rapidly, thus falling victim to this prolonged occupational stress, this research hopes to address methods to curb stress within the classroom and school environment while exploring the value of strong leadership.

1.1 Research Problem

Among the excessive demands teachers face that aid to their stress, as mentioned by Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2009), much can be directly supported by strong leadership within the administration team that encompasses the vice-principal and principal of a school. The problem this study will explore is the role of the school administration surrounding teacher occupational stress. Deal & Peterson (1990) assess that principals have a direct impact on the culture of the school. Thus, this study will explore practices that establish a culture that facilitates wellbeing among teachers.

‘Wellbeing’ in the context can manifest in numerous ways. As contributors to wellbeing, this study will address how to sustain teacher commitment and fulfillment to their work and understand why this vital aspect is often lacking. In connection, after a recent Canadian-wide study, Karsenti & Colin (2013) assess that teachers are particularly inclined to abandon the profession during their induction period, which lasts for the first seven years of teaching. This offers an interesting point of consideration, as this induction period is when many teachers need the most support. Further, Friedman (1993) states that regarding teacher burnout, a key phase is increased feelings of emotional exhaustion, which will be explored. Another aspect is the development of negative, cynical attitudes and feelings towards one clients, or students. The
problem lies in whether teachers are getting the right supports from their administration team, as there can be detrimental outcomes for the teachers and ultimately the students once burnout manifests itself.

1.2 Research Questions

The main research questions this study will address are:

- How does strong leadership from the administrative team foster better working conditions for teachers?
- How does appropriate support practically manifest itself?
- Are there specific supports in place for novice teachers who are at the highest risk of burnout?
- How are principals making efforts to address issues preventively, as well as reactionary?
- What does a strong school culture look, sound and feel like?

1.2.1 Subsidiary Questions

- What are current methods employed by principals to support teaching staff?
- How does strong leadership help create a better team environment?
- How can the administration also be part of the stress?
- Is there a space for teachers to reach out for assistance within the school?
- How does a principal judge whether to let a teacher work out a situation before intervening?

1.3 Background of the Researcher

As a teacher candidate and someone who has grown up in a “teacher” household, I have witnessed burnout manifest among classroom teachers. I am invested in this topic in order to find strategies in teacher wellness and to deeply explore the external demands that contribute to
teacher stress. I believe this study will inform not only my short-term goals as a teacher, but also my long-term goals to become a principal. In line with my own philosophy, I believe “leadership serves as a catalyst for unleashing the potential capacities that already exist in the organization” (Leithwood, 2006). Leaders, especially in a school, have a role I admire: to bring forth all the potential in their teachers, students and community. I am hoping my findings will not only transcend in an educational context, but even in an overall discourse of administration support, leadership, and staff management.

1.4 Overview

In order to explore the research questions and address my overarching research problem, I will conduct a qualitative research study by interviewing two elementary school principals on their experiences as leaders of their respective schools. In chapter two I will review the literature in areas of school management and culture in relation to teacher burnout. In chapter three I will divulge into the research design and methodology used to conduct this study, followed by reporting my research findings in chapter four. In chapter five I will discuss these findings and their significance in relation to the literature along with implications in my own practice as a future teacher.
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is to review the literature in areas surrounding occupational well-being and burnout among teachers. Throughout I will incorporate an administrative lens and interjection to consider the supports given to teachers. I will begin by reviewing a model of burnout and how it commonly manifests itself, as there is a variety of research that has attempted to clarify characteristics of burnout in an educational context. Following the model of burnout, I will review the sources of teacher burnout to understand how it is triggered. I will proceed to review what the literature has concluded in regards to the implications of teacher burnout in the realm of teacher-student relations, teacher-colleague relations, and teacher-parent relations. Lastly, I will provide an assessment of the research that explores prevention strategies for teacher burnout.

2.1 Occupational well-being: Teacher burnout and its triggers

2.1.1 A Model of Teacher Burnout

The literature surrounding occupational well-being, specifically in the realm of education, developed in its premature stages in the 1970s. Kyriacou (2001) describes how the first work with the notion of teacher stress was published in 1977, while McGuire (1979) first studied the idea of burnout specifically in the context of education. Since the 1970s, a plethora of research has been conducted to divulge and sift through the complexities of teacher burnout, and its relation to stress and anxiety.

The definition of burnout can be directly related to notions of occupational stress. Kyriacou (2001) describes a model of teacher stress that develops when a teacher experiences
unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, frustration or depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher. Further, Chang (2009) notes that frustration is the most frequently experienced unpleasant emotion reported by teachers, among guilt and anxiety.

Burnout, although resulting from prolonged stress, develops in a number of phases. It is important to consider that teachers experience burnout in a number of ways, each responding to stress and each phase in a differently. Schaufeli & Enzmann (1998), from occupational psychology studies, describe stress as the first stage of burnout, contrived from an imbalance of resources and demands. Following this stress period, mental and physical repercussions are advanced, such as emotional tension, fatigue and exhaustion, accompanied by sleeping problems and headaches. The last phase surrounds changes in attitudes and behaviour.

The stages of burnout that Schaufeli & Enzmann (1998) describe can translate directly to an educational context. Maslach & Jackson (1981) look at three dimensions of burnout commonly faced by teachers, which include: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2009) describe emotion exhaustion as correlating to physical exhaustion, while depersonalization can encompass a negative and cynical attitude towards colleagues and students. Taris (2004) notes that personal accomplishment is a subjective judgment of one’s own competence and achievement at work, whereas they begin to evaluate themselves negatively as well as a general feeling that they are no longer doing a meaningful or important job (Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2009).

2.1.2 Sources and Triggers of Teacher Burnout

The sources and triggers of teacher burnout discern itself in a variety of ways. In order to understand the complexities of teacher burnout, I will review the social contexts of teacher burnout followed by reviewing literature tied to equity theory. Lastly, I will deconstruct
components of the model of burnout in order to target the foundation of the emotional states that eventually manifest into burnout.

The social context for burnout in education stems from an overarching societal undervaluing of those in the service profession, particularly education. Farber (2000) stipulates that including the chronic undervaluation of work involving the care of children and, similarly, the continual denigration of work primarily performed by women, serve to promote the conditions that make teachers feel overworked and unappreciated. Here, an explicit connection to reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson 1981) as a trigger of burnout can be deduced, where teachers feel they are not making a meaningful impact in their career. On human service workers, Faber looks at Freudenberger’s (1974) original conception of burnout who found themselves under increasing pressure to succeed in helping others, demanded more of themselves than they were able to give, and ultimately exhausted themselves.

Burnout in an educational context can draw many connections to equity theory. At the heart of equity theory lies the assumption that people pursue a balance between what they ‘‘invest’’ in a particular relationship (e.g., time, skills, effort) and the benefits they ‘‘gain’’ from it (such as status, appreciation, gratitude, and pay) Taris (2004). This notion of inequality can occur in situations as Farber (2000) described, where teachers feel overworked and underappreciated, hence the imbalance of ‘‘investment’’ and ‘‘gain.’’ Teachers have relationships that depend on maintaining this balance of equity: with students, colleagues, and the school administration/ institution. Stress is caused by perceived inequity within these relationships (Taris, 2004). Similarly, when teachers perceive they invest more than what they get back from their schools, or when outcomes from students are lower than they had expected, they are prone to experience burnout. (Van Horn, 1999).
The model of teacher burnout addresses this imbalance of equity with each stage of stress, eventually leading to burnout. The three dimensions of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) commonly faced by teachers, which include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment, all have components of triggers that correlate to inequality. Regarding emotional exhaustion, Grayson & Alvarez (2008) researched that emotional exhaustion was closely associated with the climate factors of parent and community relations and student–peer relations, aspects that directly relate to working with students and families within the school environment. Blackbranch (1996) stipulates that the level of education in the parent population is much higher than some decades ago, attributing to more parent involvement in education, even in the daily work at school, which in itself may be a source of stress and dissatisfaction for some teachers. Here, the autonomy of the teacher is affected. Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2009) explore the notion that degree of autonomy correlates to job satisfaction and is essential to address the needs of the students. This disruption can result in emotional exhaustion in teachers, as they are losing the balance they have contrived for classroom autonomy. Further, constant interference or strife between students and teacher and parents and teacher can lead to the teachers “investment” to lack “reward” in the form of appreciation or student success.

Following emotional exhaustion, teachers often face depersonalization as a result of burnout. Depersonalization is characterized as a withdrawal mechanism (Taris, 2004) where a negative or cynical attitude develops as a response to teaching pupils with lack of motivation and maintaining discipline (Kyriacou, 2001). Farber (2000) assesses depersonalization as synonymous with being “worn out” in that these teachers “turn off to the job and stop attempting to succeed in situations that appear hopeless; they attempt to balance out the discrepancy between input and output by reducing their input” (p. 678). Here, connected with equity theory,
there is an attempt to restore equity of input and output, yet by lowering overall input to reduce stress.

The final dimension of burnout surrounds personal accomplishment. Schwab (2001) notes that most educators do not enter the field for financial gain, but instead they strive to make a positive difference in children’s lives. When complications interfere with this premise, the idea of a teachers’ personal accomplishment can be thwarted. In relation to a child’s success, Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2009) stipulate that a teacher’s sense of personal accomplishment is related to interactions with parents as the teacher is often the mediator between the school and the student. Teachers commonly complain that they are viewed only as successful if 100% of their students achieve at or above the mean on every index of educational performance (Farber, 2000). Regarding equity, teachers are subject to feeling less accomplished when their efforts do not produce a balanced outcome, or when they have been inputting effort for student success but it is not achieved.

In the paradigm of personal accomplishment, research suggests that as a reflection of their ideal expectation verses classroom application, this dimension of burnout particularly affects novice teachers. Bullough and Baughman (1997) found that many novice teachers do not realize the profound all-encompassing emotional work involved in teaching until their first year. Faber (2000), categorizing this type of burnout as ‘classic,’ describes how these types of teachers react by working harder and investing as much as they can whereas exhaustion ensues. Further, new teachers experience a dramatic range of intense emotions and passions evoked by the fear of not being liked or respected, the vulnerability that comes with awareness of judgment by others, the anxiety of not being familiar with the subject matter, and the discomfort that comes from having
to make rapid-fire and uncertain decisions (Intrator, 2006). Each facet can alter the teachers’ perception of personal accomplishment, thus contributing to feelings of prolonged stress.

The literature regarding occupational well-being with the lens of teacher burnout has grown extensively since the 1970s. Conceptualizing prolonged stress from the classroom and school-related institution has opened up research in dimensions of burnout, namely emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment, and causes within each dimension. Equity theory has also become an essential focus when considering burnout, as many triggers of the dimensions of burnout are rooted in perceived inequality. Moving forward, I will explore the literature surrounding implications of burnout between the teacher and students, the teacher and colleagues/administration, and the teacher and parent parents.

2.2 Implications of Teacher Burnout

2.2.1 Teacher-Student Relations

The effects of teacher burnout can be far more reaching than within the psyche of the teacher. Teacher burnout has implications on student interaction within the classroom. Research indicates that negative attitudes from teachers are associated with decreased quality of teaching, less flexibility and acceptance of various student needs, and poorer overall teacher-student interaction (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). Further, they found that as teachers experience higher degrees of stress, they are less tolerant of aversive or challenging students (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). Once teachers are experiencing burnout, particularly wear or emotional exhaustion, renewing their sense of dedication and care are difficult tasks; These teachers tend to minimize successes, maximize failures, and perceive the future as inevitably as bleak as the present (Farber, 2000). In this regard, the effects of prolonged unattended stress, and thus burnout, result in lower-quality instruction and teacher presence within the classroom.
2.2.2 Teacher- Colleague Relations

In many ways, colleagues and the administration of a school can contribute dimensions of burnout. Demands placed on teachers, time pressures, and role conflict ambiguity (Kyriacou, 2001) can create animosity between staff. Further, Schaufeli, (1996) found that relationships among colleagues at work can be construed in terms of social exchange relationships. Here, there is some evidence that employees maintain ‘support bookkeeping’ that is based on the balance between giving and receiving support from others. Colleagues can often become a shoulder to turn toward, as well as the resentful “bookkeeper” of sorts once stress begins to manifest. This can foster a toxic attitude among colleagues, where support should potentially be the most prominent.

2.2.3 Teacher- Parent Relations

When teachers display dimensions of burnout, they begin to alter their classroom presence. This can have ill effects with student engagement. There is no doubt that students communicate this strife or ill feeling with their parents, thus fostering an extension of a cynical rapport with parents among the teacher. Regarding dimensions of burnout, Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2009) affirmed that depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment were most strongly related to teachers’ relations with parents. Each relationship, whether teacher- student, teacher-colleague or teacher- parent, has the potential to create prolonged stress and thus burnout for the teacher. More startling, burnout from one facet may have repercussions in other relationships, as displayed with the teacher-student- parent paradigm. The next point of focus will consider how to prevent dimensions of burnout in order to maintain positive relationships within the school climate.
2.3 Teacher Burnout: Preventative Strategies

The literature supports a plethora of methods to assist in preventing teacher burnout and stress-related symptoms. Kyriacou (2001) makes the distinction that the nature of stress can be triggered in two categories: one based on self-image and the other on excessive demands. On targeting these triggers, prevention methods will be explored in relation to internal perception, the school climate and administrative leadership that combine how teachers conceptualize their self-image and how they cope with demands.

2.3.1 Internal Perception

Coping mechanisms for prolonged stress have been studied in an educational context. Known methods for stress relief have been suggested, such as meditation, relaxation and physical activity (Farber, 2000). Yet, stress-reduction techniques alone are unlikely to renew commitment and involvement into teaching until teachers make significant modifications in their appraisals that they are at least partially successful at the job and/or receiving adequate rewards or perks for the work. These techniques, therefore, are unlikely to resolve the problems and symptoms associated with teacher burnout (Farber, 2000). Teacher burnout is very much a mental phenomenon. Appraisal theory argues for a cognitive view of emotions, means emotions are elicited by judgments of events and situations. Emotions are thus a response to an interpretation of a situation (Roseman & Smith, 2001). In connection, Kyriacou (2001) makes the distinction between direct-action techniques and palliative-action techniques as methods to reduce stress. Direct-action techniques encompass eliminating the source of the stress while palliative-action techniques involve regulating emotions to feel less stressed. Chang (2009) asserts that teachers need to be more self-reflective in monitoring their own stress levels or emotions. This self-
reflective state can allow a clear follow up in coping with situations, and mindfully assists in whether to take direct or palliative action. Greenglass (2002) also suggests proactive coping, wherein the teacher should anticipate future results of situations that create a stress trigger. Proactive coping emphasizes one’s personal capacity in goal management (foresee the problems and seek changes) rather than risk management (being responsive to the problems). A key component of stress management is related to how a teacher is able to conceptualize and appraise a situation.

2.3.2 The school climate

Teachers are inextricably linked to the demands and pressures of the school climate. This involves attitudes of colleagues, the daily structure, and institution. Although often constrained due to budget and funding, teachers often advocate for more prep time and reduced class sizes (Kyriacou, 2001). Instead, the school climate can be altered in other facets. A climate of social support can be established, where in teachers work in a collegial manner with one another (Kyriacou, 2001). Further, within each grade, teaching partnerships can be created to foster a sense of support. Farber (2000) warns that often, “Worn-out teachers tend to seek out those colleagues and friends who confirm their sense that teaching is primarily a stressful, ungratifying profession, that students are essentially ungrateful and disruptive, and that administrators are always unresponsive and self-promoting” (p.680). Although sharing stress among colleagues is a method of coping, it can in effect create a further environment of anxiety. Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2009) stipulate that overall, active problem solving, social and emotional support from colleagues, reorganizing the teaching situation, cooperation with parents, or changing teaching strategy are the more influential strategies in altering the school climate and coping with stress.
2.3.3 Administrative Leadership

The administrative leadership of the school controls multiple variables that can assist in preventing teacher stress, such as classroom autonomy and staff support. The literature on school leadership and student achievement found that there is not a single documented case of a school successfully turning around its pupil achievement trajectory in the absence of talented leadership (Leithwood, 2006). Further, school leaders have strong and positive influences on staff members’ motivations, commitments and beliefs about the supportiveness of their working conditions (Leithwood, 2006).

In connection with equity theory, Taris (2004) describe a psychological contract that is defined as a set of expectations that employees hold about the nature of their exchange relationship with their organization. More specifically, the psychological contract reflects the employees’ subjective notion of equity and serves as a baseline against which own investments and benefits are evaluated. As discussed, teachers often face stress when they feel that their input is not reflecting output, whether in student success or recognition. Here, administration plays one of the most vital roles, as they set the accepted practices within the school. Regarding autonomy at one practice, teachers often develop stress once they feel they lack control in their own classroom. Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2009) assess how teachers often feel underwhelmed when their autonomy in the classroom is in jeopardy and stipulate that degree of autonomy correlates to job satisfaction. Further, it is also noted that a need for autonomy is strongly related for a desire to do good work and to address the changing needs of the students.

The administration can also alleviate stress by providing support for teachers, which can manifest in a number of ways. To begin, an investment in professional development geared
toward stress prevention would display an effort to refocus teachers and reaffirm their commitment to the profession. Kyriacou (2001) suggests in-service workshops that combine direct and palliative stress relief, allowing teachers to choose methods that work for their needs. Further, he adds that good communication between staff, establishing a collegial atmosphere and clarity on school-wide policies and teacher roles can provide an environment less prone to stress. As central agents of change, principals recognize teachers as equal partners in this process, acknowledging their professionalism and capitalizing on their knowledge and skills (Marks & Printy, 2003). Feelings of personal accomplishment also wavers during burnout, principals may also consider leading by example in displaying recognition for their staff.

In order to prevent stress within schools, appraisal theory reminds teachers to keep situations in perspective. As teaching is a highly emotional endeavour, learning to discern between situations that arise in the classroom, with colleagues, or with the administration is a difficult but necessary task. Teachers are also reminded to work as collectively with their colleagues as possible. Not only will a friendly work environment formulate, but also a sense of support will foster as a result. The administration is also encouraged to create a firm support structure that will be organized, clear, and undoubtedly stable to assist staff before they cross the threat hold of being unable to cope.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the literature in areas surrounding occupational well-being and burnout among teachers. A review of the model of burnout and how it commonly manifests itself demonstrated the ways research that has attempted to clarify characteristics of burnout in an educational context. Following the model of burnout, I reviewed the sources of teacher burnout to understand how it is triggered and explored what the literature has concluded in regards to the
implications of teacher burnout in the realm of teacher-student relations, teacher-colleague relations, and teacher-parent relations. Lastly, I provided an assessment of the research that explores prevention strategies for teacher burnout, looking at a teacher's internal perception, the school climate, and administration leadership. The literature thus far has proven to be explicit in the realm of teacher burnout since the late 1970s. There have been many studies on how a teacher can internally cope with their stresses. The areas I will develop explore external demands placed on teachers that warrant additional supports, whether with students, colleagues or parents. Moving forward, I hope to contribute in the gaps surrounding the administration and their vital leadership role in supporting staff.
Chapter 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter I describe the research methodology conducted for my study. I will begin by outlining the procedure, followed by describing the instruments of data collection. I will then introduce the participants of this study with an elaboration on the sampling criteria, participant recruitment, and lastly notable participant information. Continuing, I will share the processes involved with data collection and my frame of focus for my analysis, while also disclosing the ethical review procedures required for this study. Before concluding, I will share the limitations and strengths the methodology of the study offered.

3.1 Research Approach and Procedures

A qualitative study was conducted in order to investigate how administrators support teachers to lessen their experience with stress and burnout and foster a positive school culture. A qualitative approach to this research study was chosen to allow individuals to share and make meaning from their lived experiences. As Saldana (2011) states, the goal of qualitative research is to ‘come to a new and intimate awareness and understanding about unfamiliar aspects of life’ (p.34). Qualitative research allows for a thorough exploration of a research problem, as described in chapter one. Just preceding, the literature review allowed for many academic voices of well-versed researchers to contribute to the research problem. These voices spanned from educational theorists to psychologists, each of whom added value to this issue. Going forward, qualitative research opens the forum to another essential group in gaining new insights on strategies that administrators can use to lessening teacher stress and burnout, which are namely the voices of these administrators themselves.
For the purposes of this study, characteristics of a phenomenological approach to qualitative research were found to be best suited. Creswell (2013) describes a phenomenological approach appropriate when understanding the essence of an issue with a sample of participants who have a lived experience coping with the phenomenon. He also suggests that a phenomenological approach is well suited to inform current practices, such as how strategies for teacher wellness are being executed, and to what capacity these programs are efficient.

I am exploring how administrators implement strategies for teachers to lessen their experience with stress and burnout, acknowledging stress and burnout among teachers as a vital issue. The sample of administrators chosen for this study have all experienced this phenomenon through supporting teachers. Further, these administrators have taken initiative with strategies and solutions to support staff to lessen stress and burnout and promote wellness. There is value in this qualitative approach as there is a collective issue that my sample will speak on while also being given a platform to share their own lived experiences. This platform will be provided in the form of semi-structured interviews that will be in turn used as data for this study.

### 3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

The primary instrument to collect data for the study is a semi-structured interview protocol. For the data collection process, I adhered to the model that Creswell (2013) suggests, which recommends semi-structured, opened-ended, and general interview questions that are focused on the central research problem. The value with semi-structured interviews is that they provide an opportunity for interviewees and the interviewer to converse on the issue. In this way, the questions are guides for the direction of conversation, although they do not necessarily need to be followed explicitly.
Some sample interview questions I inquired on are as follows: What current strategies do you implore to support teacher well-being in the workplace? In your experience, what are some common stressors teachers face that require administrative support? How do you determine when to intervene and support a teacher? Here, the questions are focused to my central research problem, which is to determine how administrators are responding to teacher stress and burnout. The questions also guide the interviewee to reflect on a number of instances that may be relevant and share their lived experiences.

3.3 Participants

In this section I review the sampling criteria established to recruit the participants for my study. I also discuss the sampling procedures followed for the purposes of this study, as well as share information pertaining to the participants of this study.

3.3.1 Sampling Criteria

The participants for this study adhere to a number of sampling criteria. This criteria includes:

- Administrators who have held their position as vice principal or principal for over 5 years in an elementary school
- Administrators who have demonstrated commitment to supporting teacher wellness
- Demonstrated at least five years of teaching experience prior to becoming an administrator

Participants must adhere to the following criteria in order to demonstrate their commitment and experience in education. The teaching experience ensures that participants have an understanding of the demands placed on teachers that contribute to their stress. Further, teaching experience allows these administrators to reflect on their own classrooms and relay the challenges they faced as a teacher. I have chosen to focus on elementary school principals due to the more intimate size
of elementary schools verses secondary schools where administrators have more opportunity to interact with their teachers. Further, in elementary schools, the demands that cause teacher stress are often different than secondary schools, and for the purposes of this study elementary administrators offer a more narrow focus. Regarding administrative experience, participants must have the knowledge and expertise to cope with the demands of managing their teaching staff. Administrative experience is vital to ensure that participants have implemented strategies to support teachers through their experience. Lastly, these participants must demonstrate a commitment to supporting teacher wellness. This is essential in order for staff members to feel supported by their administrative team and thus foster a positive work environment that in effect impacts the students and school community.

3.3.2 Participant Recruitment

The purposes of this study call for 2-3 participants in the sample. As Creswell (2013) stipulates regarding characteristics of phenomenological qualitative research, the sample should be narrow and specific. The two participants for my study were found through convenience and chain sampling procedures. In a typology of sampling strategies in qualitative inquiry, Creswell (2013) makes the distinction that although convenience sampling saves time and effort, it may come at the expense of the information the participants offer. Chain sampling, comparably, is when participants are recommended through peers. This also may come at a cost of finding participants that meet the criteria of the study in a time effective manner.

In order to ensure my sample meet the selected criteria, I obtained these participants in various streams through my involvement in the Faculty of Education. Through the Faculty of Education I am immersed with educators who have displayed interest as participants for my research. These participants were found through my placements within elementary schools where
I was able to network, as well as in professional development programs through the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. These professional development programs include workshops on teacher mental health. Upon contact, each participant was given an overview of my research study to ensure they are interested in participating and meet the criteria to be part of the selected sample.

3.3.3 Participant Biographies

Participant 1: Daniel

Daniel is a principal with over 11 years of experience as an administrator. Prior to his role as a principal, Daniel was an elementary school teacher who taught primary to intermediate grade levels. Further, he has experience teaching guidance, special education and acted as a literacy coordinator. Daniel’s diverse experience as a teacher and principal offer significant insight into where he would have liked more support as a teacher, as well as his own practices as an administrator in maintaining wellness among his teachers.

Daniel is currently at a Toronto District School Board K-5 school with over 750 students, 45 teaching staff and 30 non-teaching staff. The demographics of his school consist of new English language learners with a middle socio-economic background. Daniel acknowledges mental health is an increasing priority for administrators to recognize in order to support their teachers and inevitably, the students. As part of his role as a principal, Daniel places emphasis on ensuring his staff genuinely enjoy their work and are supported in various areas that can be stressful, such as technology use and interactions with colleagues/administrators. This aids in what Daniel perceives to be his most important role as a principal, which is maintaining student achievement. In particular, Daniel tries to maintain wellness in among his staff through genuine
and authentic communication, fostering a social culture climate among staff, adhering to education policy and above all, maintaining professionalism.

Participant 2: Chris

Chris is an principal with over 10 years experience as an administrator. Prior to his role as a principal, Chris was a teacher for 7 years. In that span, he garnered experience teaching in each division, from primary/ junior to intermediate/ senior. Chris also has experience working with behavioural children and youth, an opportunity that has shaped his knowledge that he passes to teaching staff.

Chris’ most recent role as a principal is in a Toronto District School Board inner city K-8 school with 450 students. The students are among the lowest on what Chris calls the Learning Opportunity Index, meaning student achievement is one of his largest priorities as a principal. In order to increase student achievement, Chris believes teaching staff need to be mentally well for the challenge. Chris acknowledges that classroom management, keeping students engaged and maintaining collegial relationships among staff are some of the key stressors in his school for teachers. In order to address this issues, Chris ensures he implements practices that support teacher wellness to inevitably raise student achievement. These practices include maintaining constant communication with staff and outlining a clear vision for the school, implementing professional development to target areas of stress, and keep staff informed in areas around policy.

3.4 Data Analysis

Upon conducting and transcribing my interviews, I proceeded to analyze the data collected. Following Creswell’s (2013) model, I began to organize the data, create themes from the data, and conclude with a discussion around my analysis. Each transcript was transcribed
individually with common patterns and themes. Saldana (2011) acknowledges that establishing patterns among transcripts are one of the first and most pivotal steps in the process of data analysis. He also describes a coding process to make meaning of individual sections of data. In this process, a code in the form of a word or short phrase symbolically assigns a salient attribute for a piece of the data, or transcript (Saldana, 2011). Similar to coding is an additional process known as text segmentation. Text segmentation is used to deconstruct potential themes, as segmentation is a technique for bounding text in order to facilitate the exploration of thematic elements and their similarity, dissimilarity, and relationships (Guest, 2012).

The data was interpreted once I established the relevant themes and categories. Interpretation of data goes beyond the coding into meaning making (Cresswell, 2013). In line with this, Saldana (2011) encourages deductive reasoning to make conclusions from established themes brought forward in the data analysis process. Null data is also significant and will be discussed as part of the data interpretation and deductive process.

3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

The ethics of qualitative research and the involvement of participants must be considered seriously. Ethical issues go through the entire process of an interview from the start to the final report (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Participants acknowledged their participation in an ethical protocol consent letter (Appendix A) that explicitly outlines the study and its purposes. Creswell (2013) states that the researcher must be explicit in how they are storing data from the interview. Participants were made aware that all data from the interview is stored on my password-protected computer and destroyed after 5 years. The consent letter also indicates that the interview was audio-recorded. Participants were reminded that they may withdraw from the study at any time.
There are no known risks to participation. To respect anonymity, participants were given a pseudonym and any indentifying markers related to their school and staff will be excluded.

Creswell (2013) states that good ethical practice requires the researcher to be explicit about the purpose of the study and the participant’s role. Participants will also have the opportunity to review the transcripts and retract any statements I conducted from the interview. Participants were reminded that they can choose to refrain from answering any question, and that only my course instructor will have access to the raw data.

3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

The limitations of this qualitative research study vary. Creswell (2013) describes a phenomenological form of qualitative research in which I employed characteristics for my study. One of those characteristics is a notably small sample. As my study has only have 2 participants, the findings are not generalizable. Another limitation is that due to the ethical parameters of my study, I can only interview teachers or administrators as opposed to students, parents or community members. The participants who must adhere to this parameter alter the other avenues this study could have taken with a multitude of different perspectives.

The strengths of this qualitative research study are plenty. The small sample allows for the lived experiences of a few participants to be validated. Their insights also speak to broader issues surrounding teacher wellness. Further, the administrators who participated in my study had the opportunity to reflect on their current practices. This can inform how to improve teacher wellness within schools and speak to different leadership initiatives to support staff.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I outlined the qualitative research methodology conducted for my study. I began by outlining the procedure, followed by describing the instruments of data collection. I am
doing semi-structured interviews to retrieve my data. I then introduced the participants of this study with an elaboration on the sampling criteria, participant recruitment, and lastly notable participant information. Continuing, I described the processes involved with data collection and my frame of focus for my analysis, while also disclosing the ethical review procedures required for this study. Lastly, I disclosed the limitations and strengths the methodology of the study offered. Going forward, I will be reporting on the findings of my research.
Chapter 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter I will report and discuss my research findings with regards to the role of the principals in supporting teachers through occupational stress. I will further begin to address my research questions while presenting my findings. This chapter will be organized based on themes of how occupational stress manifests itself, followed by proactive leadership strategies and reactionary leadership support. These themes will be supported by various sub-themes with reference to the research participants and the literature review. I will conclude by summarizing my research findings in preparation for chapter 5 which will discuss the implications of my findings and where further research can be continued. The pseudonyms of the participants in my findings will be Daniel and Chris.

4.1. Identifying Occupational Stress in Teaching

Occupation stress among classroom teachers manifests in various ways. In order to explore these causes, this section will first discuss the role of administrators, keeping in mind that school leadership can be a key stressor for teachers. Further, this section will present causes of stress among teachers from an administrative perspective.

4.1.1 The role of administrators

To understand and assess the impact that administrators have with teaching staff regarding their wellness, it is first essential to distinguish their role within the school. Their position and duties can also be examined to explain why they are also a source of stress for teachers. To begin, Daniel brought forth the sentiment that administrators have a duty and responsibility to ensure staff are safe, happy and well supported. Agreeably, Chris adds that among ensuring staff are supported, a principals duties are also to be fiscally responsible,
maintain safety and to bring a strong vision to the school. Above all, Chris and Daniel both note that their primary responsibility is to student achievement. This is done in tandem with what Chris also noted as a primary role of principals: “Raising the bar for teaching staff.”

One of the ways that student achievement is ensured is that teachers themselves are in the right state of mind to do their job, as teacher stress has implications with student engagement in the classroom. Negative attitudes from teachers are associated with decreased quality of teaching, less flexibility and acceptance of various student needs, and poorer overall teacher-student interaction (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). Daniel and Chris both share that they have witnessed how stressed teachers alter the potential for not only achievement in their students, but also enjoyment of learning. Chris poses: “If I don’t have happy staff, how will the kids be happy?”

Student achievement is one of the primary responsibilities for administrative staff to maintain in their schools. In conjunction with student achievement is ensuring teaching staff are well and ready to conduct their craft. Stress can be a barrier in teaching to an educators full potential. Going forward, I will assess the causes of teacher stress as brought forth from my research participants in conjunction with the literature.

### 4.1.2 Causes of Teacher Occupational Stress

Matters that are personal and professional can trigger teacher occupational stress. Teachers have relationships that depend on maintaining balance with students, colleagues, and the school administration/ institution (Taris, 2004). If this balance is altered, stress occurs. In order to bring my findings forward, I will share Daniel and Chris’ experiences with their own stresses as teachers and what their current school climate is like in relation to teachers stress. These experiences will be compared and analysed in relation to the literature.
Daniel reflects on his past professional stresses, assessing that he was more stressed as a novice teacher and felt more confident once he gained experience. Further, situations that often led to stress came in the form of ambiguity and unclear feedback from his administrators. Among these causes of stress, Daniel also mentioned that parents and students could aid in stress depending on the situation. Further, external factors can also alter stress levels, such as systematic changes. The sources of frustration from factors outside the classroom include administrative demands, externally mandated change or reformation, and conflicts between their teaching goals and the expectations from school administration (Chang, 2009). This is particularly evident in the context of Daniel’s school climate during the potential strike mandate, which triggered uneasiness among staff that is beyond the control of the administration.

Daniel is also clear in stating that stress is a personal matter, and staff handle situations differently: “what may be a stressful condition for one may not be a stressful condition for others.” With his current staff, Daniel assesses that personal stress, such as family or health issues, are factors that can alter a teachers’ wellbeing that are beyond their control. He also brings forth the stresses of 21st century learning initiatives, such as integrated technology, that can cause more seasoned teachers to become overwhelmed.

On a similar token, Chris’ largest stressors as a teacher came in the form of what he called “perception of support” as opposed to tangible and practical solutions from his principal. In the context of the high-needs school he was teaching at, (which included young offenders and students with emotional and physical challenges) the administrators did not meet his needs. He reflects that the administrators were out of touch with what the staff were facing on a daily basis. Although the working environment that included high-risk students would overwhelm many teachers, Chris clarifies that the behavioural issues of the students and their needs were not his
actual stressors, as he had a plethora of training in working with such students. In his own school, Chris attributes teacher stresses to classroom management, teaching the curriculum in a timely and accurate fashion, the interactions teachers have with their administrators and internalized high expectations. Similar to Daniel, he also notes that teachers can be hesitant to approach 21st century learning initiatives, such as effectively using technology in the classroom.

Daniel and Chris’ experiences display a number of occupational stress triggers that research supports. As described in Daniela and Chris’ own experiences, when teachers perceive they invest more than what they get back from their schools, or when outcomes from students are lower than they had expected, they are prone to experience burnout (Van Horn, 1999). Chang (2009) notes that frustration is the most experienced unpleasant emotion reported by teachers, among guilt and anxiety. Frustration can be attributed to internalized responses to what Daniel and Chris expressed, from poor administrative communication, class management, curriculum delivery and self-doubt. In relation, Intrator (2006) found that novice teachers experience a dramatic range of intense emotions evoked by the fear of not being liked or respected, the vulnerability that comes with awareness of judgment by others, the anxiety of not being familiar with the subject matter, and the discomfort that comes from having to make uncertain decisions.

These causes of occupation stress among teachers are significant to recognize. Although stress is often perceived internally, there are considerable external professional factors that can aid in a teachers stress and overall wellbeing. These are tied to balance in student-teacher relations, teacher preparedness, and what I regard as most important, the overall school climate that is set by the administration. The sections going forward will address proactive leadership strategies and reactionary leadership support when teachers are facing occupational stress.
4.2 Proactive leadership strategies

Part of an administrator’s duty and responsibility is ensuring staff safety and wellbeing, as outlined previously. Part of this responsibility is being proactive in leadership strategies that can curb occupational stress among teachers before this stress manifests severely. Three prominent strategies that will be explored are communication between staff and administrators, school culture, and professional development.

4.2.1 Communication

The communication that teachers have with their administrators can prove to significantly alter their working relationships in a positive manner. Regarding school management stress support strategies, Kyriacou (2001) states that managerial communication and a sense of collegiality are palliative techniques that can assist with teacher wellbeing. The context of communication will be explored through establishing a rapport among staff and authentic classroom presence of administrators.

To begin with Daniel, he advocates for communication among staff as one of the key strategies that can alter stress levels with teachers. As the school leader, being accessible and available to his staff is one of his management initiatives. Daniel places priority on building a rapport with teachers, which can aid in trust, relationship building, and even becoming familiar with the stress triggers of staff. In relation, Daniel shares: “I genuinely am the type of person who wants to know all the people in the building… I want to build a rapport and relationship with them.” Part of this rapport extends to giving staff recognition and feedback. On this, Daniel believes it is effective to “praise publically, criticize privately... If I need to re-direct someone I
try to do it privately and in the most sensitive way as possible.” These approaches enable a relationship of professionalism and more importantly, confidence in the administration.

Alternatively, Daniel also recognizes staff autonomy in the sense that many teachers will refrain from establishing a rapport with their principal. He stipulates that this could be for personal reasons, of which professionalism and job expectations as per the Education Act must be maintained.

Chris’ approach to communication is similar to Daniel in the sense that he strives to gain the trust of his staff and get them on board with his school vision. Chris acknowledges that his approach can be perceived as abrupt, although teachers do welcome his honesty and lack of ambiguity through their communication. Chris establishes a rapport to try and eliminate the intimidation of coming to ask for assistance. While conversing with staff, he is calm and always listens first to assess how to proceed. Similar to Daniel, part of these interactions also include staff acknowledgement: “As with students, if you don’t acknowledge their [teachers] achievement it can be detrimental to overall attitude and behaviour.” Again, it is important to acknowledge that many teachers do not engage with this rapport as well. Chris shares that in this instance, teachers tend to become “an island unto themselves” whereas as long as they are adhering to professional standards that is sufficient.

Opening the line of communication and thus building a rapport with staff can significantly alter occupational stress for a teacher. Daniel and Chris display numerous tactics to ensure communication is established and relationships of trust are built. Grayson & Alvarez (2008) found that teacher burnout declined in schools where teachers feel they can disclose their stress to administration. This vulnerable act can be achieved through a proactive established trust and rapport with the administration. Staff appreciation is a proactive support strategy that
boosts a teacher’s sense of personal accomplishment. Recognition for a teacher’s effort is among the frequently advocated changes to support occupational wellness (Kyriacou, 1987).

Going forward, additional factors that aid in established rapport among staff and the administration will be explored such as an authentic administrative presence.

Authentic administrative presence refers to administrators who are present and thus aware of the needs of their teachers in the classroom. This is not to disrupt classroom autonomy, but to be able to support teachers in various areas. For instance, Daniel has made it part of his daily routine to visit various classrooms. He makes his purpose clear—“I am not in classrooms inspecting”—but instead “touching base with teachers and students in their classrooms.”

Similar to Daniel, Chris is also a proponent of actively circulating in the school to ensure he has an authentic presence: “A few minutes is all it takes to observe a classroom… I walk around, I give suggestions, and I acknowledge what they are doing well. Teachers really value that interaction.” This observation is key to provide teachers with necessary feedback and strategies.

The authentic presence of administrators can proactively support teachers by facilitating a collegial environment as opposed to hierarchical. Principals can become agents of assistance with a genuine understanding of a teacher’s class dynamic. Again, the purpose of this administrative presence is not to invade or suppress classroom autonomy, which is often a concern for teachers (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Alternatively, this presence would make administrators aware of their staff, students and their collective needs. Marks & Printy (2003), assess that when teachers perceive principals’ instructional leadership behaviors to be appropriate, they grow in commitment, professional involvement, and willingness to innovate.
themselves. This is significant in that an administrator’s presence, followed with guidance, can foster a relationship of support, trust and occupational wellbeing.

Communication among staff is a key proactive measure to ensure teachers are supported in their job role. Establishing a rapport among staff and an authentic classroom presence of administrators are two strategies that the participants demonstrated and advocated for as an essential part of their interaction with teaching staff. Going forward, proactive culture management within the school and professional development will be explored.

4.2.2 Culture Management

The culture of a school can impact the way teaching staff perceive their occupational wellbeing. One of the most important roles the school administration undertakes is the management of the school culture. On school culture, Peterson (2002) states, “It is the set of norms, values and beliefs that make up the ‘persona’ of the school. A school culture influences the way people feel and act” (p.10). This section will explore culture management as a proactive leadership strategy. The accounts of the participants will be shared followed by an analysis of the literature in culture management.

Daniel exhibits one of his primary goals as a principal in maintaining culture and a positive school climate. As part of the conditions to help students achieve lies within the wellbeing of the teaching staff, this can have far-reaching influence, trickling from the staff to the students. As a school leader, Daniel “takes great pride in establishing norms and conditions so that people can thrive.” Parts of these norms that Daniel tries to establish are functioning as a team with his teachers and office staff. Even further, Daniel constantly reminds his staff that he is learning with them in regards to professional development. This collegial approach further fosters a team environment that removes what can be an intimidating hierarchy of management.
Daniel has also established a social culture within his school that is significant in stress reduction. In this social culture, teachers are part of various clubs, from weight loss groups, to walking clubs, to yoga clubs. Teachers participate in each at their own desire, all in an effort to not only have fun at work, but also reduce stress.

Chris’ experience with culture management highlights what can be considered the challenges that administrators face when attempting to set the school on course with an altered vision. Chris deems culture management as one of the largest challenges as a principal. In tandem to this, he is a proponent for a strong school vision for the betterment of student success. While fostering a school vision, there can be opposition towards the changing school climate that often follows. He stipulates that opposition usually arrives from mistrust in the school administration from teachers, as well as a fixed mentality from staff that are unwilling to further develop. Chris stipulates that “once you get a critical mass of teachers who see your vision and philosophy and know that you are supporting them at becoming better at what they do, then you have way more potential to grow and change.” Chris’ leadership approach is supported by Leithwood (2006), who also asserts that building a vision and concrete directions for staff is a key attribute to successful leadership. This trust among teachers and the administration often surfaces once a rapport has been established. Chris attempts to foster a sense of teamwork among his staff in an effort to move forward with a collegial culture that in turn also benefit the students.

Daniel and Chris’ experiences with culture management are significant in highlighting how a school climate can influence teacher wellbeing. Functioning as leaders, principals can serve to transform school cultures or to maintain them. (Marks & Printy, 2003). In the instance with Daniel, his role was to maintain an already sound school culture that valued collegial
collaboration. In Chris’ experience, he was tasked with altering an already existing culture, which proved to be challenging and yet necessary. The school principal is the creator or re-shaper of a school’s teacher culture and influences not only the actions of the school staff, but also their motivations and spirit (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Chris’ motivation was centred on his school vision, which eventually got his teaching staff on board. Daniel maintained his schools culture by ensuring he always emulated a positive attitude, or “spirit.” Further, Daniel opened the opportunity for social initiatives among teachers. Both participants emulate how even with challenges, the principal’s personality traits, attitudes, and behaviors have a crucial influence on school culture and, through school culture, on teacher culture, especially its atmosphere (Lee & Li, 2015). With a proactive attempt to manage school culture, administrators can create a working environment that benefits teachers and students. Although occasionally tasking, once on track the school’s culture can significantly improve and set the standard of expectations among staff. To proceed, the following section will explore professional development as a final proactive method to address teacher occupational wellbeing.

4.2.3 Professional Development

Professional development is an essential proactive strategy to ensure teachers are equipped to do their job with the highest degree of preparedness. As discussed, teacher occupational stress often arises from class management issues, to lack of confidence with the curriculum. Professional development can address these issues. Studies have demonstrated that school principals have a significant impact on teachers commitment to professional development (Lee & Li, 2015). The proactive professional development that will be explored in this context is workshops that the participants arrange for their staff to address various foreseen stresses.
With regards to professional development, Daniel acknowledged that one of the stressors for his staff are 21st century learning initiatives that include proficient use of technology in the classroom. Implementing technology as a way to deliver curriculum can be daunting to staff. In order to address this, Daniel and his staff both participate in workshops to address technology proficiency in the classroom, which aids in less backlash from parents who are growing to demand technological use in the schools. Other 21st century learning initiatives include the role of the teacher as facilitator as opposed to sole keeper of knowledge. Daniel has found that his new staff are more inept with this teaching philosophy while he has had to ensure his less novice staff were continuing to grow and change their teaching practices. This can be a source of stress that was addressed with continued professional development.

Similar to Daniel, Chris is active in arranging workshops that address the stresses of his staff. Chris’ experience within a high-needs school allowed him to work with a number of doctors, behavioural therapists and speech pathologists (among others) who have aided in his expertise with classroom management. Chris lends his experience to new teachers by conducting a mandatory classroom management seminar. Here, he addresses key issues that he finds teachers get overwhelmed by, such as students with behavioural needs and appropriate responses.

Although Chris is a proponent of workshops, he also finds that they may not be effective if they are not implemented in a timely fashion. “Workshops don’t work because the application is lost unless you practice it right away. When I send teachers out for PD I ask them to just bring one thing back to apply.” Chris tries to distress teachers by removing the expectation that they need to know it all, but also ensuring that they are implementing key ideas that apply to their needs in the context of their classroom.
The participants demonstrated their acknowledgment of the needs of their teachers with proactive workshops to enhance the professional development of their teaching staff. This is a significant effort as these workshops can provide proactive and practical strategies for common occupational stressors. These workshops assist with what Kyriacou (2001) calls a “palliative action technique” (p.30) in that feeling of stress are lessened with measures to address what would commonly overwhelm staff in the teaching setting. Chang (2009) found that teachers at career frustration might return to enthusiastic and growing state if they engaged in professional development that was revitalizing. Even beyond attending these sessions, implementation of key ideas can alter teaching. Once teachers are part of these professional development initiatives, they can take back applicable ideas to their own classrooms that improve their teaching and student learning.

Proactive measures for teacher occupational wellbeing have been outlined in this section. These proactive leadership strategies include communication between staff and administrators with a further focus on building a rapport with staff and having an authentic classroom presence. Following, culture management was explored in the context of creating a positive school climate. Lastly, proactive professional development was analysed with reference to workshops that address the stresses of teachers to offer practical solutions. The following section will explore administrative reactive support for occupational stress that teachers face.

4.3. Reactive Leadership Support

Reactive leadership support encompasses how administrators assist their teaching staff with occupational stress once the stress has manifested towards burnout. These support strategies will be explored in the context of internal school support, with a focus on teacher mentorship.
Following, externals school supports will be displayed with a lens on education policy and school board initiatives in place to support teachers.

4.3.1 Internal School Support

Once stress begins to manifest itself more severely, there are a number of steps administrators can take for internal school support. This section will analyse mentorship support. Mentorship is often used as a strategy to support teachers as it can increase feelings of job satisfaction and reducing feelings of isolation experienced by teachers (Hellsten, 2009). This section will explore how the participants use teacher mentorship to support their staff.

With novice teachers in particular, Daniel finds that assigning a mentor to these staff can prove to alleviate stress. Often, Daniel arranges to converse with staff that are facing stresses, particularly if they are within their first five years of teaching. From there, he can establish the best possible mentor for the teacher, especially whether mentorship will be formal or informal.

Chris has similar experience using internal school supports to assist staff. With regards to mentors, he seeks out a seasoned teacher to guide a more novice or struggling teacher. He advises that teachers are connected with mentors who do not have the same teaching style: “You [already] know what you know, so find someone who can teach you differently.” Through technology, Chris also encourages staff to team teach and share resources electronically. This can also alleviate stresses related to curriculum and lesson delivery.

Mentorship is an important aspect to relieve teacher stress in areas of classroom confidence. Salinitri (2005) assesses that mentorship creates a meaningful relationship focused on mutual learning. Daniel and Chris’ use of mentors fostered a collegial environment within their schools. Mentors are also tasked with both professional and emotional support of their colleague (Hellsten, 2009). As Chris mentioned, he also encouraged staff to do professional
resource sharing among one another. Beyond emotional support, this method also opened up resources to novice staff. Further, the participants were active in assessing the type of mentor needed for their staff. Hellsten (2009) stipulates “the roles, knowledge, and skills associated with being a mentor range from informal colleague to trained, knowledgeable advisor” (p.707). As displayed with Daniel and Chris, the school administrators in conjunction with the teachers would assess the type of support needed within the school. There are also supports and resources that administrators refer to outside of the realm of their school. This facet will be examined in the following section.

4.3.2 External School Support

There are many instances where the occupational stresses that teachers face are referred to external school supports as a reactionary measure. External school supports will be displayed with a lens on education policy and school board initiatives in place to support teachers.

Among all possible efforts to establish proactive measures in the workplace to support occupational wellbeing, Daniel has often turned to education policy and board initiatives to further assist his staff. This support often begins as contacting the school board for advisement on how to handle a situation among staff. It can further manifest itself with staff being directed at board initiatives to support occupational wellbeing, from an Employee Assistance program to policies that can further aid teachers. Daniel makes reference to a situation in which he mediated an issue among staff through the mandated workplace harassment policy. Here, Daniel went beyond the scope of internal school support to refer to board level policies and resources. He found that once going through these processes staff are usually satisfied and reported feeling supported through their issue, whether personal or professional.
Regarding external school support for teachers, Chris has also referred teachers to board level support services. He stipulates that he is primarily responsible for a teachers professional wellbeing, in that he will refer staff to the Employee Assistance program for personal counseling if needed. As for truly being reactive when dealing with teacher wellness, Chris believes there is more improvement to be made with respect to external supports. Chris advocates for a wellness centre, in that the school boards, Ministry of Education and teacher unions come together to provide a wellness centre. This centre would focus on professional development with exemplary teachers, and also provide teachers the opportunity to regain the skills and perspective needed to be a successful and mentally well teacher.

Once stress has manifested itself, administrators turn to external school supports. These supports include school board initiatives and policies. Kyriacou (2001) assesses that these strategies are important management considerations to lessen feelings of stress in a palliative manner. Similar to Employee Assistance, Kyriacou (2001) studied the success of “Teacherline,” (p.31) a telecommunication service for the stresses that teachers face. With regards to Chris’ call for improvement in the realm of teacher wellness, Laurzon (2004) further asserts that it is a challenge to “legitimize teacher wellness so that administrators, teacher unions and association leaders, and teachers embrace the concept of wellness within the education system.” (p. 149).

Despite positive responses that Daniel experienced from external support referral, areas concerning occupational wellbeing can always be improved. Reactionary measures for teacher occupational stress are explored in two streams, from internal to external support. Within internal school support staff mentorship is used to support teachers who are struggling in their classrooms. External staff support refers to policy and school board initiatives that administrators refer teachers for stress aid.
4.4. Conclusion

This chapter reported and discussed my research findings in relation to my research questions with regards to the role of the principals in supporting teachers through occupational stress. Each section referenced participant voices in relation to the literature. The chapter was organized based on themes of how occupational stress manifests itself, followed by proactive leadership strategies and reactionary leadership support. Each theme was divided among several sub-themes that assisted in the analysis. With regards to how occupational stress manifests itself, I further explored the role of school principals followed by their assessment of stress among staff. Continuing with proactive leadership strategies, this section explored communication among administrators and staff, as well as establishing a school culture and professional development. The last theme, focused on reactionary support measures, explored internal school support for teachers through mentorship, followed by external stress support. External stress support was maintained through school board initiatives and province-wide employment policies. Going forward, chapter 5 will discuss the implications of my findings and where further research can be continued.
Chapter 5: IMPLICATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This study sought to address how school administrators support the wellbeing of their teaching staff in an effort to curb teacher occupational stress. This administrative lens offers insight from a perspective of school leadership and how principals can be a significant aid or barrier to teacher occupational wellbeing. When I initially began this research, I was interested in exploring teacher wellness in relation to occupational burnout. Upon exploring the literature, I discovered that there has been extensive research on teacher mental health stemming from the 1970s, although not specifically on the relation of school administration and these stressors. In areas related to school leadership, this study shifted toward a bridge between teacher wellness in relation to administrative support.

To recapitulate, I interview two principals (with the pseudonyms Daniel and Chris) to understand their professional experiences within the schools they manage. Both participants are from elementary schools spanning from k-8 in the Toronto District School Board. Their experiences, analysed alongside the literature review, finds three notable themes. The first theme looked at how occupational stress manifests itself in conjunction with the role of school leadership, the second theme focused on proactive leadership strategies and the third theme was reactionary leadership support.

This chapter will begin by assessing the findings with the literature to further draw attention to key ideas from the study. Following, I will present broad implications of the findings for the educational community as well as display what these implications reflexively mean as a pre-service teacher candidate. I will finish by sharing recommendations from the study, followed areas for further research.
5.1 Overview of Key Findings

Upon exploring how administrators support teacher occupational wellbeing, three significant themes have surfaced from the data. The first theme explored how occupational stress manifests itself in conjunction with the role of school leadership, followed by proactive leadership strategies and reactionary leadership support.

The first theme explores how administrators perceive stress and their role as the leaders in the school in response to these stresses. The participants, who are principals themselves, were asked to consider their own perceptions and experiences of teacher stress. They both asserted that although stress is personal (concerning matters not related to work as teachers) stress can often manifest in the teacher occupational setting. These triggers, which were also found in research, include: lack of administrative support, classroom management, and lack of curriculum and lesson delivery understanding, to name a few (Kyriacou, 1987). Specific to administrative causes of stress, Change (2009) asserts that administrative demands, externally mandated change or reformation, and conflicts between their teaching goals and the expectations from school administration can aid in a disconnect between staff and their principal. The participants shared similar experiences with stress related to their relationship with their school administrators. I found it particularly important for the participants to reflect on their own novice teaching experiences to consider how these stresses have altered for their staff and what strategies they implore when current stressful situations arise among their staff.

With regards to how the participants perceive their role in the school, both are adamant that student success is their main priority. Student achievement has a direct connection to teacher well being. Both the participants and the research align in agreement in so far to say that students are more likely to achieve with a teacher who is in a healthy and positive state of mind than with
a teacher facing occupational stress and burnout (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). One of the participants, Chris, states this more bluntly, “A year with a terrible teacher is a year wasted.” Although this statement may sound harsh, I find it depicts the clear need for why administrators must make teacher wellness a pressing priority in their schools. Going forward, I will discuss the proactive strategies already in place by the participants in conjunction with how they align with the literature.

The next theme explores proactive strategies that administrators use to ensure teacher wellness in their schools. The first proactive strategy is communication between the administration and the teachers in establishing a rapport and fostering an authentic classroom presence. The second proactive strategy is building a foundation of culture management within the school. Regarding communication, both participants advocate for building a rapport among staff and establishing moments for genuine communication where staff can open up about any concerns. Grayson & Alvarez (2008) finds that teacher burnout declined in schools where teachers feel they can disclose their stress to administration. They also acknowledged that since stress is personal, some staff may not wish to engage in communication initiatives brought forth by the administration. At minimum, Daniel makes it clear that professionalism and job expectations as per the Education Act must be maintained.

The next proactive strategy in line with communication is regular classroom visits by administrators. The participants made it part of their routines to visit classrooms throughout the day. Here, the literature and the participants diverged on the merit of these visits. Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2007) assess teachers feel concerned their classroom autonomy is at risk when their administrators are surveying them. Alternatively, this presence would make administrators aware of their staff, students and their collective needs, which is how the participants perceive their
classroom involvement. Daniel makes his purpose clear: “I am not in classrooms inspecting” - but instead -“touching base with teachers and students in their classrooms.” Here, communication and overall trust among teachers and their administrators is key. When a collegial environment is established as opposed to a sense of hierarchy, staff are more willing to grow in commitment, professional involvement, and willingness to innovate themselves Marks & Printy (2003).

This next proactive strategy is known as culture management. Culture management can have a direct impact on a collegial environment within a school, which can inevitably alter stress levels for teachers. Daniel and Chris’ experiences in maintaining culture management align with the literature in the sense that as leaders, principals can serve to transform school cultures or to maintain them (Marks & Printy, 2003). The participants display the two ways that culture management tends to manifest itself, from transformation to being maintained. Daniel spoke on his experiences maintaining the social culture, where the staff are active in participating in social clubs and events. These initiatives generally allow for a more fun and stress relieving work environment. Alternatively, Chris shared his experiences attempting to alter his most recent school’s culture management, where he expressed challenges and resistance from more senior staff. The final proactive strategy concerns professional development, here the administrators used their professional foresight to target key issues in multiple workshop series.

The participants demonstrated their acknowledgment of the needs of their teachers with proactive workshops to enhance the professional development of their teaching staff. The data and research supports this initiative, as teachers at career frustration might return to enthusiastic and growing state if they engaged in professional development that was revitalizing (Chang, 2009). Professional development also targets key stresses that teachers may face, from
effectively using technology in the classroom to class management seminars. The proactive strategies in this study encompass authentic communication between teachers and the administration, where there is an established rapport. Further, and more contentious depending on the teacher’s needs, is when the administration has an authentic classroom presence. Culture management is also a significant proactive strategy in establishing a positive school culture, while using proactive foresight administrators are able to provide professional workshops to target key issues teachers face. In the following section, I will discuss the findings for the final theme, which explored reactionary strategies once stress manifests and impedes a teacher’s wellbeing.

The final theme of the study explores reactionary strategies that administrators use to assist teachers who are facing stress. These strategies were explored among two sub-themes, the first being internal school support through mentorship and the second being external education policy and school board initiatives. The data finds that with regards to internal school supports, the participants were active in assigning their teacher’s mentors to assist with various stresses. Daniel and Chris’ use of mentors fostered a collegial environment within their schools. As research shows, mentors are tasked with both professional and emotional support of their colleague (Hellsten, 2009). This support can alleviate stress that teachers face.

The second sub-theme explored external education policy and school board initiatives that administrators reference once stress has manifested among their staff. The data shows that the participants would suggest these methods to support teachers beyond the scope of what the school could offer. Here, the participants displayed experience referring staff to the Employee Assistance program for personal counseling if needed. As for truly being reactive when dealing with teacher wellness, Chris believes there is more improvement to be made with respect to
external supports. Chris advocates for a wellness centre, in that the school boards, Ministry of Education and teacher unions come together to provide a wellness centre. This centre would focus on professional development with exemplary teachers, and also provide teachers the opportunity to regain the skills and perspective needed to be a successful and mentally well teacher. Despite positive responses that Daniel experienced from external support referral, areas concerning occupational wellbeing can always be improved. Reactionary measures for teacher occupational stress are explored in two streams, from internal to external support. Within internal school support staff mentorship is used to support teachers who are struggling in their classrooms. External staff support refers to policy and school board initiatives that administrators refer teachers for stress aid.

This section displayed the findings for the study in addressing how administrators support teacher wellness. The data presented multiple methods that were outlined in the discussion of the findings. This explored themes of the role in the administration in relation to stress management, followed by proactive leadership strategies and reactionary leadership support. Each theme was divided among several sub-themes that assisted in the analysis. With regards to how occupational stress manifests itself, I further explored the role of school principals followed by their assessment of stress among staff. Continuing with proactive leadership strategies, this section explored communication among administrators and staff, as well as establishing a school culture and professional development. The last theme, focused on reactionary support measures, explored internal school support for teachers through mentorship, followed by external stress support. External stress support was maintained through school board initiatives and province-wide employment policies. The next section will assess the implications for these findings for the educational community as well as display what these implications reflexively mean as a pre-
service teacher candidate. I will finish by sharing recommendations from the study, followed by areas for further research.

5.2 Implications

5.2.1 Implications for the educational community

The findings for this study carry numerous implications that influence various stakeholders in the educational community. For the purposes of this study, I will refer to the administration, teachers, students, parents and the educational governing bodies as members of this community. This section will be structured by exploring each theme in conjunction to their implications for the applicable stakeholder. This study examined themes of the role in the administration in relation to stress management, followed by proactive leadership strategies and reactionary leadership support.

With regards to the role in the administration in relation to stress management, I initially began by asking the participants to consider causes of stress they faced as teachers as well as what stresses their current staff face. The implications for these considerations allowed the participants to be reflective in their choices as administrators. This is a far-reaching implication as it has allowed the participants to address issues differently than they may have experienced. For instance, Chris reflects about instances where he was given the “perception of support” from his administrators as opposed to tangible solutions. Going forward in his own practice, Chris ensures that he is considering the needs of his teachers with appropriate responses. This approach inevitable influences the well being of the teachers, which correlates to student success. This notion will be further explored in the following section.

The proactive measures that administrators use to diminish teacher occupation stress before it manifests are communication among staff, culture management, and professional
development. Regarding communication, once administrators establish a rapport among staff, the implications are significant. Research from the findings demonstrates that staff begin to trust their administrators more, thus enabling conversations about their personal stresses. This allows the administrators to work with the staff in finding solutions. Further, with an authentic classroom presence, administrators are able to witness areas first hand in where they can support teachers. Among teachers and administrators, students benefit from this communication, as solutions are more likely to manifest. A hieratical barrier gets diminished here, where a collegial relationship becomes established. This collegial relationship is further explored in areas of culture management.

Culture management has far-reaching implications for a school community. The school leaders inevitably set the tone for their school, and although they may face resistance initially, a positive school culture is incredibly impactful. Schools that have positive culture management open spaces for teachers to participate in a social culture. This creates spaces for teachers to enjoy their workplace outside of the classroom setting, and can influence the overall atmosphere that reaches students and parents in the school community.

Ongoing professional development is also impactful as a proactive leadership strategy. Here, the implications extend directly to the students as well. With their foresight and communication among teachers, administrators can assess what kinds of professional development their teachers need. This is also in conjunction with school board initiatives in ensuring their overall staff are well versed in certain areas (i.e. technology in-services). The implications of professional development create a more confident teacher, and students that reap the benefits of what the workshop offered their teacher. Going forward, I will examine the implications of reactionary strategies that administrators use to support teacher wellbeing.
Reactive leadership support encompasses how administrators assist their teaching staff with occupational stress once the stress has manifested towards burnout. The implications of these support strategies will be explored in the context of internal school support, with a focus on teacher mentorship. Following, the implications of external school supports will be displayed with a lens on education policy and school board initiatives in place to support teachers.

Regarding internal school support, teachers who are facing stress due to occupational demands (lesson delivery, class management, among others) are recommended a school mentor. These mentors are key in not only supporting teachers with technical aspects of their job, but also emotionally. Again, the stakeholders here encompass the students, teachers and the educational system. Although most mentors are from the same school, occasionally administrators reach out for external board mentors who assist teachers. Once a teacher is mentored, their quality of teaching can impact the success of their students.

External support strategies are the final sub-theme with significant implications for educational stakeholders. Here, specific province wide educational policies are in place with even more board specific initiatives to support teacher wellness. Such programs include Employee Assistance, where administrators refer staff if their stresses are beyond the scope of the other solutions outlined. Yet, the findings for this study also found that the educational system and school boards can always improve in their teacher wellness initiatives. This will be further discussed in the recommendations. The following section will examine the implications of this study as a pre-service teacher candidate.

**5.2.2 Implications as a pre-service teacher candidate**

As a pre-service teacher candidate, this study was fascinating to undertake for the purposes of my own teaching. It is often echoed in teacher education programs that teachers face
high a risk of burnout, especially as a novice teacher. This inevitably sparked my initial interest in this topic. After consolidating the research to understand how stress and burnout manifest in teachers, I was interested in the administrative lens in bridging teacher wellness with school leadership. As a future teacher, this study has offered implications on my perception of stress and tangible solutions to overcome stress.

As my participants stated in chapter 4, many teachers may not choose to engage with their administration and fellow staff in the workplace. The participants reflected that this might be a very isolating choice, as teaching is a profession where teachers are always learning and developing their craft. In this respect, as a future teacher I am open to establishing a rapport with not only administrative team, but my fellow colleagues. I am open to joining various clubs and activities established for teachers, understanding that these are in place to make the workplace more enjoyable. Further, I am eager to learn in professional development seminars where I can bring new ideas back to the classroom.

Regarding personal stress and occupational stress that may have become unmanageable, I believe a teacher should use their agency to make the board level, union level and ministry level resources available to them for further support. This may come in the form of Employee Assistance, or taking a personal leave. As a future teacher, I have come away from this study valuing the importance of teamwork in a school among the administration and colleagues. The rest of the chapter will provide recommendations from the study, as well as assess areas for further research.

5.3 Recommendations

This section will outline various recommendations that surfaced from this study. I will outline recommendations for each theme. This study examined themes of the role in the
administration in relation to stress management, followed by proactive leadership strategies and reactionary leadership support. To begin with the role of administrative support in relation to stress management, the following is recommended:

- Principals should be reflective on their own experiences to determine their approach in supporting their staff.

Proactive leadership strategy recommendations are as follows:

- Principals should make an authentic classroom presence part of their routine to avoid a “perception of support.” This would allow them to address issues that they witness and offer appropriate support.
- Principals should establish a clear vision for their school and ensure this vision is transparent to their teachers.
- Principals should open opportunities for a social culture within their school to create spaces for teachers to enjoy their job outside of the classroom.

Reactive leadership strategy recommendations are as follows:

- Principals should ensure staff are aware of the school board and provincial policies that support their wellbeing.
- Principals should gain access to more funding for professional development from the educational governing bodies.

Each recommendation offers solutions for each theme that can foster wellbeing within a school. The stakeholders from the educational community, from teachers to students, will have far-reaching effects with the recommendations. This study displayed that once a teacher is well supported, students benefit. These recommendations hope to outline further areas to improve to strive for well-supported teachers. The following section will explore areas for further research.
5.4 Areas for further research

This research paper displayed how administrators support teacher wellness. While doing so, new questions developed that are areas for further research. Educational researchers are encouraged to explore various aspects that this study did not fully examine, such as: culture management and leadership in a school, union barriers to fully establishing a collegial working relationship among teachers and administrators as opposed to hierarchal, and systematic barriers to increased wellness funding among schools. Even further, future research can also explore the stresses that administrators themselves face, which can in turn influence their teachers and students. Each of these areas are impactful in relation to how teachers and their administration work together in a school, which can trigger or alleviate occupational stress among teachers.

5.5 Conclusion

This qualitative research study examined how administrators support their teachers to maintain occupational wellness. There was a lens on school leadership throughout this study as I found it to be an underdeveloped area of the literature surrounding mental wellness and teaching. After consulting the literature and analyzing the data from my two participants, this study came to find three significant themes that address school leadership and occupational wellness among teachers. These broad themes were how administrators perceive stress and their role as the leaders in the school in response to these stresses followed by proactive leadership strategies and reactionary leadership support. Each theme was divided among several sub-themes that assisted in the analysis. With regards to how occupational stress manifests itself, I further explored the role of school principals followed by their assessment of stress among staff. Continuing with proactive leadership strategies, this section explored communication among administrators and staff, as well as establishing a school culture and professional development. The last theme,
focused on reactionary support measures, explored internal school support for teachers through mentorship, followed by external stress support. External stress support was maintained through school board initiatives and province-wide employment policies.

This research is significant as it suggests that a collegial working relationship among teachers and their administration foster a less stressful working environment for teachers. When communication opens between both parties, trust and a collegial relationship can manifest. The solutions presented in this chapter are important for school leaders to consider, as their role is essential in setting a positive tone for their school. Once this is in place by principals, teachers have a better experience at work and sense more support in various areas that may be potential stressors. When each stakeholder comes together, from the administration, to teachers, to the educational governing body, it can have far-reaching influences on where it matters most—the students.
References


Appendix A: CONSENT LETTER

Date:

Dear _______________________________,

My name is Stephanie Carnevale and I am a graduate student in the Master of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. My research will focus on how administrators support teacher wellness. I am interested in interviewing administrators who have demonstrated commitment to teacher wellness and support among their staff. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

Your participation in this research will involve one 45-60 minute interview, which will be transcribed and audio-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient for you, outside of school time. The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a research conference or publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity and I will not use your name or any other content that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information will remain confidential. This data will be stored on my password-protected computer and the only people who will have access to the research data will be my course instructor Dr. Angela MacDonald- Vemic. You are free to change your mind about your participation at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may also choose to decline to answer any specific question. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published, which may take up to a maximum of five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to participation, and I will share with you a copy of the transcript to ensure accuracy.

Please sign this consent form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. I am very grateful for your participation.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Carnevale
stephanie.carnevale@utoronto.ca

Course Instructor’s Name: Dr. Angela MacDonald- Vemic
Contact Info: angela.macdonald@utoronto.ca
Consent Form
I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by _____________ and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: _______________________________________

Name: (printed) ______________________________________________

Date: ______________________________________
Appendix B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Introduction:

Thank you for participating in this study. The research aims to learn about different initiatives administrators have taken to support teacher wellness. The interview should take approximately 30-45 minutes and I will ask you questions concerning your experience as an administrator and how you have displayed commitment to supporting your staff and maintaining teacher wellness. I want to remind you that you may refrain from answering any questions. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Section A- Background Information

1. What is your current position? How long have you been in this position?
2. How long were you a teacher?
3. What grades have you taught?
4. What made you want to take on an administrative role?
5. How long have you been in an administrative role?
6. Can you tell me about your school?
   a. What is the size of the school?
   b. How many students are there? What are the student demographics?
   c. How big is your teaching/support staff?
   d. What are some of the program priorities in your school?
7. As you know, I am interested in learning how administrators support teacher wellness. Before we speak more about that, can you tell me more about what experiences contributed to developing your interest and commitment to this area? *Listen and then probe as necessary re: personal, professional, and educational experiences.
a. Did you experience stress when you were teaching? What were some of the primary sources of stress that you experienced?
b. In what ways do you think these sources of stress are similar and different from the sources of stress experienced by teachers in your school?

Section B- Beliefs

8. How would you describe your role in the school? What do you consider to be your primary responsibilities?
9. What does “teacher wellness” mean to you?
10. In your experience, what have been some of the primary sources of stress experienced by teachers in your school? How do you know?
11. Do you find that novice teachers respond to stress differently than experienced staff?
12. What are some of the primary challenges that you believe teachers face in 21st century school contexts?
13. In your view, how do you prepare teachers for the stress that accompanies teaching? Can teachers be prepared?
14. What are some of the resources and supports available to teachers at the board level that you are aware of? To your knowledge, do teachers access these?
15. How well do you believe the school system does in supporting teacher mental health and well-being? How do you think it could strengthen its support?
16. How do you think students benefit from having a well supported teacher?

Section C- Practices

17. What do you do to support teacher wellness? Can you please give me some examples of the kinds of practices, policies, or programs that you implement to support teacher wellness?
18. How do you make teachers aware of the kinds of support that you have available to them?
19. How commonly do teachers access this support?
20. What outcomes have you observed from these kinds of supports?
21. Can you provide me an example of a practice, policy, or program that you have implemented and how teachers responded?
- What was the form of support?
- Who accessed this support?
- How did they respond to the support available?
- What outcomes did you observe?
- what resources were required to implement this support?

Section D- Supports and Challenges

22. What range of factors and resources help you support teacher wellness for your teachers?  
23. What challenges, if any, do you encounter in this work? How do you respond to these challenges? How might the education system further support you in meeting these challenges?

Section E- Next Steps

24. What goals do you have in terms of supporting teacher wellness in your school?  
25. What advice, if any, do you have for beginning teachers about how to cope with the stress that accompanies the teaching profession?

Thank you for your time and participation.