Teacher Stress & Mental Health

Barb VanDoorn, 4K-12 School Counselor, Lake Holcombe School
Lake Holcombe School
Single 4K-12 building
Enrollment- 310

Holcombe, WI
Unincorporated

“Two bars and a gas station”
Fact: 1 in 5 children ages 13-18 have, or will have a serious mental illness.¹

- 20% of youth ages 13-18 live with a mental health condition²
- 11% of youth have a mood disorder¹
- 10% of youth have a behavior or conduct disorder¹
- 8% of youth have an anxiety disorder¹

Impact

- 50% of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14 and 75% by age 24.¹
- The average delay between onset of symptoms and intervention is 8-10 years.¹

Suicide

- 3rd Suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death in youth ages 10-24.¹

Nami (National Alliance on Mental Illness), 2015
What do we know about Wisconsin’s kids?

For 9-17 year olds:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental Health Issue</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have a diagnosable mental health issue</td>
<td>1 in 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have experienced depression</td>
<td>1 in 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(50% depressed at least 1 day a month)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have seriously considered suicide</td>
<td>1 in 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*2017 Data from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Wisconsin Office on Children’s Mental Health*
Mental Health Facts in America

Fact: 43.8 million adults experience mental illness in a given year.

1 in 5 adults in America experience a mental illness.

Nearly 1 in 25 (10 million) adults in America live with a serious mental illness.

-$193 billion serious mental illness costs America every year.

Impact

40% of employees with a mental illness take time off because of it—up to 10 days a year.

1st

Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide, and is a major contributor to the global burden of disease.

Mental Health by the Numbers; NAMI, 2015
Teachers aren’t immune to mental health concerns

46% of teachers report high daily stress during the year.

Teachers, Stress, and Health, Penn State and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2016
The Quality of Worklife Survey
30,000 teachers surveyed in 2015 in the United States.

How often do you find your work stressful?

- Often: 73%
- Sometimes: 24%
- Rarely: 3%
- Never: 0%
The job of principal is becoming more complex and stressful.

- Three-quarters (75%) of principals feel the job has become too complex.
- Seven in 10 (69%) principals say the job responsibilities are not very similar to five years ago.
- Job satisfaction among principals has decreased nine percentage points in less than five years, to 59% very satisfied from 68% very satisfied in 2008.
- Half (48%) of principals feel under great stress several days a week. Only about four in 10 principals say they have a great deal of control over curriculum and instruction (42%), and making decisions about removing teachers (43%).

Metlife Survey of the American Teacher, 2012
What is stress

"the brain's response to any demand"

The National Institute of Mental Health

Stress becomes harmful depending on its intensity, duration, and what protective factors are in place.

"when risk factors exceed protective factors"
Your brain’s response to stress

1. PERCEIVED THREAT

2. AMYGDALA
   Perceives a threat, triggers a response before we have a chance to process whether the threat is real.

3. HIPPOCAMPUS
   Regulates emotion and memory.

4. PREFRONTAL CORTEX
   Under stress, this region shuts down. Responsible for planning complex cognitive behaviors, decision making, moderating social behavior.
Today’s stress is constant

Stress becomes a *mental health concern* when *intensity* is heightened, *duration* is sustained, and *protective factors* are insufficient to deal with the situation.
Modern day stress response...

Fight

Flight

Freeze
What do we know about teacher stress and educator mental health?

And why does it matter?
Center for Education Policy, George Washington University

May 2016
3300 teachers surveyed; 67 questions
Listen to Us: Teacher Views & Voice
Most significant reasons why teachers joined the profession

- To make a difference in students' lives: 68%
- To help students reach their full potential: 45%
- A teacher inspired me when I was young: 37%
- To be a part of those “aha” moments when things just click for a student: 32%
- To share my enthusiasm for the subject I teach: 31%
- To make a difference in the larger community: 24%
- To have a good work/family balance: 15%
- To have a non-traditional work schedule (e.g., summers off): 7%
- Because it was a profession where jobs were available: 5%
- To make a difference in my school: 3%
- For the earning potential: 1%
Listen to Us: Teacher Views & Voice
Teacher Perceptions of their school, colleagues, & job

- The teachers at this school like being here:
  - I would describe us as a satisfied group: 64% agree, 36% disagree
  - I like the way things are run at this school: 60% agree, 40% disagree

- I don’t seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began teaching: 60% agree, 41% disagree

- The stress and disappointments involved in teaching at this school aren’t really worth it: 49% agree, 51% disagree

- If I could get a higher paying job, I’d leave teaching as soon as possible: 49% agree, 52% disagree

- I think about transferring to another school: 44% agree, 57% disagree

- I think about staying home from school because I am just too tired to go: 42% agree, 58% disagree

[Bars showing percentages for strongly or somewhat agree and strongly or somewhat disagree]
### Most significant challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges from systemic factors</th>
<th>Percentage of all teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State or district policies that get in the way of teaching</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constantly changing demands placed on teachers</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constantly changing demands placed on students</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges within the school</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managing student behavior</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing the needs of economically disadvantaged students</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large class sizes</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of sufficient time for teachers to collaborate with each other</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of sufficient instructional time for students</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of supportive leadership in my school</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of supplemental academic support for struggling students</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for more parent-teacher collaboration</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsafe working conditions</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges related to the profession</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My limited earning potential</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of career ladder/opportunity to advance in profession</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of sufficient professional development to ensure my growth</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A: I don't face challenges as a teacher</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Listen to Us: Teacher Views & Voice

Biggest challenge with economically disadvantaged

Figure 1-B. Biggest challenges in educating economically disadvantaged children

- Emotional needs: 42%
- Academic needs: 40%
- Social needs: 18%

Figure reads: Of the public school teachers who selected “addressing the needs of economically disadvantaged students” as one of their top teaching challenges, an estimated 42% considered the emotional needs of these students as the most challenging need.
### Listen to Us: Teacher Views & Voice

When teachers feel they are being heard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Percentage of teachers who feel their opinion IS heard at the school level and strongly or somewhat agree with the statement</th>
<th>Percentage of teachers who feel their opinion IS NOT heard at the school level and strongly or somewhat agree with the statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like the way things are run at this school</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teachers at this school like being here; I would describe us as a satisfied group</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began teaching</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I could get a higher paying job, I'd leave teaching as soon as possible</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think about staying home from school because I am just too tired to go</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The stress and disappointments involved in teaching at this school aren't really worth it</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think about transferring to another school</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Listen to Us: Teacher Views & Voice

Summary of findings:

- Half or more indicated decreased enthusiasm, high stress, and a desire to leave the profession.

- Most notable stressors:
  - Changing demands
  - Focus on testing
  - Lack of teacher voice

“Forces outside of teachers’ control may be taxing their good will and dedication.”
Wisconsin Educator Survey
August-September 2017
11,000 respondents

PURPOSE: “to gain deeper knowledge of the workforce issues facing Wisconsin schools”
### Wisconsin Educator Survey

**Have you given serious thought to leaving your school/district?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage seriously thought about leaving district</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Service Professionals</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Wisconsin Educator Survey

**If yes, what is the biggest reason you are considering leaving?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers- reason to consider leaving</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Suburban</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student behavior</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient class room support</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling overwhelmed</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient pay</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much paperwork</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of the above (+- one reason)</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Wisconsin Educator Survey

*Have you seriously thought of leaving the profession?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serious thought to leaving the profession</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Services Professionals</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teachers by years of service who have seriously considered leaving the profession

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers by years of service, considered leaving</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 years</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20 years</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Wisconsin Educator Survey

*If yes to leaving the profession, what would convince you to stay?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers, would convince to stay</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Suburban</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More effective leadership</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better school climate</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better control of student behavior</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More classroom supports</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better pay</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with work/life balance</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More respect</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less conflict with parents</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of the above</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Wisconsin Educator Survey

**How would you describe the leadership structure of your district?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Suburban</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrators</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top down</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>53.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributed</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pupil Services Professionals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top down</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>73.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributed</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top down</td>
<td>72.9</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributed</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wisconsin Educator Survey

Factors that impact educator mental health:
• Lack of decision making
• Feeling overwhelming
• Climate, student behavior, lack of support

**Stress**—when risk factors exceed protective factors  
**Mental health concern**—when your ability to live, work, and have satisfying relationships is compromised.
Teacher Stress and Health
The effects on teachers, students, and schools.

Negative Consequences of Teacher Stress

1. When teachers are highly stressed, students suffer socially & academically
2. Leads to teacher turnover and financial cost (Rural- $4000; Urban $17,000 annually per district)
3. Turnover affects student math & language arts scores, especially for low income students.
Impact on Rural Schools
2017 Rural Wisconsin

• 1 in 4 teachers have fewer than 5 years experience
• Less able to afford more pay to retain teachers
• Rural schools are used to gain experience & move to higher paying districts

CNN Money Report, December 2017
How we’ve addressed teacher stress in the past

Suggestions in the 1990s:*  
- Adjust your diet  
- Exercise  
- Relaxation techniques  
- Develop a support network  
- Take breaks; don’t take work home with you

Today, teachers are still told to rely on self-help

Self care but can’t fix everything
Educator stress and mental health needs to be addressed systemically.

"Since we initiated regular staff development sessions, we’ve turned the school around 360 degrees."
Teacher Stress and Health  The effects on teachers, students, and schools.
1. School Organizations that lack strong principal leadership, a healthy school climate and a collegial, supportive environment.

Source of stress:

Suggestions to decrease stress:

- Focus on climate
- Mentor & induction programs
- “Leading for Learning” (strong principal leadership)
Source of stress:

2. Job Demands that are escalating.

Suggestions to decrease stress:

- Strategic Abandonment
- Rule of Three
Initiative Overload

Initiatives at our schools:
- PBIS
- RtI
- UDL
- ACP
- MHFA
- SBIRT
- SEL
- TSS
- ESY
- BIP
- LLI
- SLO
- PPG
- EE
- SPO
- AODA
- BAB
- After School
- Summer School
- TLA

Solution: Strategic Abandonment
Practice Strategic Abandonment to avoid....

Remember...

The Rule of Three
Source of stress:

2. Job Demands that are escalating.

Suggestions to decrease stress:

- Strategic Abandonment
- Rule of Three
- No fidelity shaming
- “Improvise, adapt, overcome”
“The perfect storm of occupational stress appears to be a combination of two malignant facts:
• a great deal is expected of you and
• you have no control over whether you will perform well.”

*Brain Rules*, by John Medina, 2009
3. Work Resources that limit a teacher’s sense of autonomy and decision-making power.

Suggestions to decrease stress:

- PLCs that allow autonomy
- Teach to Lead Summits
- Putting staff in leadership roles
Source of stress:

4. Teacher Social and Emotional Competence to manage stress and nurture a healthy classroom.

Suggestions to decrease stress:

- SEL programs
- Promote supportive mental health practices
De-stressing Rule of Three:

1. Simplify (Strategic Abandonment)
2. Teacher Voice
3. Supportive Climate
“Today, teaching is one of the most stressful occupations in the U.S. High levels of stress are affecting teacher health and well-being, causing teacher burnout, lack of engagement, job dissatisfaction, poor performance, and some of the highest turnover rates ever.”
Our teachers’ work environment is our students’ learning environment.
Thank you!
Bibliography

Center on Educational Policy, *Listen to Us: Teacher Views and Voices*. May 2016.


