

**TEACHER SELF-CARE: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE
EFFECTS OF TEACHER STRESS LEVELS**

LACEY KELLY

A Project

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies,
Concordia University of Edmonton

in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree

Master of Education

**Concordia University of Edmonton
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

Edmonton, Alberta

**TEACHER SELF-CARE: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE
EFFECTS OF TEACHER STRESS LEVELS**

LACEY KELLY

Approved:

Supervisor: Brent Bradford, PhD

Date

Second Reader: Simmee Chung, PhD

Date

Dean of Graduate Studies: Patrick Kamau, PhD

Date

DEDICATION

This research study is dedicated to educators
putting their heart and soul into teaching,
while the days can overwhelm, may you find your light
by showing love to yourself and making 'you' a priority.

“Be you, love you. All ways, always.”
~ Alexandra Elle

*“I lied and said I was busy.
I was busy;
but not in a way most people understand.*

*I was busy taking deeper breaths.
I was busy silencing irrational thoughts.
I was busy calming a racing heart.
I was busy telling myself I am okay.*

*Sometimes, this is my busy -
and I will not apologize for it.”*
~ Brittin Oakman

“We’re all just walking each other home.”
~ Ram Dass

Abstract

In the profession of teaching, there are unique challenges due to the high stress, emotional exhaustion, and difficulty of work-life balance. Therefore, maintaining balanced wellness is a struggle many teachers face; imbalances can result in increased stress levels, and in many cases burnout. The self-care strategies we practice in our daily lives influence how we cope with stress both in the moment and in the long-term. This research study investigated how self-care strategies within the six dimensions of wellness impact teacher stress levels. Employing a mixed-methods research approach, educator respondents (n=34) completed a quantitative survey reporting stress levels and self-care strategies that are valued as well as how often they are practiced. The data identified areas of wellness that teachers value as most important, the positive strategies teachers are employing, and areas where there is a disconnect between the value and practice of self-care strategies. Following an initial analysis of the results, qualitative data was collected through interviews allowing deeper exploration into the dimensions of wellness. After analysis of the data, themes emerged indicating the need for reflection as part of wellness practice, as well as support in the areas of emotional and physical wellness. Results of the study can be employed to support future wellness programming.

Keywords: teacher wellness/well-being; dimensions of wellness; stress; burnout

Acknowledgements

To my family, thank you for putting up with the long hours and always being supportive of my journey and encouraging me to grow.

To my future husband, Adam, thank you for being there, all the little things you did helped me through those long days. I appreciate your patience and belief in me.

To my master's cohort, Norma, Jenna, Adam, and Brenda, your friendship and support has been a lifeline during this journey helping me to just 'keep on swimming.'

To my supervisor, Dr. Brent Bradford, thank you for your ongoing encouragement and patience, your words were empowering and helped me grow. You have been an inspiration for my research to continue to help educators.

To the inspiring female professors, Dr. Simmee Chung, Dr. Heather Raymond, and Dr. Muna Saleh, your powerful narratives have been an inspiration and taught me the power of story.

To Ryan, my cheerleader and guardian angel, always.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Inspiration for my Research	1
Need for Research	5
Purpose of the Research Project.....	6
Research Questions	7
Significance of the Research Project.....	7
Review of Related Literature	8
History of Wellness	9
Shift From Health to Wellness	150
Importance of Teacher Wellness	15
Strategies for Supporting Teacher Wellness	19
Teacher and School Wellness Programs	25
Summary of Review of Related Literature.....	30
Methodology.....	32
Research Participants.....	333
Research Instrument	34
Summary of Procedures	35
Data Analysis.....	36
Methods Triangulation	38

Ethical Credibility	399
Validity of Results.....	39
Findings.....	40
Phase 1: Online Survey	40
Phase 2: Semi-Structured 1-on-1 Telephone Interview.....	50
Discussion.....	55
Recommendations for Supporting Teacher Wellness.....	61
Limitations	64
Suggestions for Future Research	65
Concluding Thoughts.....	66
References.....	68
Appendices.....	76
A: Letters of Consent.....	76
B: Online Survey	82
C: Semi-Structured 1-on-1 Telephone Interview Protocol.....	94

List of Tables

Table

1: The Six Dimensions of Wellness	14
2: Four Components of Comprehensive School Health (CSH).....	29

List of Figures

Figure

1: Research Context	9
2: Comprehensive School Health Framework	27
3: Physical Wellness Strategies	43
4: Social Wellness Strategies	44
5: Emotional Wellness Strategies	45
6: Spiritual Wellness Strategies	46
7: Intellectual Wellness Strategies	47
8: Occupational Wellness Strategies.....	48
9: Self-Care Strategies by Importance	49

Introduction

The shift from health to wellness recognizes that everything we surround ourselves with impacts our well-being; we must practice self-awareness of the things we allow to enter into our lives because it all directly influences our internal balance. Achieving wellness means finding balance in the many dimensions of a person's being and taking care of one's self. Self-care is a topic that requires additional research attention, particularly focusing on high stress work environments like teaching in today's schools. My research, therefore, aims to explore how teachers practice self-care in order to better understand how to combat the stress teachers experience. By learning more about teachers' self-care and the impact it has on their overall well-being, connections can be made to help support teachers deal with the daily stressors that impact their wellness. Indirectly, my research aspires to open the lines of communication for dealing with stress in a profession that can often feel isolating. I aim to help change the stigma that practicing self-care is selfish, when in fact, it promotes wellness and can enhance teacher effectiveness and improve student achievement (Eva & Thayer, 2017).

Inspiration for my Research

The profession of teaching is a calling that offers a unique opportunity to make a difference in the lives of children and youth. With this great responsibility comes evolving challenges and high daily stressors that nearly half of teachers experience. Thus, stressors negatively affect the health and well-being of both teachers and students (Greenberg et al., 2016). Stress and burnout impact new and experienced teachers alike. The pressure on early career teachers causes an astounding 40% to leave the profession in the first five years (Clandinin et al., 2013). Even expert teachers experience higher than

average levels of stress and burnout, leading to health concerns, reduced teaching effectiveness, and medical leaves.

When I began my teaching career, my experience was no different; the hours were long and the stressors seemed challenging and never-ending. Teaching, marriage, family, friends, taking care of a house and more all formed the pieces in my life that fought for top priority. However, my well-being was never on that list. My own health and happiness seemed to not be a priority. I was unhappy, overweight, and for the first time was experiencing health issues that my doctor could not explain. Then, in my second year of teaching, I lost my husband. At the age of 32, my healthy, active, vibrant husband succumbed to a brain aneurysm while playing hockey. My world fell apart and I sunk to a dark and cloudy place. Dealing with the stress in both my personal and work life became insurmountable. Some days I would choose to be consumed by my work as a distraction by staying late and going above and beyond for my students. However, there were days I was not mentally well and I could not be fully present for my students, and I developed a deep sense of guilt that led me to believe that I was letting them down.

With the sudden loss of my husband, I felt as though I had broken into pieces and I had to work each day to help put myself back together and improve my health and well-being. As this happened, I realized I was not the same person anymore. In my pursuit of figuring out this new version of myself, I turned to physical activity as my outlet. This was the beginning of a healthier, stronger, more confident 'me.' Taking control of my physical wellness helped me immensely. However, I began to realize it was not enough, there were other aspects of my well-being that desperately needed nurturing. With deep reflection and trial-and-error of a myriad of strategies, it was not until I nurtured my

emotional well-being that the dark cloud inside of me slowly began to lift. I had not realized the disrepair my other dimensions of wellness had been in. Little by little, I began to make changes that I so desperately needed. It was not until I paid close attention to these other aspects of my wellness that I truly felt my anxiety begin to ease and find content.

Although society stresses the importance of finding work-life balance, I came to realize that the delicate balance of our lives involves many other dimensions. As I learn more about Indigenous teachings, I realize the importance of balance in the world around us. During the EDUC 626 Leadership in Curriculum and Instruction course, Elder Phillip Campiou (Driftpile First Nation, lives in Edmonton, Alberta, personal communication, October 3, 2020) shared with us the teaching of the Medicine Wheel. Elder Phillip shared the importance of connecting our mind, body, and spirit to bring balance to be one.¹ Through these teachings, I am learning that within ourselves lies a delicate web where the world in and around us are all intricately connected. Pulling in one direction impacts the entire web. Healing requires harmony among each piece. Evidently, finding harmony between the different dimensions of wellness was the key I had been searching for, and it unlocked a world where there was happiness and possibility again.

Trying to find balance in my wellness while managing the stressful workload of teaching was particularly challenging. The endless workload of teachers comes from a place of love, and there seems to always be more you can do for your students. We want to provide the best for our students, to be everything they need: teacher, coach, social

¹ Elder Phillip Campiou is a Traditional Woodland Cree who is originally from Driftpile First Nation, Alberta. Elder Phillip is actively involved in teaching holistic approaches to health and healing. He is also a member of CUE's Faculty of Education's Nechiyawak's Advisory Council to support the braided approach.

worker, nurse, librarian, tutor, and in some cases even parent. However, we cannot wear these different hats for every student, every day and still have space for everything else that is required in our lives. Through my research, readings, and conversations with teachers, I have come to realize that many experience this feeling of guilt and unease, constantly worrying that not enough is being done for students. And, I have found that this feeling of guilt and unease adds directly to the stress and imbalance of health and well-being that so many teachers experience, while they aim to fulfill their occupation's roles and responsibilities alongside their personal and other required duties in life (e.g., family, finances).

Teaching is a nurturing profession where students and families are at the forefront of teachers' minds. Prioritizing ourselves and practicing self-care is often overlooked by teachers, adding to the stress and burnout. As Carrington (2018) advocated, "if teachers feel unsupported, misunderstood, unappreciated and empty, they will have little capacity to help those they teach and care for every day" (para. 4). A teacher that takes care of one's self will be better able to support students and create a positive learning environment. Throughout this research project that I conducted as part of my Master of Education degree, I aimed to explore self-care strategies valued and practiced by teachers in order to identify which supports have the greatest impact to help teachers manage stress and balance their well-being. My ultimate hope is to help others reflect on their wellness to find balance in the complex web that is the life of a teacher. It took time for me to figure out how to seek help and start the reflection process to make space for my own well-being as a priority. Hence, I aim to help other teachers on their journey of self-reflection and wellness.

Need for Research

Finding wellness in my life has been an ongoing journey, throughout my teaching career I have witnessed many teachers with similar struggles coping with stress and trying to find balance between work and life. With exploration of the topic during my graduate studies (e.g., courses, discussions, readings), I noticed there is minimal research on teacher wellness in the area of self-care practices related to stress reduction. The focus of wellness research in schools is primarily about student health and wellness. The limited body of research on teacher wellness is centered around targeted programs for staff, rather than self-care practices and strategies. While these programs may have success, they overlook what teachers are already doing for their wellness (i.e., self-care strategies). By analyzing the positive self-care strategies teachers value and practice regularly, there is potential to build on their current self-care regimen in order to combat stress. This gap in research fails to identify and build on the positive aspects of an individual's health and wellness.

The wellness programs provided by most Alberta schools/districts provide minimal support that typically consists of health benefits, a limited number of counselling sessions, and online resources. Wellness programming deserves more attention in the research community. This research project has the potential to help increase awareness of the need for comprehensive wellness programs in schools. That said, teachers have an obligation to students no matter the state of their well-being. If we can provide support for teacher wellness, we will have more equipped teachers that are able and positioned to manage their stress while being fully present for their students. Overall, this research

topic is worthy of attention as further research in this area can lead to improved teacher and student wellness.

Purpose of the Research Project

The purpose of this research project was to investigate how self-care strategies within the six dimensions of wellness impact teacher stress levels. A better understanding of teacher self-care and stress can inform teachers about how self-care strategies may help them to better cope with stress.

While my own experiences seeking well-being is unique, the dimensions of wellness are universal. I was curious to learn more about the experiences of others to discover commonalities that could improve overall teacher wellness. There are many facets of well-being to consider. For myself, certain aspects had a greater impact than others. However, building awareness and committing to making change were most important. Although it is difficult to ascertain what areas will be important for others, I predict that targeting some dimensions will be universal to improving teacher wellness. Key factors will likely include practicing self-care that targets individual needs, building self-awareness, learning coping methods for stress, and taking part in collaborative teaching support networks.

Exploring well-being requires sharing personal details and thinking deeply about our successes, as well as our short-comings. Lack of self-awareness will likely be the most difficult barrier to overcome. Other potential difficulties include varying support needs depending on the point in a teacher's career, life experiences, and ability to handle stress. While different levels of teaching and life experiences may make finding commonalities more difficult, exploring wellness of teachers at all stages will add

richness and complexity to the research findings. In order to be fully present for students as caring and effective educators, teacher well-being must be, and remain, a priority.

Research Questions

This research project was guided by a general question:

What self-care strategies are valued and practiced by teachers, and how do they impact stress?

Given this general question, sub-questions were broken down into individual self-care strategies within each of the six dimensions of wellness (i.e., physical wellness, emotional wellness, social wellness, intellectual wellness, spiritual wellness, occupational wellness):

- a. *Rate the importance of each self-care strategy relative to your own personal wellness...*
- b. *On average, how much time do you spend weekly on each of the following self-care strategies?*
- c. *How would you rate your current level of stress? (Likert 4-point scale from low=1 to high=4)*
- d. *In the last month, have you experienced high levels of stress that have impacted your daily life (e.g., difficulty sleeping, worrying)? (Yes or No)*

Significance of the Research Project

The significance of this research project was to add to the domain of teacher wellness research, specifically how self-care impacts stress levels and how to employ this knowledge-base to improve wellness programming in schools. With the addition of this valuable data, this research project was necessary and beneficial for multiple stakeholders

including teachers, students, policy-makers, and communities. This information will be particularly relevant for teacher-leaders and school divisions in supporting teacher wellness and developing future health and wellness programming.

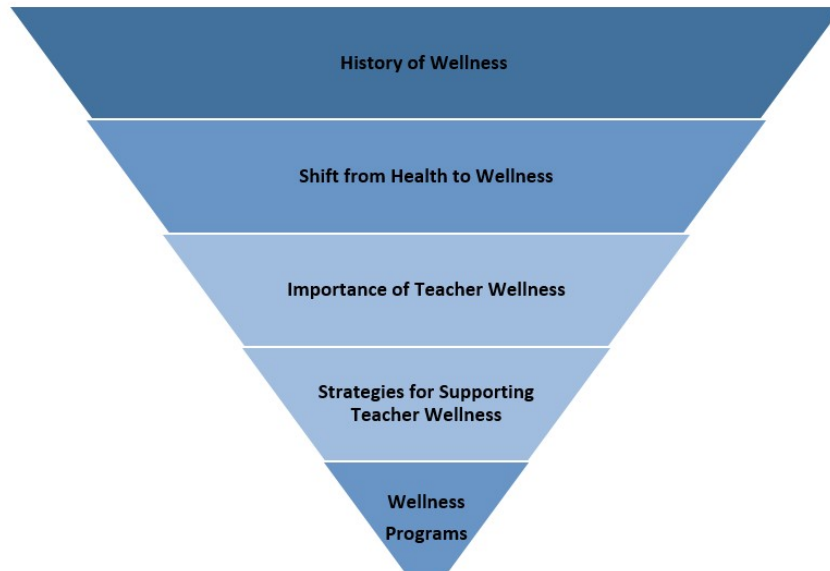
Teachers will be able to employ the results to reflect on their wellness and initiate dialogue with colleagues about supporting wellness as a team. This research project will also assist teachers in understanding and implementing health and wellness strategies with students. As teachers reflect on their own self-care, they will be better equipped to teach them to students, in turn improving the overall health and wellness of the school community. These benefits, along with those outlined in subsequent sections, have the potential to improve awareness and practice of self-care strategies to combat teacher stress.

Review of Related Literature

The review of related literature explores a variety of connected topic areas leading to this research project's central focus (see Figure 1). To begin, I delve into the history of wellness. Second, the shift from health to wellness is covered followed by a discussion on the importance of teacher wellness. Fourth, I describe strategies for supporting teacher wellness, and follow that section by exploring suitable teacher and school wellness programs. A summary of the findings and recommendations found throughout the review of related literature concludes this section.

Figure 1

Research Context



History of Wellness

The idea of wellness dates to ancient times in India, China, and Greece. In India, a holistic approach to health originated around 3000-1500 BC in the practice of Ayurveda in which, “perfect health is defined as a balance between body, mind, spirit, and social well-being” (University of Minnesota, 2016). Ayurveda is still the prevalent model for health care in India and is practiced around the world through meditation. Since 3000-2000 BC, Traditional Chinese Medicine has been rooted in finding harmony to achieve health and well-being (Global Wellness Institute, n.d.). Pieces are seen in modern practices including acupuncture, tai chi, and herbal medicine. The Olympic Games began as a celebration of healthy regimens practiced by the Greek (Ancient History of Wellness, 2005). Hippocrates, a Greek physician, influenced holistic practice of medicine and the idea of prevention by maintaining a balanced lifestyle to achieve optimal health

(Kleisiaris et al., 2014). Even in ancient times, it was recognized throughout the world that keeping well required balance of body, mind, and spirit. Although the practices were called something different, they provide the roots for our modern concept of wellness.

Contrarily, the North American approach to medicine took on a different twist. Near the nineteenth century, many holistic approaches emerged such as homeopathy, osteopathy, chiropractic, hydrotherapy, and herbal use. However, a turn was taken in the early twentieth century when North American and European medicine was heavily influenced by *The Flexner Report* produced in 1910. The report questioned the scientific validity of physician training and medical practices in order to achieve excellence in the field, with little consideration for patient care (Duffy, 2011). This disease-oriented approach aimed to disprove many of the natural treatments and focus on medical treatment backed by scientific evidence. It looked at physical health with a singular approach, overall well-being was not necessarily a factor. As a result, North American medicine moved farther away from the wellness approach that had been employed for thousands of years.

Shift From Health to Wellness

In the mid-twentieth century, a shift began in North America from health as disease prevention and treatment towards a holistic approach to wellness of body, mind, and spirit. In the past, the determination of health has often focused on the presence of disease or illness (Prescott et al, 2019). In 1946, the World Health Organization (WHO) defined health in their constitution as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (para. 1). While the WHO’s definition provided more dimension to the idea of health, Halpert Dunn

recognized the complexity of achieving positive health and the need for further exploration. Dunn (1959b) introduced the concept of “high-level wellness”, in which we progress towards living “at a fuller potential” by integrating well-being from body, mind, and spirit, as well as physical growth, balance through relaxation, and environment (p. 456). From Dunn’s perspective, rather than seeking health, we strive to achieve wellness in our lives by making changes in how we experience the world.

Indigenous perspectives on wellness. The importance of balance is significant in Indigenous healing practices where one must be aware of and find harmony with the living world around one’s self. Portman and Garrett (2006) identified that there are many healing ceremonies and traditions practiced by different Indigenous² tribes including Sweat Lodge Ceremony, Smudging, and Pipe Ceremony. The common goal is to regain balance by healing relationships with others, nature, the spirit world, and/or one’s self. In his teaching on the Medicine Wheel, Elder Phillip Campiou explained how the mind, body, and spirit must have balance to be one; we need to take care of our mind, it helps take care of our body and helps us find balance (P. Campiou, Driftpile First Nation, lives in Edmonton, Alberta, personal communication, October 3, 2020). McCabe (2008) explained, “the Medicine Wheel is a way of understanding, centering and balance” (p. 145). The circle of the Medicine Wheel has four quadrants, representing mind, body, emotions, and spirit; finding harmony requires a delicate balance of these pieces within our inner dialogue. As “life is always circular and cyclical—not linear” (Brokenleg & James, 2013, p. 52), the relationships of these pieces is an ongoing fluctuation towards

² In their analysis of tribal practices, Portman and Garrett (2006) cite those of “Native American” tribes and traditions.

balance, which is required in order to achieve wellness (McCabe, 2008; Portman & Garrett, 2006).

In Western culture, health is focused on modern science and medicine refers to pharmaceutical remedies that can be prescribed for almost any ailment, often overlooking other alternatives. Contrarily, in Indigenous cultures, the term “Medicine” is defined very differently; Medicine can encompass physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects. “One experiences life through the senses, and it is through one’s emotional experience of life that one becomes aware of Medicine” (McCabe, 2008, p. 459). In this Indigenous-related tradition, Medicine may include remedies such as herbs, the gifts of nature such as light and soil, experiences, memories, people, and the inner being. These remedies may be part of the healing process of the mind, body, emotions, and spirit, helping to regain harmony and find wellness. As Elder Phillip reminded me, the mind, body, and spirit cannot be focused on individually, rather, they are each an important strand to our being. Each strand is not as strong on its own. As I think about his teachings alongside the braided approach in the Faculty of Education at Concordia University of Edmonton, there is strength as the ways of knowing (e.g., self, others, society) weave together. We need tension to hold the braid together and make it strong. The tension is our discomfort with the unfamiliar. We must stretch our thoughts and emotions, stretch one’s self, to aspire to strength and wisdom (Personal communication with Elder Phillip Campiou and Dr. Simmee Chung, October 3, 2020).

Dimensions of wellness. Dunn’s (1959a) work helped spark the wellness movement in North America and introduced the various aspects of well-being. The Six Dimensions of Wellness model, developed by Bill Hettler in 1976, provided a

comprehensive approach to balancing well-being. Hettler (1976) believed that wellness must be balanced amongst all aspects of our well-being in order to find the “pathway to optimal living” (p. 2). The Six Dimensions of Wellness in Hettler’s model include emotional, occupational, physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual. Viewing wellness from a holistic perspective is necessary as there are many contributing factors that are complex and woven together (Foster & Keller, 2007). Table 1 outlines Hettler’s dimensions more specifically to enhance understanding and provide details for each one.

Table 1

The Six Dimensions of Wellness

Dimension	Description
Occupational Wellness	Occupational wellness is fulfilled through a career that is satisfying, aligned with personal values, and promotes growth opportunity. Through meaningful work, there is job satisfaction and the ability to develop and use unique skills and talents.
Physical Wellness	Physical wellness encompasses the health of the body through diet and physical activity. How a person treats their body and what goes into it will impact wellness. Bad habits can include excessive alcohol, tobacco, and drug use. Developing positive habits that include healthy foods, daily physical activity, and listening to your body can help mood, self-esteem, and energy.
Social Wellness	Social wellness involves contributing to nature and community. On the path to wellness, there is increased awareness of the impact on society and preserving the natural world. A reflective and empowering outlook encourages positive relationships and communication.
Intellectual Wellness	Intellectual wellness means being on a journey of life-long learning. There is always potential to extend knowledge and master new skills. Seeking challenges and solving problems expands the mind; learning must be constant and evolving.
Spiritual Wellness	Spiritual wellness may encompass religion for some, and for others it is developing a personal belief system as they search for meaning in life; aligning values, beliefs, and actions to live better and be accepting of multiple perspectives.
Emotional Wellness	Emotional wellness involves self-awareness and regulation of emotions to promote positive feelings towards one's self and outlook on life. Empathy towards others will help build relationships and provide a support system; healthy conflict can challenge our viewpoints in positive ways.

Adapted from Hettler (1976). *Six dimensions of wellness model*.

Focusing in on one area to improve well-being does not provide balance of the delicate system of wellness. Society tends to focus on physical health, promoting a balanced diet and exercise as the key to being healthy. While physical wellness is an

important piece, too much focus in this area can lead to imbalances. Ardell (2005) explained that focusing on one aspect of health, for example losing weight, lacks a larger perspective and often will not be a successful strategy. Considering the bigger picture by examining overall health through the various dimensions of wellness can help reshape thinking to develop a wellness mindset. Ardell contended that wellness must be integrated into one's lifestyle. Through reflection of all dimensions, one can begin a journey toward improving their wellness.

Importance of Teacher Wellness

Understanding the importance of addressing all dimensions of wellness is particularly important in professions prone to stress, like teaching, where nearly half of teachers experience high levels of daily stress (Greenberg et al., 2016). The consequences of teacher stress impact the health and well-being of teachers and students, academic performance, classroom climate, teacher turn-over, and financial loss in schools/districts. The overall health of a school is impacted by the wellness of its teachers.

Teacher wellness impacts student wellness. In order to take care of students and the learning environment, the well-being of teachers needs to be taken care of first. Carrington (2018) argued, "if teachers feel unsupported, misunderstood, unappreciated and empty, they will have little capacity to help those they teach and care for every day" (para. 4). Supporting teacher wellness will help create the capacity for them to support students. Eva and Thayer (2017) identified that a crucial element of creating a positive classroom climate is teacher self-care. If a teacher is not experiencing wellness in their own capacity, it is difficult for them to build a dynamic of wellness for others. As teachers improve their own well-being and classroom effectiveness, there is a positive

impact on student achievement, well-being, and the classroom climate (Flook et al., 2013). Taking care of teachers will in turn help students. The benefits of teacher wellness extend to the school culture and student wellness. Teachers are important role models for students and can be highly influential; healthy habits portrayed by school staff can have a positive influence on students (Berg et al., 2018). Therefore, supporting teacher well-being has the power to positively influence student health, well-being, and academic achievement.

Early career attrition. The stresses of teaching are overtly evident in the beginning years of the career. A Canadian study by Clandinin et al. (2013) found that an astounding 40% of teachers leave the profession in the first five years. Early career teacher attrition is often attributed to burnout, lack of resilience, and/or lack of support. Anhorn (2008) blamed “difficult work assignments, unclear expectations, inadequate resources, isolation, role conflict and reality shock” (p. 15) for this level of teacher attrition. Research is unanimous that the workload and overall experience for beginning teachers is overwhelming. In the review of literature, Tait (2008) identified the workload to be the same as experienced teachers while often being assigned a complicated subject schedule with students that can be challenging to manage. The same things asked of veteran teachers are expected from a first-year teacher; without adequate mentorship and support, surviving can be a challenge.

Risk of teacher burnout. Research on burnout focused primarily on healthcare workers and teachers due to the emotional and physical demands of these professions that involve the care of others. Maslach et al. (2001) characterized job burnout by three dimensions: overwhelming exhaustion, feelings of cynicism and detachment from the

job, and a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment. Those experiencing burnout often have little emotional or physical capacity, view their job negatively, and feel incompetent. Burnout is higher among those with an external locus of control who lack coping methods for stress and often exhibit poor self-esteem and low levels of resilience.

Education is focused on student achievement, however teacher well-being also needs to be at the forefront of education, as “the personal, societal, and financial costs associated with burnout are too high to ignore” (Flook et al., 2013, p. 182). Stress causes many teachers to face risk of burnout or leaving the profession entirely. Cenkseven-Onder and Sari (2009) warned that the long-term stress experienced from burnout can be detrimental to physical and mental health. As well, it negatively impacts a school’s culture, impedes student success, and increases the likelihood of teachers taking leaves of absence. Levels of burnout and quality of life are both predictors of teacher well-being; if a teacher is under extended periods of stress, their health and wellness are at risk.

The stressful reality of teaching. Kendrick (2019) advocated that teaching is “heartwork”, as it requires an immense amount of emotional labour to be expended along with a complex workload that continues to change and increase. Those working in emotionally taxing professions, including teaching and nursing, are at risk of compassion fatigue which “is the emotional and physical exhaustion that can develop when helpers are unable to ‘refuel and regenerate’ as a result of their emotional labour and dedication to others” (The Alberta Teachers’ Association, 2020b, p. 23). In an ongoing two-year study of teacher stress in Alberta, The Alberta Teachers’ Association (2020a) indicated that compassion fatigue is prevalent in the majority of participants as the teaching

profession requires significant emotional labour. The effects of compassion fatigue include low energy, exhaustion, difficulty concentrating, lack of motivation, sleeping issues, and diminished work performance.

As a profession, the repercussions of this emotional labour must be recognized. Teacher stress is attributed to four main causes: school organizations (e.g., leadership and the environment/school culture), increasing job demands (e.g., behavioural issues and standardized testing), work resources (e.g., limiting teacher autonomy), and teacher social and emotional competence (Greenberg et al., 2016). In a 2011/12 Canadian national study on work-life balance, Duxbury and Higgins (2013) uncovered how wellness in the teaching profession compares to the general population. Overall, the work-life balance of teachers is significantly more difficult compared to the general population. The study revealed that 74% of teachers experienced conflict with work-life balance, as opposed to only 30% in other professions. Compared to other professions, teachers are more likely to experience high stress levels, depressed moods, and low levels of life satisfaction. Teachers are twice as likely as other professions to report work-life challenges, which often leads to a decline in mental health and poor job satisfaction, putting teachers at risk of burnout. When employees have less time for self-care activities (e.g., sleep, time spent doing recreational activities, time to themselves), there is greater risk of mental and physical health problems (Duxbury & Higgins, 2013).

These findings by Duxbury and Higgins (2013) are likely due to the amount of energy required, long hours, necessity to take work home, and excessive workload of teachers. As well, the lack of perceived work flexibility and control for teachers is high, making work-life balance more challenging. The factors reported by teachers that most

contributed to increased workload are the rising enrollment of students with diverse needs and changes in the scope of work. Day (2007) identified different phases of a teacher's career that may be indicated by teaching and/or life experiences. While there are specific vulnerabilities to each phase, there is no stability in the positive or negative times of a teaching career. Depending on the stressors of work and life, the vulnerable points may shift with time requiring the teacher to have different needs during different phases of their career.

Strategies for Supporting Teacher Wellness

Fostering flourishing teachers. Schools want flourishing teachers as they are more motivated, supportive, and successful. Capone and Petrillo (2020) explained that in order to flourish, positive mental health must be experienced where there are positive qualities within the emotional, psychological, and social realms of well-being. In their study on teacher efficacy and job satisfaction, it was found that positive mental health and supporting the social and personal skills of teachers can “promote well-being and job satisfaction and [help them to] cope better with burnout and depression” (p. 1762). Supporting well-being within the dimensions of wellness will foster flourishing teachers, while enhancing the overall school climate and student achievement.

When teachers flourish, the school becomes a bright and positive place for collaboration and learning, as Cherkowski and Walker (as cited in Cherkowski, 2018) explained:

Teachers shared that they flourish: when their students do; when they feel a sense of belonging to a team of colleagues working toward a common purpose; when they feel a sense of joy, play, laughter, and fun at work; when they are encouraged

and supported to take risks in their teaching; and when they see they are making a difference in the lives of their students, school, and community. (p. 64)

The picture painted by Cherkowski and Walker (2018) is the idealistic school where teachers and students are flourishing in an environment that is conducive to learning and collaboration. The benefits of supporting the mental health of teachers extends beyond employee wellness by enhancing the school community.

Targeted strategies for combating teacher stress/burnout. The pool of research on reducing teacher stress is growing. There are many stress reduction programs and techniques that have been studied. However, most studies make the comparison to a control group. Iancu et al. (2018) conducted a comparative study on interventions for reducing teacher burnout with the following research-based interventions: cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), mindfulness and relaxation, social-emotional skills, psychoeducational approach, social support, and professional development. Of these interventions, it was found that mindfulness and cognitive behavioural therapy (e.g., stress management skills, coping skills) had the most significant impact on overall burnout factors. While further study is needed to explore long-term significance of stress reduction, there is promise in including CBT and mindfulness as part of employee wellness programming. The two domains of well-being identified as key for reducing burnout were physical and creative factors (Brasfield et al., 2019). The physical factors included self-care strategies; teachers practicing physical wellness were less prone to emotional exhaustion. The second dimension, the creative factors, involves regulation and control of emotions and thoughts. Teachers strong in this dimension have skills similar to emotional intelligence, where control of emotions, building of relationships,

and awareness of self, others, and environment are present. Therefore, it can be suggested that self-care practiced in the realms of physical and emotional wellness have the most influence on reducing potential burnout.

Reflecting on health values versus practices. With the growing wellness industry, there is an inherent societal value of health and wellness. However, when thinking about our own health there can be a disconnect between the strategies we value versus those practiced on a regular basis. Anshel et al. (2010) agreed with the findings that changing habits is challenging, particularly because they are embedded in daily routines. Thus, making change, particularly with physical activity routines, requires overcoming significant barriers. Gendron et al. (2016) suggested these psychological barriers require flexibility in order to make change toward a better quality of life.

Despite having strong values related to our health and wellness, there are often negative behaviours we participate in that are misaligned with those values. Anshel et al. (2010) found that when participants identified unhealthy habits and reflected on the disconnect between these habits and their personal values, they were able to create an action plan building better habits. This process, paired with coaching and social support, helped participants maintain motivation and make changes toward healthy lifestyle habits. The process of identifying areas of need that correlate with their values made participants see the effort as worthwhile and they wanted to make the associated lifestyle changes. Other studies that examined the benefit of exercise programs on mental and emotional well-being lacked the long-term or lifestyle change focus required to make the benefits last and “stick” with participants (Anshel et al., 2010). Therefore, we are more

likely to reach a goal that is linked to personal values especially when coached and supported by others.

Emotional intelligence. There is an inevitable transmission of attitudes, emotions, social cues, and behaviours between teachers and students through, what is often referred to as, the hidden curriculum. Czajkowski and King (1975) explained that the hidden curriculum can include learning from the realms of attitude, emotion, moral, and social. By cultivating emotional wellness in teachers, this transmission can be increasingly positive and support the learning environment. Goleman (2005) identified emotional intelligence, which includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, to be more important than intellectual quotient in determining overall success in life. Mortiboys (2012) identified the potential benefits of teaching with emotional intelligence to include fewer discipline issues, decreased student drop out rates, better relationships with students, reflective learning, and an environment for learning where students are “engaged, motivated, confident, constructive, ready to collaborate, creative, and resilient” (p. 4). In the study by Dolev and Leshem (2017), teachers receiving emotional intelligence training found the process to be “transformational, launching a process of reflection, introspection and personal development... [and] enhanced their self-awareness and emotional intelligence competencies,” in turn positively impacting their teaching (p. 32). Thus, cultivating emotional intelligence in teachers and students is an important piece of the wellness of a school.

Mindfulness. The body of research pointing towards mindfulness as a means to combat stress and emotional exhaustion is growing. Targeted mindfulness training

programs show long-term benefits improving emotional well-being and reducing exhaustion associated with burnout (Eva & Thayer, 2017; Flook et al., 2013; Schnaider et al., 2017). Teachers taking part in mindfulness training experience greater compassion (Eva & Thayer, 2017; Flook et al., 2013) and the ability to control and recognize the emotions of others (Eva & Thayer, 2017; Schnaider et al., 2017). “When students get upset, mindful educators don’t match that emotion and exacerbate the situation” (Jennings, 2018, p. 67).

Not only does mindfulness enhance emotional well-being, it can also improve focus, attention and memory, enhancing teacher effectiveness (Eva & Thayer, 2017). Mindfulness practice can increase awareness of anxiety and stress levels, helping participants learn their limits and manage stress more effectively (Gendron et al., 2016). Learning mindfulness takes time and energy, a targeted approach is required for it to be effective and for participants to see lasting effects (Flook et al., 2013; Schnaider et al., 2017). Like the benefits of regular exercise on physical health, consistent practice of mindfulness can help improve emotional health (Flook et al., 2013).

Targeted training and professional development. Equipping teachers with necessary skills to cope with stressful situations has the ability to reduce long-term stress. Teacher coping skills and self-efficacy have been directly correlated with student behaviour and academic achievement (Herman et al., 2018). The study by Herman et al. (2018) randomly selected teachers to take part in classroom management professional development. Participants scored significantly higher in coping skills compared to nonparticipants. Their findings indicated that the ability to cope with difficult situations positively impacts self-efficacy and in turn the ability to successfully attend to these

situations. Providing targeted professional development for teachers in their areas of need will help build coping skills, in turn reducing exhaustion and burnout. Cenkseven-Onder and Sari (2009) found that the ability to cope with job-related stress is found to be a predictor of well-being. They recommended that, “in-service educational programs about intrapersonal relations and coping strategies with stress would be developed” (p. 1232). Practicing ongoing assessments as a regular “check-up” for employees provides preventative measures to help identify the problems early on and offer support/training specific to their needs (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Professional development that targets the individual and current needs of each teacher can fill in gaps where stress is experienced most for that teacher. This type of training can target skill building to improve resilience, helping teachers cope during stressful situations.

School climate and leadership. In a study of wellness as a factor of teacher burnout, Brasfield et al. (2019) found predictors of wellness to include teacher leadership as well as certain factors in domains of well-being. Teachers who are leaders and experience autonomy in their role are "more protected from burnout despite the experience of high occupational stress" (p. 174). As teachers take ownership of their role, this autonomy can combat the associated exhaustion. The school environment and leadership impact the quality of school life for both teachers and students. Cenkseven-Onder and Sari (2009) identified that the quality of school life for a teacher is made up of a complex arrangement including social relationships, task-related experiences, students, staff, administration, and school culture. Making it even more complex, the perception of these things is also a factor that can create positive or negative feelings about the work environment. Data gathered has suggested that school climate, intrapersonal

relationships, teacher autonomy, and coping strategies for stress are important factors in determining the well-being of teachers and the likelihood of teacher burnout (Brasfield et al., 2019; Cenkseven-Onder & Sari, 2009). Therefore, school leadership plays a critical role in creating school climates that foster positive relationships and provides support for teachers in their pursuits, whether they are teacher leadership pursuits or areas of need that require professional development.

Teacher and School Wellness Programs

Teacher wellness impacts student learning, absenteeism, teacher retention, and the atmosphere of the classroom and school (Eva & Thayer, 2017; Greenberg et al., 2016; Flook et al., 2017). Thus, the well-being of teachers must be considered by school divisions and school leaders. Greenberg et al. (2016) suggested four key programs to help reduce teacher stress and improve well-being of both teachers and students. These include mentoring and induction programs, workplace wellness programs, social emotional learning (SEL) programs, and mindfulness/stress management programs. These programs can be integrated with teacher wellness and student wellness, and implementation has the ability to enhance the overall school health.

Employee wellness programs. Currently, Alberta teachers have a formal benefit program, the Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (n.d.), that offers employee wellness supports, such as family and financial counselling and mental health online resources. These benefits and supports are more related to health and offer reactive solutions, rather than building proactive wellness strategies. The research has pointed toward the need for a targeted wellness program in schools to help build a foundation for teacher wellness. One example stands out that employed the dimensions of wellness (see Table 1) to create

an employee wellness program. Davies et al. (2003) analyzed this school in the United States. The goal of the program was to help improve teacher health, reduce stress and absenteeism, and, in the long-term, enhance the levels of teacher retention. There were targeted short- and long-term strategies for each of the dimensions of wellness that were monitored by a health team. Results showed positive teacher feedback and improved school culture. Students also benefited from the program with teachers sharing their learnings in the classroom and eventually staff translated the program to target student wellness. Although the end goal of staff retention could not yet be determined in the article, the positive results show promise for teacher wellness. As the research suggested, the health and wellness initiatives naturally trickled down to students allowing the entire school community to benefit from the program.

Comprehensive school health and teacher wellness. Organizations often turn to wellness programs and health benefits to address employee health. When carefully implemented, this type of program can offer benefits for teachers. However, schools offer a unique environment where policies and culture impact both students and teachers. A comprehensive school health (CSH) approach can help to build capacity to influence the culture of a school towards a healthy way of living that supports student achievement. CSH's holistic method targets four components of school health to build its framework: Teaching and Learning, Social and Physical Environment, Healthy School Policy, and Partnerships and Services (see Figure 2). "When actions in all four components are harmonized, students are supported to realize their full potential as learners – and as healthy, productive members of society" (Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School

Health, n.d.). Figure 2 outlines the fundamental principles of CSH; the four components provide a sustainable whole-school wellness approach.

Figure 2

Comprehensive School Health Framework



Note. Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health, n.d., (<http://www.jcsh-cces.ca/about-us/comprehensive-school-health-framework/>)

The advantages of CSH are often considered for students. However, these benefits can extend beyond students impacting the school environment and staff. Berg et al. (2018) advocated that, while generally aimed at students, school health programs also encourage healthy lifestyles among school personnel. CSH has the potential to provide a valuable wellness framework that can be embedded in a school’s culture for the benefit of both teachers and students. Each component is an essential piece of the puzzle, providing cohesion and strength to the overall health goals. The components are interconnected, much like the dimensions of wellness (see Table 2). Balance among all parts is needed if wellness is to be achieved. That said, by fusing the components of CSH with the

dimensions of wellness, a strong foundation can be built to support health and wellness throughout the school community. Targeting the dimensions of wellness through a CSH lens has the potential to infuse wellness into school culture and encourage teachers to extend their healthy experiences into their teaching.

Table 2*Four Components of Comprehensive School Health (CSH)*

When We Say	We Mean
<i>Social and Physical Environment</i>	<p>The social environment is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the relationships among and between staff and students in the school • The emotional well-being of students • Influenced by relationships with families and the wider community • Supportive of the school community in making healthy choices by building competence, autonomy, and connectedness.
	<p>The physical environment is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The buildings, grounds, play space, and equipment in and surrounding the school • Basic amenities such as sanitation, air cleanliness, and healthy foods • Spaces designed to promote student safety and connectedness and minimize injury • Safe, accessible, and supportive of healthy choices for all members of the school community.
<i>Teaching and Learning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal and informal provincial / territorial curriculum, resources, and associated activities • Knowledge, understanding, and skills for students to improve their health and well-being and enhance their learning outcomes • Professional development opportunities for staff related to health and well-being.
<i>Healthy School Policy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies, guidelines, and practices that promote and support student well-being and achievement and shape a respectful, welcoming, and caring school environment for all members of the school community.
<i>Partnerships and Services</i>	<p>Partnerships are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The connections between the school and students' families • Supportive working relationships among schools, and among schools and other community organizations and representative groups • Health, education, and other sectors working together to advance school health.
	<p>Services are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and school-based services that support and promote student and staff health and well-being.

(Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health, 2015, p. 2)

Pre-Service and early career teacher wellness. There is enormous stress experienced by early career teachers (Anhorn, 2008; Clandinin et al., 2013; Tait, 2008). Therefore, interventions to support wellness should begin with pre-service teachers. Brasfield et al. (2019) advocated for intervention of wellness programming in teacher training, particularly focusing on physical and emotional self-care strategies as a way to reduce teacher burnout. Resilience is strongly associated with early career attrition; pre-service teacher education that includes teaching and building resilience will improve emotional regulation and support more effective social interaction with social environments (Tait, 2008). Equipping new teachers with skills for emotional awareness and control as well as resilience may help decrease the burnout and attrition of early career teachers. Mentorship and induction programs supporting new teachers leads to higher satisfaction and retention, better instructional practices, and higher student achievement (Greenberg et al., 2016).

Summary of Review of Related Literature

The review of related literature helped shed light on some important aspects related to teacher wellness. A holistic and balanced approach to wellness is rooted in ancient practices of India, China, and Greece. Indigenous teachings about health instill the importance of harmony with the body, mind, and soul. However, the history of wellness in North America had been largely driven by a disease-oriented approach to treatment up until the mid- to late-twentieth century. The shift from health to wellness requires reflection on the dimensions of wellness (i.e., physical, emotional, occupational, social, intellectual, spiritual) to help find a balance of our complex inner workings.

Due to the high stress of the profession, teacher wellness is of particular significance. Teachers experiencing high levels of stress are not only a financial burden on the system, their stress directly impacts student well-being and academic performance. The emotional exhaustion that can be present for teachers puts them at risk of burnout, which can lead to significant implications on health and well-being. Instances of compassion fatigue are rising due to the emotional labour of teaching and difficulty of finding work-life balance within the profession (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2020a). In order for teachers, and in turn schools, to flourish, teachers must experience positive mental health.

While health is of high value for many people, the practice of healthy habits often falters with a disconnect between what is valued and what is practiced; resulting in unhealthy habits and difficulty altering these routines. Achieving lasting change requires reflection on personal values and related behaviours, as well as support and coaching. The body of wellness research points towards targeted approaches to combat the high stress and emotional exhaustion teachers face daily. Equipping teachers with tools to overcome the emotional burden is a key starting point (e.g., mindfulness, emotional intelligence training). Depending on emergent needs and stage of career, targeted training can be beneficial for teachers to meet their personal needs.

A positive school climate with a supportive leadership team can enhance the well-being and overall success of both teachers and students. Employee benefit programs are not enough; through a comprehensive school health and wellness plan, key components can be addressed to begin building an environment where health and wellness are valued and practiced daily. Wellness programming should begin with pre-service teachers to

help combat the stress that early career teachers experience. Educators are shaping the future through their students. Therefore, supporting positive mental and physical health and wellness must be a priority in schools, beginning with awareness and promotion of teacher well-being and self-care.

In conclusion, the following key points are important considerations for teacher wellness:

1. The stress of teaching as a career can have a negative impact on the health and wellness of teachers, with increased risk of burnout and other health issues.
2. Student achievement and well-being are directly linked to teacher wellness.
3. Early career teachers experience significant stress, in part due to challenges of the role and overwhelming expectations.
4. A considerable number of teachers experience compassion fatigue due to the emotional labour required. Work-life balance is significantly more difficult for teachers than other professions.
5. There is an increase in the recognition of addressing teacher wellness as part of overall school health and wellness. Teacher wellness programming should include aspects of emotional intelligence, mindfulness, targeted training and professional development, school climate, and leadership development.

Methodology

The research project was conducted using mixed-methods employing both quantitative and qualitative data collection. Two different data sets were obtained throughout the project. First, the collection of quantitative data (i.e., online survey) was gathered, followed by qualitative data (i.e., telephone interviews).

Research Participants

The participant group, Health and Physical Education Council (HPEC) of Alberta members, was chosen because this group of educators likely value health and physical education. After receiving permission from the Alberta Teachers' Association (Office of Research) to contact the HPEC Executive Committee, an introduction about the research project was shared with HPEC executives. Then, the board of executives successfully voted to include the invitation to participate in the research project in the HPEC Newsletter (i.e., E-Sprinter; October 2020). Signed consent from the HPEC President was received and a link to voluntarily participate in the research project was included in the E-Sprinter. The initial page of the survey outlined pertinent information and participant consent. Participants providing consent were then permitted to begin the survey. Consent could be revoked by closing the survey at any point before completion. However, once completed, consent could not be revoked due to anonymity. Survey respondents were invited to voluntarily participate in the qualitative research phase. An information letter and consent form outlined project details and pertinent information related to participation in the 1-on-1 telephone interview. Participants signed the consent form prior to participating and were informed they could revoke consent in the project at any time before completion of the study. See Appendix A for organization and participant consent forms.

HPEC background. The Health and Physical Education Council (HPEC) is a specialist council of the Alberta Teachers' Association dedicated to advocating for quality health and physical education programming in Alberta. HPEC had approximately

1800 members in 2020. Members are educators that generally value health and physical education, keeping current on best instructional practices and resources.

Research Instrument

Phase 1: Quantitative research instrument. The survey questions (see Appendix B) were designed based on the primary research question with sub-questions targeting each dimension of wellness. Through consultation with my research supervisor (Dr. Brent Bradford), discussions with colleagues, and a review of related literature, specific questions were created for the survey. The survey was specifically designed for this research project, as other available wellness surveys measured personal opinions on wellness rather than the value and practice of specific self-care strategies.

The first two questions of the survey were designed to gather demographic information about the participants. The majority of the questions focused on the importance and practices of self-care strategies among the six dimensions of wellness. To measure the importance of each self-care strategy, a Likert scale was used, prompting respondents to choose ‘not at all important’, ‘somewhat important’, ‘important’, or ‘very important’. Next, respondents indicated how often self-care strategies were practiced. Physical activity strategies were measured using time increments while all other strategies were measured using a Likert scale with the options of ‘never’, ‘rarely’, ‘sometimes’, or ‘regularly’. The concluding questions measured stress levels using a Likert scale, on a continuum, where 1 represented ‘low’ and 4 represented ‘high’, as well as a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response. Finally, respondents could provide their contact details to receive a summary of the research project findings, as well as an opportunity to participate in Phase 2—the qualitative data collection (i.e., 1-on-1 telephone interview).

Phase 2: Qualitative research instrument. Upon closing of the survey, those respondents opting to participate in the qualitative data collection were interviewed. The purpose of the 1-on-1 telephone interview (see Appendix C) was to gain a deeper understanding of self-care for teachers and explore the balance between the dimensions of wellness. A semi-structured interview approach was chosen to allow the opportunity to alter questions and probe deeper into the responses as needed. The exploration of wellness must take human nature into account, hence, being informed by narrative inquiry was an integral part of this study as it “has the compelling, sometimes confounding, quality of merging overall life experiences with specific research experience, realms of experience often separated in inquiry” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992, p. 115). The semi-structured interview allowed for a deeper exploration into the narrative of the participants.

Summary of Procedures

This mixed-methods research project had two phases for the quantitative and qualitative data collection, followed by data analysis. Phase 1 consisted of a 20-question online survey for respondents to identify the value and practice of self-care strategies and stress levels. Phase 2 consisted of a 12-question semi-structured 1-on-1 telephone interview. Below is a summary of the processes for both phases of the research project.

Online survey. The following summarizes the process that was completed for the online survey:

- Online survey (i.e., Google Form) link invitation was distributed to HPEC members in the E-Sprinter newsletter
- Research project information was provided on the initial page

- Consent was obtained (i.e., by clicking “Yes, I Consent” or refusing and closing the survey)
- At the end of the survey, a voluntary invitation to participate in qualitative research allowed participants to provide contact information if interested

Semi-structured 1-on-1 telephone interview. The following summarizes the process that was completed for the semi-structured 1-on-1 telephone interviews:

- Participants were selected after they stated their interest by adding their email address to the end of the online survey (i.e., Phase 1)
- Consent was obtained in written form
- The research project was explained using the information provided and allowed time for questions
- The semi-structured 1-on-1 telephone interview was conducted using predetermined questions
- Prior to starting the interviews, participants verbally consented to the interview being recorded (i.e., Audacity voice recording program)
- ‘Member checking’ was employed to ensure understanding of responses
- Respondents were thanked for their willingness to participate

Data Analysis

Once respondents completed the online survey, the raw data was coded and descriptive statistical analyses were employed to organize and summarize the data set. Gathering the descriptive statistics into an organized manner assisted in simplifying the large quantitative data set (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2009). For example, the terms used in the Likert scale were changed into variables for descriptive statistical analyses (e.g., not

at all important=1; somewhat important=2; important=3; very important=4). More specifically, the coded data set was divided into the different dimensions of wellness (e.g., physical, intellectual, occupational) to help organize the data set into more manageable sub-categories. An initial scan of the descriptive statistics was then performed by both myself and my supervisor to identify any emergent trends. Bar graphs were developed from the quantitative data depicting respondents' thoughts related to self-care strategies (across the various dimensions of wellness) clearly identifying values and habitual practices.

After this initial scan of the coded data set, further discussions occurred with my supervisor to help solidify the questions for the semi-structured 1-on-1 telephone interviews. Additionally, trends found from Phase 1 assisted in the direction of Phase 2 (i.e., semi-structured 1-on-1 telephone interviews). Phase 2 involved a small number of participants (n=3) that volunteered to continue from Phase 1. All three interviews were conducted over the telephone and were scheduled at a convenient time outside of school hours. The semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility in the questions and the ability to follow the lead of each interviewee, as the actions, questions, and responses of the interviewer shapes the relationship and can influence the experience (Clandinin et al., 1992). As this was the first set of research interviews I had conducted, I was aware of the need for unbiased language and probing questions to encourage the interviewees while trying to avoid shaping their answers. The interview data was transcribed verbatim and initially reviewed to generate preliminary coding categories.

When considering content analysis, a detailed and systematic examination and interpretation of interviews is required to identify emerging patterns, themes, biases, and

meanings (Berg, 2009; Merriam, 2009). Becoming familiar with the interview data along with developing an in-depth understanding of the general ideas and meaning is an important element in the analysis process (Creswell, 2012). Spending time reflecting on each of the three interviews, in addition to transcribing them, helped me develop a deep familiarity of the data along with the identification of emergent themes.

The coding categorization process (i.e., open coding) was conducted independently by myself (and on a lower scale by my supervisor). The purpose of including my supervisor in the categorization process was to increase research credibility as a form of triangulation (Patton, 2002). Although my supervisor was provided with copies of the interview data, all identifiers were removed from the transcripts prior to the analysis stage to ensure respondent anonymity. Following Phase 2 (i.e., 3 interviews), data sets from Phase 1 and 2 were joined to organize, analyze, and interpret the entire data set as a whole to identify trends and emerging themes, and suggest strategies for teacher wellness.

Methods Triangulation

When conducting mixed-methods research, the process of establishing and assessing research validity is cyclical and ongoing (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Hence, for this research project, methods triangulation was employed to tie different methods of data collection that have no overlapping strengths and weaknesses, which can lead to more conclusive evidence (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Moreover, the employment of an online survey and semi-structured 1-on-1 telephone interviews allowed for more conclusive evidence as opposed to only utilizing one method.

Ethical Credibility

In the social sciences, because the social lives of human beings are being studied, researchers must adhere to ethical considerations (Berg, 2009). To fulfill the ethical responsibilities, a number of actions were carried out. First, approval was obtained from the University Research Ethics Board as well as endorsement from the HPEC Executive Committee members. Second, consent was collected from all Phase 1 respondents and from the three Phase 2 respondents. Third, the online survey data was collected anonymously. Those respondents sharing contact information (i.e., to receive study findings and/or participate in Phase 2) were removed from the data set and used only for the purposes of sharing data and/or contacting respondents for the interview (i.e., Phase 2). Finally, the semi-structured 1-on-1 telephone interview data were transcribed verbatim, will be retained as a paper copy, and secured in locked possession at CUE for a period of 5 years. For the semi-structured 1-on-1 telephone interviews, each respondent was provided with a pseudonym to ensure that privacy was guaranteed to the highest degree.

Validity of Results

The strength of research is in the trustworthiness of its study through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Hence, for valid data, responses, and results to unfold, consistency among the research must be present. That said, direct respondent quotes from the interviews were included to help readers determine their own interpretation of the data. After completing the three interviews and the thematic analysis of the results, my supervisor reviewed the transcribed interview to help validate the results. Although there is naturally selectivity in

the data used by the interviewer (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992), the analysis and triangulation process, as well as supervisor overview, helped eliminate bias and enhance validity of the results. Credibility of the results was obtained through triangulation of conducting a mixed-methods project alongside the review of related literature, enabling a more profound comprehension of the results. Lastly, the transferability of this project affords opportunities for similar results to occur with other teachers specializing in Health and Physical Education across Alberta in a similar time and school setting. Moreover, resulting from the “thick description of the context” (Guba, 1981, p. 86), details related to this mixed-methods project are applicable to contexts with a comparable nature.

Findings

In this section, findings from the quantitative data are organized first by demographics, including the participants’ role as an educator and years of teaching experience. Next, the respondent stress levels are reported. Lastly, self-care strategies related to each dimension of wellness are rated for their importance to the respondent, followed by how often the strategy is practiced.

Phase 1: Online Survey

Of the survey respondents (n=34), educator demographics included 82.4% (n=28) teachers, 14.7% (n=5) administrators, and 2.9% (n=1) consultants. The experience of the educator respondents with 0-4 years was 14.7% (n=5), 5-9 years was 23.5% (n=8), 10-14 years was 14.7% (n=5), and 15+ years was 47.1% (n=16). There was variation of educator experience across the spectrum. When respondents rated their current level of stress on a scale of 1 (being low) to 4 (being high), 47.1% of respondents (n=16) rated stress at a level of 4, while 44.1% (n=15) rated a stress level of 3, 5.9% (n=2) rated a

stress level of 2, and 2.9% (n=1) rated a stress level of 1. Overall, 91.2% (n=31) of respondents experienced moderate to high levels of current stress, and in the last month 97.1% (n=33) reported high levels of stress (i.e., causing worry or loss of sleep).

Of the respondents indicating high levels of stress (i.e., on a scale of 1 to 4, chose 4), there was a discrepancy between the valued importance of a self-care strategy and its practice on average of 2.65 strategies per participant. The respondents that indicated a moderately high level of stress (i.e., on a scale of 1 to 4, chose 3), the discrepancy was on average 4.6 strategies per participant. Of the 30 self-care strategies listed, respondents practiced regularly or sometimes an average of 18.8 strategies. Those respondents that indicated high levels of stress (i.e., 4), on average, practiced regularly or sometimes the same number of self-care strategies of those experiencing lower levels of stress.

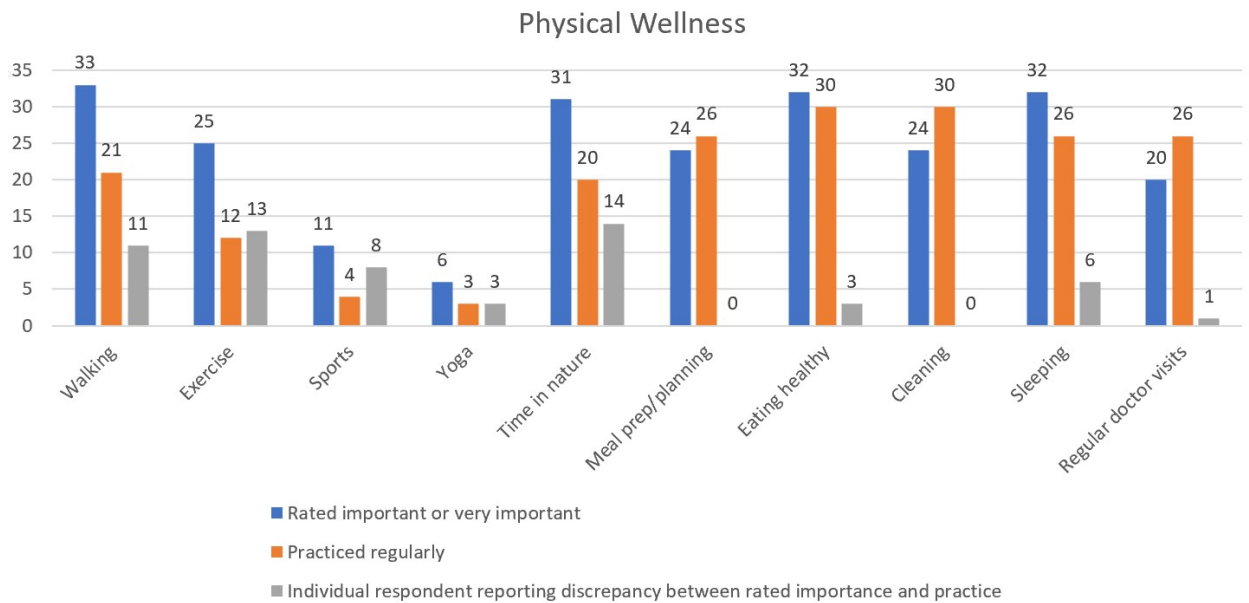
Physical wellness. Physical wellness strategies can be divided into two categories, those considered physical activity strategies and those that are not physically active, characterized as other physical wellness strategies. Physical activity strategies most valued by respondents were walking, exercise, and spending time in nature. Walking was rated important or very important by 94.1% (n=32) of respondents. However, time spent walking was practiced regularly (1 hour or more each week) by 61.8% (n=21) of respondents. Of the individual respondents, 32.4% (n=11) had a noteworthy discrepancy between their value and practice of this self-care strategy. Exercise (i.e., cardiovascular and/or strength training) was rated important or very important by 73.5% (n=25) of respondents, with only 35.3% (n=12) regularly exercising (1 hour or more each week). There was a notable discrepancy between value and practice of exercise by 38.2% (n=13) of respondents. Spending time in nature was rated important

or very important by 91.2% (n=31) of respondents. Regular practice of spending time in nature (1 hour or more each week) was practiced by 58.8% (n=20) of respondents. The individual respondent discrepancy between practice and value of spending time in nature was 41.2% (n=14). As outlined in Figure 3, there was a noticeable discrepancy between the value and practice of physical activity strategies. More than 73.5% (n=25+) of respondents highly valued walking, exercise, and spending time in nature, however, practice of the strategy did not reflect the perceived importance.

Several other physical wellness strategies were practiced regularly or sometimes by 75% or more of respondents, indicating the importance of meal planning/preparation, eating healthy, cleaning, sleeping, and regular medical visits. Meal planning/preparation was rated important or very important by 70.6% (n=24), with a high percentage of respondents, 76.5% (n=26), practicing this strategy regularly or sometimes. Eating healthy meals was rated important or very important by 94.1% (n=32) of respondents, closely followed by 88.2% (n=30) practicing this strategy regularly or sometimes. Cleaning was rated important or very important by 70.6% (n=24), and practiced regularly or sometimes by a higher percentage of respondents, 88.2% (n=30). Sleeping 7-8 hours a night was rated important or very important by 94.1% (n=32), with 76.5% (n=26) of respondents practicing this strategy regularly or sometimes. With the exception of sleeping 7-8 hours a night, the other physical wellness strategies had less discrepancy between value and practice. Physical wellness strategies that are valued as important or very important by 70% or more of respondents include walking, exercise, spending time in nature, meal preparation/planning, eating healthy, cleaning, and sleeping.

Figure 3

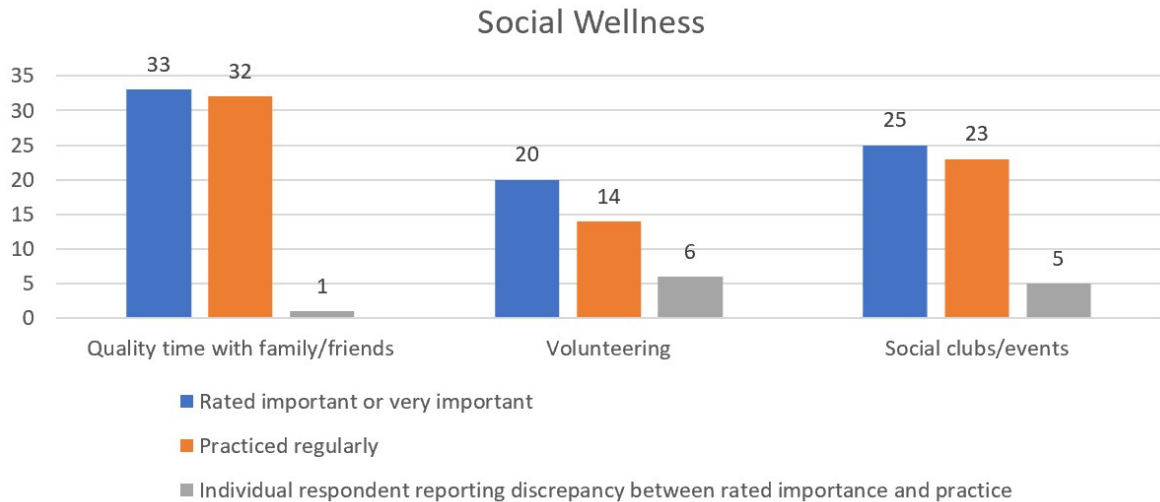
Physical Wellness Strategies



Social wellness. Of the social wellness strategies, the most important to respondents was quality time with family/friends with 97.1% (n=33) rating it as very important, while 94.1% (n=32) of respondents regularly or sometimes practiced this strategy. More than half of respondents (n=20) rated volunteering as important or very important, with 41.2% (n=14) practicing this strategy regularly or sometimes. Social events or clubs were important or very important to 73.5% (n=25) of respondents, closely followed by 67.6% (n=23) regularly or sometimes practicing this strategy. As shown in Figure 4, social wellness through quality time and social clubs are highly valued and well-practiced by educators.

Figure 4

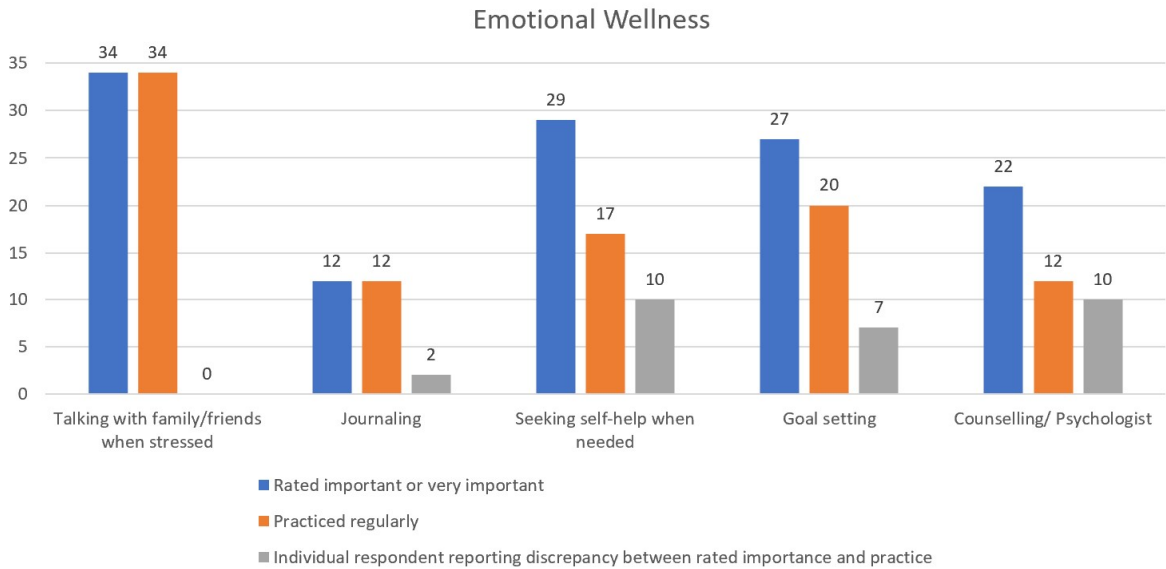
Social Wellness Strategies



Emotional wellness. Of all the wellness strategies, talking with family/friends was by far the most valued and utilized self-care strategy with 100% (n=34) of respondents valuing it as important or very important. As well, all respondents practiced this strategy regularly or sometimes. Seeking self-help when needed (e.g., money management, stress reduction, time management) was important or very important to 85.3% (n=29), however only practiced regularly or sometimes by 50% (n=17) of respondents. Goal setting was important or very important to 79.4% (n=27) of respondents, and practiced by 58.8% (n=20). Visiting counselling/psychologist was important or very important to 64.7% (n=22) of respondents, with only 35.3% (n=12) practicing regularly or sometimes. Talking with family/friends and journaling showed little to no discrepancy between value and practice. As outlined in Figure 5, most emotional wellness strategies are highly valued. However, there was some discrepancy with practice for seeking self-help, goal setting, and counselling/psychologist visits.

Figure 5

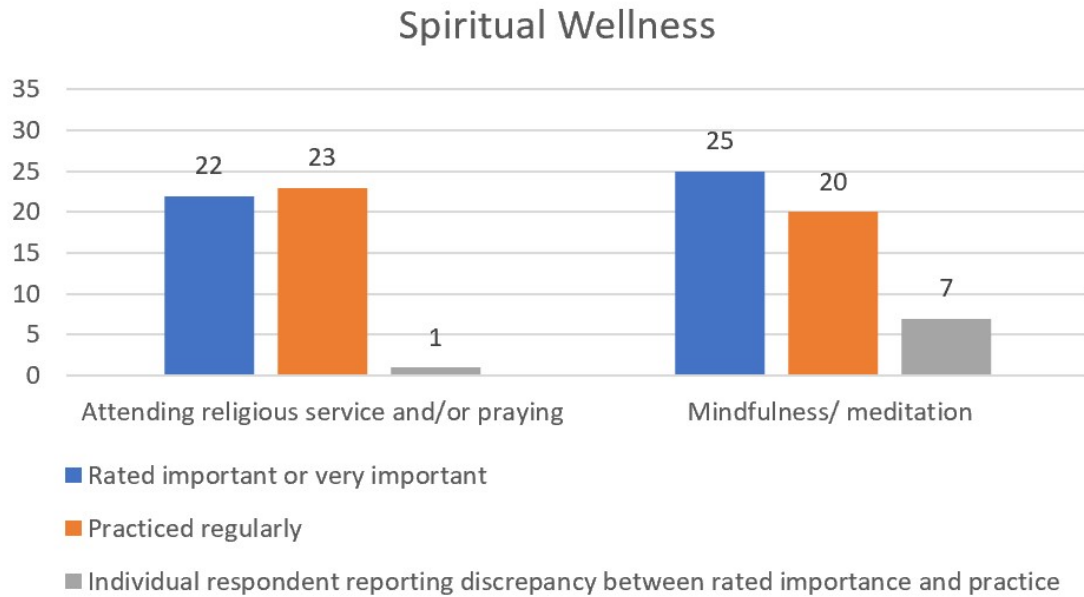
Emotional Wellness Strategies



Spiritual wellness. Attending religious services and/or praying was important or very important to 64.7% (n=22), with slightly more respondents, 67.6% (n=23), practicing this strategy regularly or sometimes. Mindfulness/meditation was also highly valued with 73.5% (n=25) of respondents rating the strategy as important or very important. However, fewer respondents, 55.9% (n=19), practiced mindfulness/meditation regularly or sometimes.

Figure 6

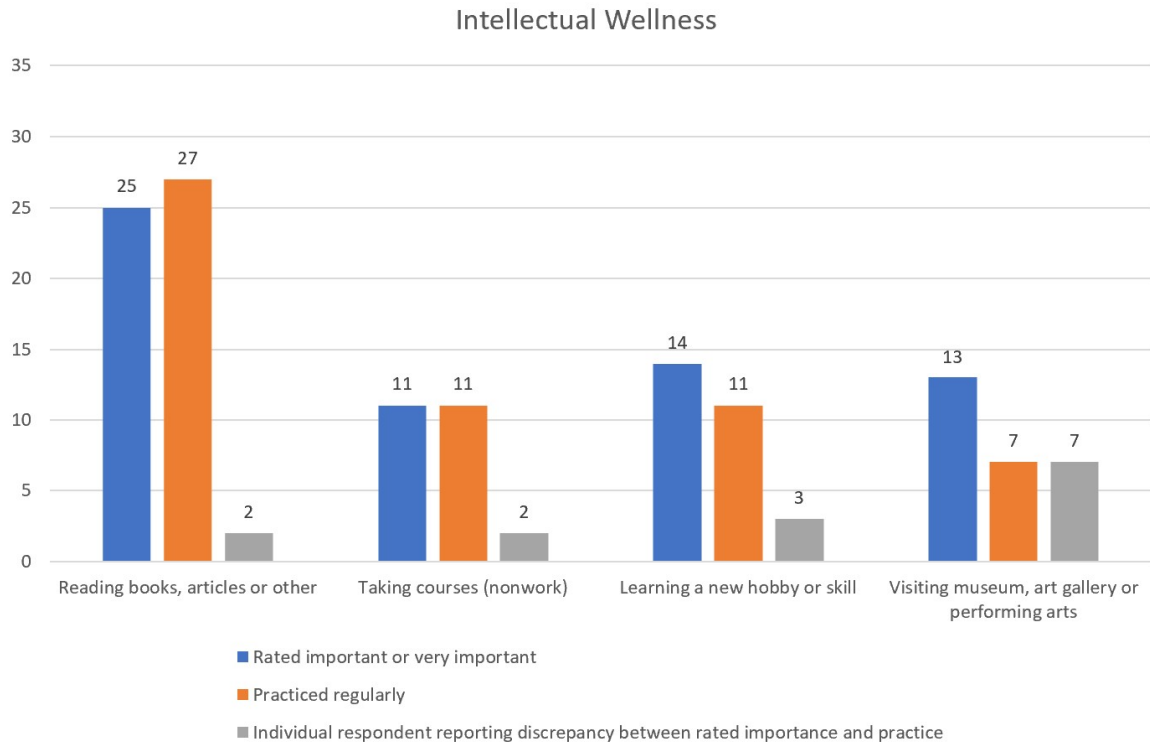
Spiritual Wellness Strategies



Intellectual wellness. Of the intellectual wellness strategies, reading (i.e., books, articles, or other) was by far the most valued with 73.5% (n=25) of respondents rating it as important or very important. Slightly more, 79.4% (n=27) of respondents, practiced this strategy regularly or sometimes, as outlined in Figure 7. Taking courses was equally valued and practiced by 32.4% (n=11) of respondents.

Figure 7

Intellectual Wellness Strategies

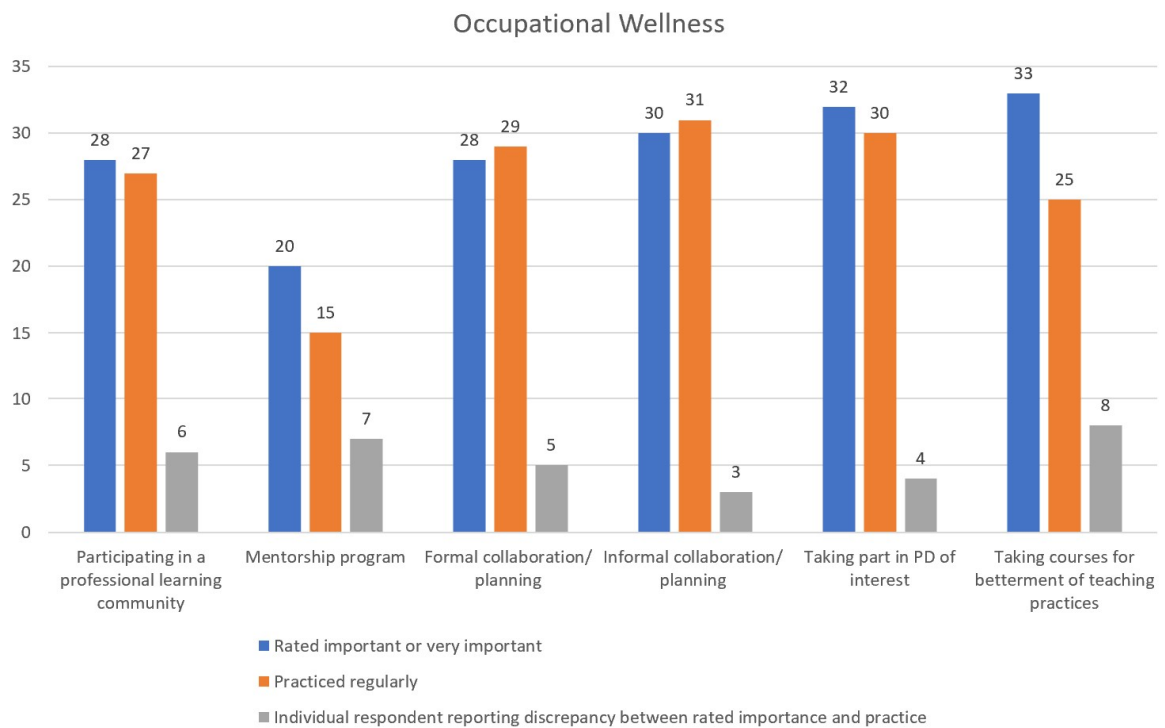


Occupational wellness. Participating in a professional learning community is important or very important to 82.4% (n=28) of respondents, closely followed by 79.4% (n=27) regularly or sometimes practicing this strategy. Mentorship was valued as important or very important by more than half of respondents (n=20), with slightly fewer practicing this strategy regularly or sometimes, 44.1% (n=15). Formal collaboration (mandated by the school) was important or very important to 82.4% (n=28), on par with practice of it regularly or sometimes by 85.3% (n=29) of respondents. Informal collaboration/planning (on personal time) was also highly valued with 88.2% (n=30) of respondents valuing it as important or very important, although a slightly higher number, 91.2% (n=31), practiced this strategy regularly or sometimes. Likewise, taking part in

professional development opportunities of personal interest was important or very important to 94.1% (n=32) of respondents, and practiced regularly or sometimes by 88.2% (n=30). Taking courses for the betterment of personal teaching practice was important or very important to 97.1% (n=33), although the number of respondents practicing this strategy regularly or sometimes was only 73.5% (n=25). As outlined in Figure 8, more than 82.4% (n=28+) of respondents highly valued occupational wellness strategies that support collaboration and improvement through professional development or courses.

Figure 8

Occupational Wellness Strategies

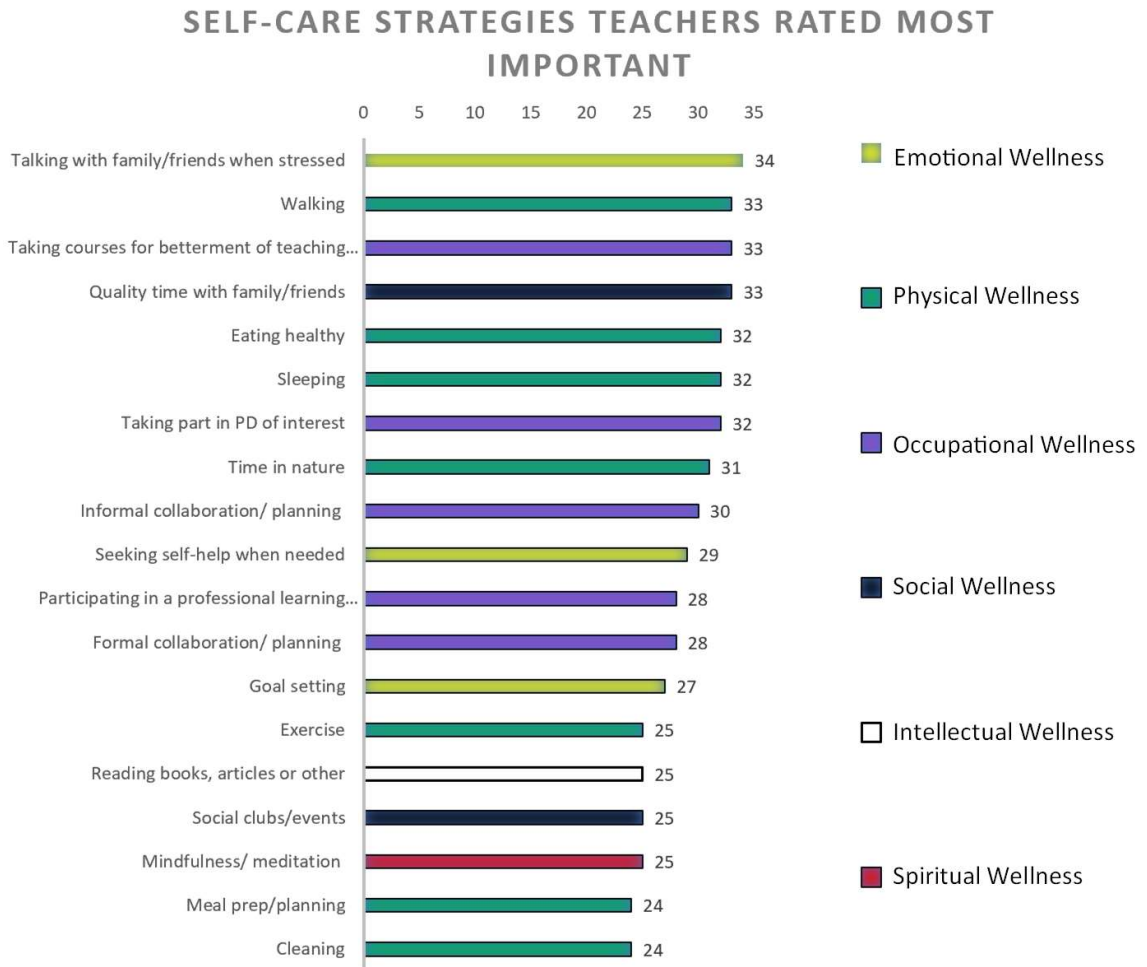


The self-care strategies rated most important to teachers, >70% (n=24+), are outlined in Figure 9. Talking with family/friends when stressed was the highest valued

strategy with 100% of respondents rating it as important. Walking, taking courses for betterment of teaching practices, and quality time with family/friends rated next highest with 97.1% (n=33) of respondents rating the strategies as important. Eating healthy, sleeping, and taking part in professional development of interest were important to 94.1% (n=21) of respondents.

Figure 9

Self-Care Strategies by Importance



Phase 2: Semi-Structured 1-on-1 Telephone Interview

In this section, findings from the qualitative research are organized beginning with the demographics of the interviewee, their definition of self-care, and the emergent themes of the interview. Next, personal wellness is outlined with the positive strategies of the interviewee as well as barriers to wellness. Lastly, workplace wellness is discussed, including the positive factors and challenges experienced by teachers.

Interview 1. Interviewee 1 (i.e., Beth) was a teacher with 14 years of experience, situated in an urban elementary school with an arts-based focus. When asked what self-care means, Beth explained it is “recognizing your own needs and the importance of it so you don’t burn out and you can still care for others.” Throughout the interview, the themes of thinking, perspective, balance, and support were prevalent, highlighting Beth’s value of reflection and maintaining a balance between work and family life.

Self-care strategies practiced by Beth included exercise, healthy eating, getting enough sleep, journaling, taking time for enjoyable activities, and having alone time away from family. Practicing these strategies has helped Beth manage stress and “fill her tank” with activities that are personally fulfilling. During moments of stress, Beth employed deep breathing and often found it helpful to walk away or take a moment to pause and think. Beth explained that even though an issue may feel like “it’s a big deal right now, but it won’t be a big deal in 6 months.” Maintaining a thoughtful perspective helped Beth find calm in stressful moments and prioritize what needed to be done.

Balancing family and work was an important factor in our discussion on wellness. Beth shared, “I am proud of switching off work mode and having family mode.” The one area where a disconnect was identified was in the level of physical activity. Although

Beth highly values exercise and physical activity, it is the self-care strategy that gets put aside most often. Beth explained “I probably don’t work out as much as I value just because I work full-time and I have 2 young kids. So that definitely [is an area of disconnect].”

Beth noted that with teaching experience comes the ability to better manage the stressors of the profession and find a balance between work and home life. “I think as I’ve gotten more teaching experience, again I have more perspective. I realize that the year is long, the days are long, and to not get too worked up over the day-to-day stuff.”

Collaboration was an important piece for Beth “to take away the planning stress and assessment stress.” Beth identified that often the “informal chit chat between colleagues” is what is most authentic and provides useful information for teachers. As well, Beth emphasized the importance of having a supportive team, administrators that “keep the important things important,” and supportive colleagues where “everyone has each other’s backs.”

While Beth felt her overall work and life balance was positive, Beth noted that the inflexibility of teaching makes balance a challenge. The lack of time for collaboration means that teachers must use their own time to meet with colleagues. Overall, Beth felt that “more time” could help to improve teacher wellness and reduce stress. Beth recognized the stress experienced by early career teachers in particular, noting the high stress, excessive worrying, and difficulty to prioritize. Beth cited mentorship as a strategy that could help beginning teachers. Student mental health was recognized as a priority in the school; however, no specific teacher wellness initiatives were identified in the school or division.

Interview 2. Interviewee 2 (i.e., Sara) was a teacher with 7 years of teaching experience, teaching in an urban elementary school. When asked what self-care means, Sara shared “to me, self-care means ensuring I am well mentally and physically and spiritually. I think the three are very important and I feel if I don’t take care of one the other two fall to the wayside as well.” Throughout the conversation, the themes of balance, support, and growth emerged, revealing Sara’s holistic approach to wellness.

Physical activity self-care strategies were of particular importance to Sara, including walking, exercising, dance, and yoga. Other self-care strategies practiced included eating healthy, practicing gratitude, being present, seeking challenge, and counselling. Sara identified that an important part of her personal wellness was striving for growth; Sara explained that “there is your comfort zone and then the great things happen when you finally step outside of that.” This was part of Sara’s inspiration to start earning a Master’s Degree. In moments of stress, Sara voiced the importance of kindness, remembering that everyone has a story often helped Sara find calm. “I rely quite heavily on my family and... friends for their insight and support.”

Sara expressed that at this point in her life the dimensions of wellness were quite level and balanced. However, Sara contended, “in the past they haven’t been and that’s part of the growth cycle and analyzing where you need further growth or enrichment.” Challenges are welcomed for Sara, as Sara explained “a certain amount of stress is healthy and necessary.” Sara disclosed that in the future, when she starts a family, it will add a new dimension to the delicate balance; Sara recognized that “[teaching] will be taking away from my family time and little ones.”

As a teacher, Sara stated that self-care “is important to me because as an educator I feel like I need to be whole for my students and by doing so I give them the best version of myself and... hopefully they will model what they see and follow suit.” Sara noted that key areas for overall school wellness included having good relationships with other teachers and administrators and the presence of a supportive environment. In the future, Sara would like to see more collaboration with colleagues, “I think having and creating [a collaborative] environment is so important.” Choosing positivity is a necessary aspect to workplace wellness for Sara. Sara noted that part of the stress is that “people see the negative instead of choosing to see the positive, and that is a choice I choose to make to see the positive as much as possible.”

The targeted wellness supports offered by Sara’s division were limited with only a few counselling sessions provided, along with some wellness e-updates and seminars. Sara advocated the need for more mental health literacy to benefit both teachers and students, because our “students are not dumb they pick up on our emotions and baggage brought into the classroom and you are bringing it with you, we all have our bad days. And they do pick up on that.” When asked about the stressors of teaching, Sara recalled the shock at the beginning of her teaching career where Sara often felt anxious and unprepared for the reality of teaching. Sara attributed much of the stress to the constant change with new assessments and policies; teachers always need “to relearn the expectations.” Sara described that “society places a stigma on being busy as being a good thing... like it’s a good thing that we are stressed and burnt out,” and that choosing positivity is a choice that more teachers need to make.

Interview 3. Interviewee 3 (i.e., Amy) was a teacher with 4 years of teaching experience, teaching in an urban elementary school. When asked to define self-care, Amy explained that it “is not just a spa day... [there are other aspects] mental health, fitness, sleep, eating well... work-life balance.” During the interview, Amy expressed the importance of support, reminders to reflect, and finding balance; these themes were present throughout our conversation.

The positive aspects of wellness that Amy practices include fitness, getting enough sleep, and eating well. Amy cited mental health as an important part of self-care, in particular “trying to leave work at work as much as [I] can.” When experiencing moments of stress, Amy explained it was helpful “to take a moment... deep breathe... and think about the next step.” Amy’s goal was to continue to improve her work-life balance.

One of the challenges Amy expressed was fitting in physical activity on a regular basis. Amy shared that completing the online survey (i.e., Phase 1) was eye-opening, “when I was first doing the survey I was like, ok this is important to me, this is what I think is going to help with this [stress], but it was not aligning. I know physical fitness is important, I know getting enough sleep is important, I know all these things, but I was not doing them.” Amy expressed that the survey was a positive reminder to restart her wellness routines.

When it comes to the workplace, Amy’s school has many wellness initiatives including a mental health club for teachers, mindfulness space, and a growing bank of mental health resources available. The support of colleagues and administrators eases many stressors in the workplace, as Amy stated, “I feel so comfortable with

administration to talk about things or to go to a colleague about something I need help with.”

Amy recognized the stress of teaching as a profession:

As a teacher you have so many different/multiple hats on... I remember when I first went into the profession, I thought about what if they have a tough challenging home, or bad home life. And literally I would wake up in the middle of the night thinking of a kid. And that still happens... it's not a 9-5 job that you come in and do your work and leave, there are so many aspects that you're bringing home.

When asked what teachers need to alleviate stress, Amy advocated that teachers need more time, time to plan and time to collaborate with colleagues.

Discussion

The purpose of the research project was to investigate how self-care strategies within the six dimensions of wellness impact teacher stress levels. From the quantitative data collected in this research project, the impact of self-care strategies on stress levels is inconclusive. Respondents indicating high stress levels had a smaller discrepancy between valued importance of self-care strategies and time spent practicing them than respondents reporting moderate stress, indicating those experiencing higher stress are practicing the self-care strategies that are important to them. This can be viewed as a positive coping strategy, as these teachers are likely realizing the stress and trying to address it by practicing self-care more often. While the quantitative data shows the actual self-care strategies practiced by participants, it can only provide numbers, which does not necessarily equate to balanced wellness.

Qualitative data allowed deeper exploration of how self-care strategies impact stress. These further insights were needed to inquire into the delicate balance and inner harmony of the participant, both of which are required for balanced wellness of body, mind, and spirit (McCabe, 2008). Thematic analysis of the qualitative data revealed the theme of balance from all three interviewees. Finding balance among the dimensions of wellness, as well as with work and life, was cited as an ongoing challenge among interviewees. Achieving work-life balance is significantly more difficult for teachers than other professions (Duxbury & Higgins, 2013). This balance can be particularly difficult depending on the phase of life or career, for example as a beginning teacher or when starting a family. This supports the literature that as teachers experience different phases in their teaching career, the stressors and vulnerable points shift as do the needs of the teacher (Day, 2007). Future investigation into the cause of higher stress levels for some teachers could provide a clearer picture of the role of balance among the dimensions of wellness.

In the quantitative data, 97.1% (n=33) of respondents indicated high levels of stress in the last month (i.e., stress causing worry or loss of sleep), and 47.1% (n=16) indicated a high level of current stress. This is in line with the research that nearly half of teachers experience high daily stress (Greenberg et al., 2016). Interviewees delved into the stress of teaching identifying the difficulty of balance as a teacher, in part due to the inflexibility of teaching, heavy workload, and changing expectations. Amy explained “it’s not a 9-5 job that you come in and do your work and leave, there are so many aspects that you’re bringing home.” This emotional exhaustion is often referred to as compassion fatigue. The effects of compassion fatigue are felt by a majority of teachers causing an

impact on health and wellness (e.g., energy levels, concentration, motivation, sleep, work performance) (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2020a).

Maintaining healthy routines can be difficult, particularly during times of stress. Once these routines are disrupted, resetting does not happen without realization and intention. Amy, for instance, explained that the online survey was eye-opening to reflect on personal wellness routines, as she stated what was important “was not aligning... I know [physical wellness] is important... but I was not doing it.” The survey caused Amy to reflect on the wellness strategies that were important and realize they were not being practiced regularly or, in the case of physical activity, at all. After completing the survey, this personal reflection acted as a positive reminder to restart the wellness routines Amy valued. There is a need for reflection on our routines to regularly ‘check-in’ with our wellness, as it is common to have a disconnect between our personal values and our actions. The first step to making change requires identifying unhealthy habits and reflecting on the disconnect with our values (Anshel et al., 2010). Therefore, self-reflection must be part of our wellness routine, just like a regular ‘check-up’ at the doctor, to ensure we are maintaining balance and being mindful of our healthy and unhealthy habits. In all three interviews, the theme of reflection was evident. More specifically, each interviewee spoke from a unique angle with the emergence of perspective, growth, and the need for reminders to reflect. Although there was a specific focus for each interviewee, the need for reflection to cultivate wellness was present and its importance was emphasized by the interviewees.

Of all the dimensions of wellness, physical wellness, more specifically physical activity strategies, was found to be the area teachers struggled with most to find balance

between their valued importance of the strategy and regular practice of it. Walking, spending time in nature, and exercise were highly valued by respondents, respectively 94.1% (n=32), 91.2% (n=31), and 73.5% (n=25) rated the strategy as important or very important. However, regular practice was recorded by only 61.8% (n=21), 58.8% (n=20), and 35.3% (n=12) of respondents. Two of the interviewees also found physical activity to be the area of wellness that is most difficult to maintain during times of stress, as they explained “I don’t work out as much as I value because I work full-time, and I have 2 young kids” (Beth) and “I know physical fitness is important... but I was not doing [it]” (Amy). Research shows that maintaining physical activity routines is a challenge with significant barriers to overcome (Anshel et al., 2010). It is no surprise that physical activity is often the first self-care strategy to slip when teachers experience higher stress levels. Interestingly, both Beth and Amy are in vulnerable stages of their teaching careers, Beth having a young family and Amy in the first five years of teaching. These stages are particularly difficult due to changing circumstances and higher stress (Day, 2007).

The quantitative data showed that support from family and friends was important to all respondents (n=34). As well, 97.1% (n=33) of respondents rated quality time with family/friends as important or very important, closely followed by 94.1% (n=32) of respondents regularly or sometimes practicing this strategy. Sara shared, “I rely quite heavily on my family and... friends for their insight and support.” Evidently, having a social support network is important to teachers and highly valued in terms of social and emotional wellness. The theme of support was prevalent for all three interviewees; support is needed from both family and friends and also from within the workplace. All

three interviewees shared their value of support. For example, a statement by Sara advocated for the importance of a support network, “knowing you are supported [by teachers and admin] no matter what is very beneficial to your wellness, especially mental wellness when it comes to stress.” Literature supports the need for positive intrapersonal relationships and a positive school climate as factors in determining the well-being of teachers (Brasfield et al., 2019; Cenkseven-Onder & Sari, 2009). The school leadership team also impacts stress levels as interviewees noted a supportive administrator can ease stress. For example, Amy stated “I feel so comfortable with administration to talk about things or... if I need help.” To add support to this notion, “the quality of leadership, both at school and departmental level, relationships with colleagues and personal support, are major factors in teachers’ sustained commitment and their motivation to remain in or leave a school” (Day, 2007, p. 155); reinforcing the importance of a supportive school environment and leadership that understands the needs of its teachers.

Challenges of work-life for teachers can cause self-care activities to diminish with increased risk of mental and physical health problems (Duxbury & Higgins, 2013). Therefore, the emotional exhaustion of teaching requires careful attention to the mental health and emotional well-being of teachers. Sara noted, “our benefits don’t cover much for mental health [such as counselling]... I found that quite disheartening because I think it is so important.” The interviewees explained that overall mental health training and support for teachers has been minimal. There has been an increase in mental health awareness, and it is now part of the health curriculum for a growing number of Alberta school divisions (Alberta Education, 2017). However, mental health literacy must start with teachers, as mental health strategies are most effective when teachers learn them

through practice and experience the value, then teach them to students (Dolev & Leshem, 2017). Mental health literacy has the ability to support both teachers and students with training and proper implementation. That said, Sarah contended, “mental health literacy would change [wellness] not only for us as educators, but for our students as well.” Increasing the capacity for teachers allows them to be well, to be effective teachers, and to be able to support students emotionally, mentally, and physically.

In the profession of teaching, life-long learning is not just a desirable trait of a teacher, it is a requirement of the role as part of Alberta’s Teaching Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 2018). The quantitative data showed that occupational wellness strategies as a whole were highly valued and practiced, a celebration of the commitment of teachers to their work. Participating in professional learning communities, formal and informal collaboration/planning, taking part in professional development of interest, and taking courses for the betterment of teaching practices were valued by >82.4% (n=28+) of respondents, and practice of the strategies closely followed without noticeable discrepancies. Teachers are truly life-long learners that value improving their teaching practices and working with colleagues. The value and importance of collaboration was part of the discussion with all three interviewees. When asked what would reduce teacher stress, all three interviewees cited collaboration as a key piece. For example, Sara explained “collaboration... to bounce ideas off of [each other] and take away the planning stress and assessment stress.” A supportive environment where collaboration takes place is more likely to have flourishing teachers that are motivated and successful (Capone & Petrillo, 2020; Cherkowski & Walker, 2018).

When asked about the stressors of teaching, all three interviewees brought up the stress of early career teaching. They attested to the difficulty in finding work-life balance in the early career years; likewise, the research attests to the high stress and challenging work-load faced (Anhorn, 2008; Tait, 2008). The wellness of beginning teachers is an area that must be addressed. All interviewees cited that with experience teaching becomes less stressful. Therefore, new teachers should be better supported to manage this stress through research-based methods including emotional intelligence training (Dolev & Leshem, 2017), mindfulness (Gendron et al., 2016), and targeted training such as classroom management (Herman et al., 2018).

Recommendations for Supporting Teacher Wellness

This study has highlighted many positive aspects of teacher wellness, particularly the areas of self-care that teachers value and are practicing. “Positive psychology has emerged ever-stronger as we move away from ‘misery research’ and a depressing focus on all that is wrong with schools and school systems towards an appreciative inquiry into what seems to be working well” (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009, p. 49). Working from these positive self-care strategies and adding to what teachers are already doing has the potential to strengthen wellness practices. The following are recommendations for schools and divisions to support teacher wellness and combat the stressors of the profession:

Regular ‘check-ins’. Emergent stress can cause fluctuations in our habits and routines, and if the stress lingers these routines can be altered making it difficult to reset healthy habits. By regularly ‘checking-in’ on wellness values and practices, it may increase the likelihood of identifying areas of need and a reminder to revisit self-care

routines. From a leadership perspective, it can also identify emergent professional development or training needs for teachers as a preventative measure (Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

Tools for emotional exhaustion. The high rates of emotional exhaustion in teaching require development of emotional awareness and coping skills that can be developed through targeted training in mindfulness (Eva & Thayer, 2017; Flook et al., 2013; Schnaider et al., 2017) and/or emotional intelligence (Dolev & Leshem, 2017; Goleman, 2005). These skills promote positive mental health strategies that teachers can utilize both in the classroom and in their personal lives.

Supporting collaboration and professional learning. Occupational wellness strategies, particularly collaboration and professional learning opportunities, were highly valued and well-practiced by teachers in this study, solidifying the notion that teachers are life-long learners that are dedicated to their profession. Continuing to support collaborative planning and allowing autonomy with professional development will enable teachers to enhance their occupational wellness. Teachers highly satisfied with their career are more likely to experience increased professional autonomy, lower stress levels, and satisfaction with collaborative time with colleagues (Duxbury & Higgins, 2013).

Promoting physical activity. Teachers value physical activity. However, this is the area that often slips first during periods of high stress. Providing opportunities for physical activity in the workplace (e.g., walking club, group fitness, yoga classes), as well as encouragement for out-of-school physical activity (e.g., employee rate fitness pass, wellness benefits to cover physical activity costs) may help teachers build and/or

continue physical activity routines throughout the year. Teachers practicing physical wellness are less likely to experience emotional exhaustion (Brasfield et al., 2019).

Creating a support network. Social wellness is highly valued by teachers with a strong connection to emotional wellness where support from others was deemed by respondents as essential to their self-care. The emotional, psychological, and social realms of well-being must be cultivated in order for teachers to flourish (Capone & Petrillo, 2020). Having a solid support system is an important part of managing stress for many teachers. Schools must purposefully create a supportive school climate through team building, opportunities for collaboration, and both a formal and informal network where teachers can connect when needed.

Enhancing work-life balance. Finding work-life balance is difficult for teachers, particularly those in vulnerable stages (e.g., early career, young family). Through options such as job share, increased sub days for family illness, and mental health days, flexibility can be increased. For new teachers, mentorship and increased targeted professional development are essential.

Comprehensive school health. A strong CSH model embeds mental and physical health practices into the school culture promoting healthy practices among both staff and students (Berg et al., 2018). As teachers learn and practice these wellness tools across the dimensions of wellness, they are more equipped to effectively teach them to students (Capone & Petrillo, 2020).

Pre-Service teacher education. Equipping pre-service teachers with strategies for coping with stress has the potential to build the resilience to decrease burnout and attrition rates of early career teachers (Brasfield et al., 2019; Tait, 2008). If this wellness

education starts during pre-service teacher education, paired with mentorship early in their career, new teachers will be given the tools needed to be successful in the long-term.

Limitations

This research project did not go without limitations. Limitations included the following:

1. The data sample was collected from the Health and Physical Education Council (HPEC) of Alberta members. Being part of HPEC, there is an assumption that members are interested in and value physical and health education, physical activity, and wellness. Such a sample of teachers may be more reflective and/or involved in physical activity than other potential samples of teachers.
2. Qualitative data (i.e., semi-structured 1-on-1 telephone interview) was collected prior to an in-depth analysis of quantitative data (i.e., online survey). Had the quantitative data been analyzed first, to identify any highly noticeable trends, followed by the structuring of interview questions, different questions and topics may have been explored based on the descriptive statistical analysis.
3. The quantitative data sample size (n=34) was a limited sample of the 1800 HPEC members that were invited to participate. Generalizations beyond the sample cannot be made. Moreover, the qualitative data sample size (n=3) also limits the information available; a larger sample with multiple teachers of each category of teaching experience could have provided a more in-depth view.
4. Quantitative data (i.e., online survey) was collected at a single point in time asking participants for the average amount of time spent practicing a self-care strategy. Asking for an average limits the accuracy and may allow for personal

bias to impact participant response. As well, there was no opportunity for respondents to provide additional details (e.g., reasons).

5. The research study was conducted amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of the pandemic has the potential to impact teacher stress and lifestyle. Data collected at a different point in time would likely have different results.

Suggestions for Future Research

Throughout the research study, gaps were identified, as well as potential to mitigate limitations of the study, both of which could extend into future areas of research. For example, the quantitative data was gathered at a single point in time and instructed participants to choose their average time spent practicing the self-care strategy. Current life circumstances and personal biases affects these results, limiting the accuracy of the quantitative data collected. To enhance the accuracy of the data, a case study of teachers could be conducted with tracking of actual time spent on each self-care strategy daily for an extended period of time. This case study method could collect more accurate data, as well as provide insight into the fluctuations of stress levels teachers experience throughout the year.

Moreover, a larger sample size including teachers from a wider demographic scope would collect data that could perhaps be generalized across the teacher population. Understanding the self-care practices of the general population of teachers provides opportunity to cater wellness programming to teacher needs, as well as track wellness trends. Another potential for research would include collecting data from teachers at different points in their teaching career (i.e., longitudinal research). It is possible that the years of teaching experience influence wellness, particularly in the early career and

during life transitions (e.g., starting a family, significant life changes). Teachers may require different supports and professional development depending on their life events and teaching experience.

Concluding Thoughts

This research project helped shed more light on the wellness values and practices of teachers. And, because this research topic was of personal importance to me due to my own life and teaching experiences, I have learned to better understand and care for the dimensions of my wellness, which has made a significant impact in lowering my stress levels and improving my well-being. Understanding self-care better through this study has provided universal strategies that teachers can employ to improve their self-care practice and support their wellness. Conducting this research project has allowed me to recognize that other teachers experience similar challenges with their wellness and the difficulty of finding work-life balance.

It is imperative for teachers to be aware of their wellness. The high stress and emotional exhaustion is not imagined by teachers, and the research is unanimous that there are unique struggles within the profession of teaching that are taxing, affecting the health and wellness of teachers. While findings of this study supported the current body of research regarding the high stress of teaching, it also provided insights into areas of wellness teachers value, as well as areas where many teachers require additional support. This study highlighted the importance of awareness and on-going reflection as an essential part of our wellness routines. These findings have proven that more research is needed in the area of teacher wellness, particularly why some teachers experience higher levels of stress and how to combat these stressors.

As a profession, and as a society, we need to change the stigma that self-care is selfish. Rather, it is a requirement to be a whole and well person. Self-care promotes wellness and for teachers enhances their ability to be effective and emotionally sound for their students (Eva & Thayer, 2017). Honest reflection of our values and self-care practices must be the first step in our wellness journey; we cannot make change unless we recognize the need for it. Self-care is love for the most important person in your life, you.

References

- Alberta Education. (2015). *Alberta teacher workload study*.
<https://education.alberta.ca/media/3114984/teacher-workload-study-final-report-december-2015-2.pdf>
- Alberta Education. (2017). *Working together to support mental health in Alberta schools*.
https://education.alberta.ca/media/3576206/working_together_to_support_mental_health.pdf
- Alberta Education. (2018). *Teaching quality standard*.
<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/4596e0e5-bcad-4e93-a1fb-dad8e2b800d6/resource/75e96af5-8fad-4807-b99a-f12e26d15d9f/download/edc-alberta-education-teaching-quality-standard-2018-01-17.pdf>
- Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan. (n.d.). *Employee wellness*. Retrieved February 21, 2021, from <https://www.asebp.ca/my-benefits/employee-wellness>
- Alberta Teachers' Association. (2020a). *Compassion fatigue, emotional labour and educator burnout: Research study*.
<https://www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Research/COOR-101-30%20Compassion%20Fatigue%20Study.pdf>
- Alberta Teachers' Association. (2020b, November 4). Trauma. *ATA Magazine*, 101(1), 22-23.
- Ancient History of Wellness. (2005). *Electronic Ardell Wellness Report (E-AWR)*, 312, 3.
- Anhorn, R. (2008). The profession that eats its young. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 74(3), 15-26.

- Anshel, M., Brinthaup, T., & Kang, M. (2010). The disconnected values model improves mental well-ness and fitness in an employee wellness program. *Behavioral Medicine, 36*(4), 113-122.
<https://doi-org.ezproxy.aec.talonline.ca/10.1080/08964289.2010.489080>
- Ardell, D. (2005). What wellness offers that most lack! *Electronic Ardell Wellness Report (E-AWR), 269*, 1-2.
- Berg, B. (2009). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (7th ed.). Allyn & Bacon.
- Berg, S., Bradford, B., & Robinson, D. B. (2018). A comprehensive school health (CSH) approach to flourishing schools. In S. Cherkowski & K. Walker (Eds.) *Perspectives on flourishing in schools* (pp. 42-51). Lexington Books.
- Brasfield, M. W., Lancaster, C., & Xu, Y. J. (2019). Wellness as a mitigating factor for teacher burnout. *Journal of Education, 199*(3), 166–178.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022057419864525>
- Brokenleg, M., & James, A. (2013). Living in balance: A Lakota and Mohawk dialogue. *Reclaiming Children and Youth, 22*(2), 51-55. <http://www.reclaimingjournal.com/>
- Capone, V., & Petrillo, G. (2020). Mental health in teachers: Relationships with job satisfaction, efficacy beliefs, burnout and depression. *Current Psychology: A Journal for Diverse Perspectives on Diverse Psychological Issues, 39*(5), 1757–1766. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aec.talonline.ca/10.1007/s12144-018-9878-7>
- Carrington, J. (2018). Why the kids are the least of our worries. *ATA News, 52*(15).
<https://www.teachers.ab.ca/News%20Room/ata%20news/Vol52/Number%2015/Pages/Viewpoints.aspx>

- Cenkseven-Onder, F., & Sari, M. (2009). The quality of school life and burnout as predictors of subjective well-being among teachers. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 9(3), 1223-1235.
- Cherkowski, S. (2018). Positive teacher leadership: Building mindsets and capacities to grow wellbeing. *International Journal of Teacher Leadership*, 9(1), 63–78.
- Clandinin, D. J. & Connelly, F. M. (1992). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. Jossey-Bass.
- Clandinin, D. J., Schaefer, L., Long, J. S., & Steeves, P. (2013). Teacher education: A question of sustaining teachers. In X. Zhu & K. Zeichner (Eds.), *Preparing teachers for the 21st century* (pp. 251-262). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-36970-4_15
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Pearson.
- Czajkowski, T., & King, M. (1975). The hidden curriculum and open education. *The Elementary School Journal*, 75(5), 279-283. www.jstor.org/stable/1000558
- Davies, J., Davies, R., & Heacock, S. (2003). A wellness program for faculty. *Educational Leadership*, 60(8), 68-70.
- Day, C. (2007). *Teachers matter: Connecting work, lives and effectiveness*. McGraw-Hill Education.
- Dolev, N., & Leshem, S. (2017). Developing emotional intelligence competence among teachers. *Teacher Development*, 21(1), 21-39.
- Duffy, T. P. (2011). The Flexner report – 100 years later. *Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine*, 84(3). <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3178858/>

- Dunn, H. (1959a). High-level wellness for man and society. *American Journal of Public Health and the Nations Health*, 49(6), 786-792. doi:10.2105/ajph.49.6.786
- Dunn, H. (1959b). What high-level wellness means. *Canadian Journal of Public Health / Revue Canadienne De Sante'e Publique*, 50(11), 447-457.
www.jstor.org/stable/41981469
- Dunn, H. (1961). *High-level wellness*. Beatty.
- Duxbury, L., & Higgins, H. (2013). *The 2011/12 national study on balancing work, life and caregiving in Canada: The situation for Alberta teachers*.
<https://www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Research/COOR-94%20National%20Study%20on%20Balancing%20Work%20-Duxbury.pdf>
- Eva, A. & Thayer, N. (2017). The mindful teacher: Translating research into daily wellness. *Clearing House*, 90(1), 18-25. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aec.talonline.ca/10.1080/00098655.2016.1235953>
- Flook, L., Goldberg, S., Pinger, L., Bonus, K., & Davidson, R. (2013). Mindfulness for teachers: A pilot study to assess effects on stress, burnout, and teaching efficacy. *Mind, Brain & Education*, 7(3), 182-195.
- Foster, L. T. & Keller, C. P. (2007). *The British Columbia atlas of wellness*. Western Geographical Press.
- Gendron, B., Kouremenous, E., & Rusa, C. (2016). Emotional capital development, positive psychology and mindful teaching: Which links? *International Journal of Emotional Education*, 8(1), 63-74.

- Global Wellness Institute. (n.d.). *History of wellness*. Retrieved April 11, 2020, from <https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/industry-research/history-of-wellness/>
- Global Wellness Institute. (2010). *Spas and the global wellness market: Synergies and opportunities*. <https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/industry-research/spas-global-wellness-market/>
- Goleman, D. (2005). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ* (10th ed.). Bantam Dell.
- Gravetter, F. J., & Wallnau, L. B. (2009). *Statistics for the behavioral sciences* (8th ed.). Wadsworth.
- Greenberg, M. T., Brown, J. L., & Abenavoli, R. M. (2016). *Teacher stress and health effects on teachers, students, and schools*. Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center, Pennsylvania State University. <https://www.edcan.ca/wp-content/uploads/rwjf430428.pdf>
- Guba, E. G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Communication and Technology, 29*(2), 75-91. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30219811>
- Hargreaves, A., & Shirley, D. (2009). *The fourth way: The inspiring future for educational change*. Corwin Press.
- Herman, K., Hickmon-Rosa, J., & Reinke, W. (2018). Empirically derived profiles of teacher stress, burnout, self-efficacy, and coping and associated student outcomes. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 20*(2), 90-100. <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.aec.talonline.ca/10.1177/1098300717732066>

- Hettler, B. (1976). *The six dimensions of wellness model*. nationalwellness.org.
<https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.nationalwellness.org/resource/resmgr/pdfs/SixDimensionsFactSheet.pdf>
- Iancu, A. E., Rusu, A., Măroiu, C., Păcurar, R., & Maricuțoiu, L. P. (2018). The effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing teacher burnout: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 30(2), 373–396. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aec.talonline.ca/10.1007/s10648-017-9420-8>
- Jennings, P. (2018). Bringing mindfulness to teacher PD: By developing their own social-emotional skills, teachers can be more powerfully present in the classroom. *Educational Leadership*, 76(2), 64-68.
- Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2012). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Kendrick, A. (2019). Love, heartbreak, and teacher emotional well-being. *Education Canada*, 59(4), 22–24.
- Kleisiaris, C. F., Sfakianakis, C., & Papatheanasiou, I. V. (2014). Health care practices in ancient Greece: The Hippocratic ideal. *Journal of Medical Ethics and History of Medicine*, 7(6). <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4263393/>
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications.
- Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2008). Early predictors of job burnout and engagement. *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(3), 498–512. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aec.talonline.ca/10.1037/0021-9010.93.3.498>

- Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2001). Job burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52(1), 397. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aec.talonline.ca/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.397>
- McCabe, G. (2008). Mind, body, emotions and spirit: Reaching to the ancestors for healing. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 21(2), 143-152. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aec.talonline.ca/10.1080/09515070802066847>
- Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Jossey-Bass.
- Mortiboys, A. (2012). *Teaching with emotional intelligence: A step-by-step guide for higher and further education professionals* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health. (n.d.). *Comprehensive school health framework* [Image]. jcsh-cces.ca. <http://www.jcsh-cces.ca/about-us/comprehensive-school-health-framework/>
- Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health. (2015, October 14). *What is comprehensive school health?* jcsh-cces.ca. http://www.jcsh-cces.ca/images/What_is_Comprehensive_School_Health_October_14_2015_-_2-pager.pdf
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Sage Publications.
- Portman, T. A., & Garrett, M. (2006). Native American healing traditions. *International Journal of Disability, Development & Education*, 53(4), 453–469. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aec.talonline.ca/10.1080/10349120601008647>

- Prescott, S., Logan, A., & Katz, D. (2019). Preventive medicine for person, place, and planet: Revisiting the concept of high-level wellness in the planetary health paradigm. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *16*(2), 238. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16020238>
- Schnaider, L., Mitnik, I., Zafrani, K., Goldman, Z., & Lev, A. (2017). Inquiry-based stress reduction meditation technique for teacher burnout: A qualitative study. *Mind, Brain & Education*, *11*(2), 75-84. <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.aec.talonline.ca/10.1111/mbe.12137>
- Tait, M. (2008). Resilience as a contributor to novice teacher success, commitment, and retention. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, *35*(4), 57–75.
- University of Minnesota. (n.d.). *Ayurvedic medicine*. Retrieved February 1, 2021, from <https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/explore-healing-practices/ayurvedic-medicine>
- World Health Organization. (1946, July 22). *Constitution*. <https://www.who.int/about/who-we-are/constitution>

Appendix A
Letters of Consent

Organization Consent Form

Teacher Self-Care: An Investigation into the Effects of Teacher Stress Levels

Research Investigator:

Lacey Kelly
Master of Education Student
Concordia University of Edmonton
7128 Ada Blvd
Edmonton, AB T5B 4E4
lcarter@student.concordia.ab.ca

Supervisor:

Dr. Brent Bradford
Associate Professor, Faculty of Education
Concordia University of Edmonton
7128 Ada Blvd
Edmonton, AB T5B 4E4
brent.bradford@concordia.ab.ca

Background

My name is Lacey Kelly. I am currently a Learning Coach at St. Dominic Catholic School. In addition to my teaching/coaching duties, I am working towards a Master of Education Degree at Concordia University of Edmonton.

Purpose

The purpose of my research project is to explore self-care strategies practiced by teachers and discover if there is correlation of self-care to stress levels experienced. The results may indicate self-care practices that could help teachers manage stress, as well as identify key areas where schools can provide wellness supports. The results may inform schools how to best support teacher wellness to maintain teacher effectiveness and cultivate a healthy teaching staff.

Procedure

If you grant permission to allow the Health and Physical Education Council (HPEC) of Alberta to participate in the research project, Alberta teacher council members will be invited to participate in an online survey (available through Google Forms). The online survey will be delivered to teachers through the HPEC email list, members may complete the survey at a time of their convenience. The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes and must be completed by September 30, 2020. At the end of the survey teachers will be asked if they want to participate in an additional semi-structured 1-on-1 telephone interview at a later date. Three interested participants will be randomly selected for the semi-structured 1-on-1 telephone interview that will be conducted between October 15-31, 2020 at a time that is most convenient for them.

The findings of this research project will be provided to HPEC after all data is collected and overall findings have been processed. Interested participants will receive a summary of the findings. All data collected will remain anonymous and pseudonyms will be used to protect privacy.

Potential Risks

There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project. I will follow Concordia University of Edmonton's Ethics Board's rules and all participants will be treated in a respectful manner at all times. Participants are allowed to discontinue their participation in the project at any time until they have submitted data through the online survey. Telephone interview participants will provide consent and their identity will be kept anonymous as pseudonyms will be used. Participants may choose to withdraw from the telephone interview at any point until the completion of the interview.

Potential Benefits

Teacher wellness impacts teaching effectiveness and overall health. Discovering how to better support teacher wellness has the potential to enhance teaching effectiveness and improve health to reduce sick days and teacher leaves. When teacher wellness improves so does student wellness, impacting well-being and academic achievement.

Confidentiality

Participation in this research project is free and voluntary. Participants may withdraw at any time without penalty until submission of the online survey. Telephone interview participants may withdraw at any time until completion of the interview. Participants are asked to respect the confidentiality of the discussions, however, the researcher cannot ensure that all participants will comply with this request. All hard-copy documents, transcripts, and encrypted and unencrypted data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet or securely in a protected database for a period of 5 years. The participants will not be identified by name in any reports or presentations upon completion of this research project. At the end of the 5-year period, all electronic data will remain available to the researcher and all hard copy materials will be destroyed by the researcher.

Contact

If you have any questions or desire any further information with regard to this project, you may contact Lacey Kelly by email at lcarter@student.concordia.ab.ca. You may also contact Dr. Brent Bradford at [REDACTED], or by email at brent.bradford@concordia.ab.ca.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Lacey Kelly

Organization Consent - HPEC of Alberta

Study Title: Teacher Self-Care: An Investigation into the Effects of Teacher Stress Levels

Principal Investigator: Lacey Kelly, Concordia University of Edmonton

Supervisor: Dr. Brent Bradford, Concordia University of Edmonton, ph: [REDACTED]

Consent

The Health and Physical Education Council's participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and you may refuse permission for council members to participate or withdraw from the research at any time without consequence.

Your signature indicates that you give consent for members of the Health and Physical Education Council to participate in this research project.

Subject Signature

Date

Printed Name of the Subject signing above

Participant Consent Form: Semi-Structured One-on-One Telephone Interview

**Teacher Self-Care: An Investigation into the Effects of
Teacher Stress Levels**

Research Investigator:

Lacey Kelly
Master of Education Student
Concordia University of Edmonton
7128 Ada Blvd
Edmonton, AB T5B 4E4
lcarter@student.concordia.ab.ca

Supervisor:

Dr. Brent Bradford
Associate Professor, Faculty of Education
Concordia University of Edmonton
7128 Ada Blvd
Edmonton, AB T5B 4E4
brent.bradford@concordia.ab.ca

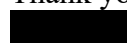
Dear Health and Physical Education Council (HPEC) of Alberta Member,

Thank you for your interest in this research project that is a requirement to earn my Master of Education degree at Concordia University of Edmonton (CUE). Your participation is valuable and much appreciated. As you are aware from my previous email, I am conducting a research project that will explore self-care strategies valued and practiced by teachers, as well as stress levels experienced on a regular basis. The purpose is to discover correlation, if any, between self-care strategies and stress levels. Your participation, which is entirely voluntary, involves responding to 10 questions through a semi-structured one-on-one telephone interview between November 15 and 30, 2020. The interview will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Your responses will be kept anonymous, and pseudonyms will be used when reporting the results.

Participation in this research project will involve no greater risks than those ordinarily experienced in your daily life. You should be aware that even if you consent to participate, you are free to withdraw for any reason without penalty. This includes a decision to not answer a particular question, or any of the questions. Once the interview is complete participant withdrawal is not possible as identifying information will be removed from participant answers. The results, which I will be reporting in class presentations and published works, will ensure your complete anonymity and no identifying data will be released to anyone.

Please be assured that this research project is being conducted in line with the highest ethical standards and has the approval of the Research Ethics Board (REB) at CUE. Please note that by signing this consent form that you are consenting to participation under the conditions described above.

Thank you for your support. If you have any questions, please contact me at lcarter@student.concordia.ab.ca.

Thank you,

Lacey Kelly

Participant Consent

Study Title: Teacher Self-Care: An Investigation into the Effects of Teacher Stress Levels

Principal Investigator: Lacey Kelly, Concordia University of Edmonton

Supervisor: Dr. Brent Bradford, Concordia University of Edmonton,
brent.bradford@concordia.ab.ca

Consent

Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary and you may refuse permission to participate or withdraw from the research at any time before completion without consequence.

Your signature indicates that you give consent to participate in this research project.

Subject Signature

Date

Printed name of the Subject signing above

Appendix B
Online Survey

Teacher Self-Care Survey

* Required

Participant Consent

Dear Health and Physical Education Council (HPEC) of Alberta Members,

My name is Lacey Kelly and I am enrolled in the Master of Education program at Concordia University of Edmonton. As part of the program requirements, I am conducting a research project that will explore self-care strategies valued and practiced by teachers, as well as stress levels experienced on a regular basis. The purpose is to discover correlation, if any, between teacher self-care strategies and stress levels. I am asking for your participation in this research project. Your participation, which is entirely voluntary, involves answering 6 sections of questions in this online survey. It will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete and your answers will be kept completely anonymous.

Participation in this research project will involve no greater risks than those ordinarily experienced in your daily life. You should be aware that even if you consent to participate, you are free to withdraw for any reason without penalty. This includes a decision to not answer a particular question, or any of the questions. Once your submitted responses are received, participant withdrawal is not possible as identifying information will be removed from participant answers. The results, which I will be reporting in class presentations and published works, will ensure your complete anonymity and no identifying data will be released to anyone.

Please be assured that this research project is being conducted in line with the highest ethical standards and has the approval of the Research Ethics Board (REB) at Concordia University of Edmonton. Note that your responses to this online survey imply that you are consenting to participation under the conditions described above (as you will have to click on the 'I CONSENT' link below). If you are unwilling to consent, please do not click on 'I CONSENT'.

Thank you for your support. If you have any questions, please contact me at lcarter@student.concordia.ab.ca.

Thank you,
Lacey Kelly

1. Choose 'I CONSENT' to participate. If you do not consent please exit now. *

Mark only one oval.

I CONSENT

Participant information

2. What is your role as an educator?

Mark only one oval.

- Teacher
- Administrator
- Other: _____

3. How many years have you been an educator?

Mark only one oval.

- 0-4 years
- 5-9 years
- 10-14 years
- 15+ years

Physical Wellness

4. Rate the importance of each self-care strategy relative to your own personal wellness:

Mark only one oval per row.

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
Walking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exercise (i.e., cardiovascular and/or strength training)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Playing sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Yoga	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spending time in nature	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meal planning/prepping	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eating healthy meals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cleaning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sleeping 7-8 hours per night	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Going to the doctor regularly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. On average, how much time do you spend weekly on each of the following self-care strategies?

Mark only one oval per row.

	None	5-15 mins	16-30 mins	31-60 mins	1-2 hours	2-3 hours	3+ hours
Walking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exercise (i.e., cardiovascular and/or strength training)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Playing sports	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Yoga	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Spending time in nature	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. On average, how often do you practice each of the following self-care strategies?

Mark only one oval per row.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Regularly
Meal planning/prepping	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eating healthy meals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cleaning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sleeping 7-8 hours per night	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Going to the doctor regularly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Intellectual Wellness

7. Rate the importance of each self-care strategy relative to your own personal wellness:

Mark only one oval per row.

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
Reading books, articles or online reading material	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taking courses or classes (not work related)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning a new hobby or skill	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visiting museum, art gallery or performing arts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. On average, how often do you practice each of the following self-care strategies?

Mark only one oval per row.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Regularly
Reading books, articles or online reading material	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taking courses or classes (not work related)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning a new hobby or skill	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visiting a museum, art gallery or performing arts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Occupational Wellness

9. Rate the importance of each self-care strategy relative to your own personal wellness:

Mark only one oval per row.

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
Participating in a Professional Learning Community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mentorship Program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Formal collaboration/planning with colleagues (school mandated)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Informal collaboration/planning with colleagues (done on your own time)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taking part in professional development opportunities you are interested in	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taking courses for the betterment of your teaching practice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. On average, how often do you practice each of the following self-care strategies?

Mark only one oval per row.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Regularly
Participating in a Professional Learning Community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mentorship Program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Formal collaboration/planning with colleagues (school mandated)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Informal collaboration/planning with colleagues (done on your own time)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taking part in professional development opportunities you are interested in	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taking courses for the betterment of your teaching practice	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Social Wellness

11. Rate the importance of each self-care strategy relative to your own personal wellness:

Mark only one oval per row.

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
Spending quality time with friends/family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Volunteering or taking part in social justice projects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taking part in social events or social clubs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. On average, how often do you practice each of the following self-care strategies?

Mark only one oval per row.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Regularly
Spending quality time with friends/family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Volunteering or taking part in social justice projects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taking part in social events or social clubs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Emotional Wellness

13. Rate the importance of each self-care strategy relative to your own personal wellness:

Mark only one oval per row.

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
Talking with a supportive friend/family member when feeling stressed or upset	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Journaling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seeking self-help when needed (e.g., money management, stress reduction techniques, time management, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Goal setting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visiting a professional counsellor or psychologist	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. On average, how often do you practice each of the following self-care strategies?

Mark only one oval per row.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Regularly
Talking with a supportive friend/family member when feeling stressed or upset	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Journaling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Seeking self-help when needed (e.g., money management, stress reduction techniques, time management, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Goal setting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visiting a professional counsellor or psychologist	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Spiritual Wellness

15. Rate the importance of each self-care strategy relative to your own personal wellness:

Mark only one oval per row.

	Not at all important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
Attending a religious service and/or praying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mindfulness/Meditation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. On average, how often do you practice each of the following self-care strategies?

Mark only one oval per row.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Regularly
Attending a religious service and/or praying	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mindfulness/Meditation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Teacher Stress

17. How would you rate your current level of stress?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	
Low	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	High

18. In the last month have you experienced high levels of stress that have impacted your daily life (e.g., difficulty sleeping, worrying)?

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No

Contact Details

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your answers will provide valuable data towards self-care strategies to help manage teacher stress. Phase 2 of my study involves semi-structured one-on-one telephone interviews. My aim is to interview 3 individuals to gather further insight related to your personal experiences. I would appreciate if you would put your name forth to put in a random draw to participate in a semi-structured one-on-one telephone interview. The interview will take approximately 15-20 minutes. If you are interested please provide your contact email.

19. Contact Email:

20. If you would like to receive a summary of the research results, please provide your contact email below:

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms

Appendix C

Semi-Structured 1-on-1 Telephone Interview Protocol

Interview Questions:

- What is your current role? (teacher, administrator, other: _____)
- How many years have you been teaching? (0-4, 5-9, 10-14, 15+)
- What does self-care mean to you?
- When experiencing stress in your daily life, what strategy or strategies, if any, do you use in the moment?
- What strategies do you find most effective to manage stress in the long-term?
- In the online Teacher Wellness Survey, you were asked what self-care strategies you valued and practiced. Did you find there was a disconnect between those you valued and those you practiced? (If yes, why?)
- Reflecting on your own answers to the questions, do you feel there is balance between the dimensions of wellness in your life? Why or why not?
- Is there a dimension or dimensions that you feel are more important? (physical, emotional, social, intellectual, occupational, spiritual)
- What do you think makes it difficult for teachers to find balance?
- What supports, if any, does your school provide for teachers with regards to stress/wellness?
- Thinking about the stress you experience at work, what supports do you feel would help teachers the most?
- Which professional supports would benefit you the most to reduce stress?
 - Professional development opportunities

- Stress management courses
- Collaboration with colleagues
- Mentorship
- Other: _____
- None of the above