# How Are Early Career Stage Teachers Impacted by Burnout: A Study of Minnesota Teachers

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## Abstract

The educational field can prove to be a stressful occupation with various aspects being more stressful than others. The purpose of this study was to explore the aspects of teaching that generate burnout in teachers with five years or less of teaching experience. The study used an anonymous online survey to collect data from teachers in the state of Minnesota. Research questions aimed to understand which aspects of teaching were the most stressful, how grade level (elementary, middle school, or high school) impacted burnout, and if professional development could help limit burnout. A total of 289 individuals were included in this research study. The study showed that student behavior and time constraints caused the most stress for early career teachers. These findings crossed all grade levels and there were no significant differences based upon the grades taught by the early career teachers.

*Keywords:* beginning teachers, educator burnout, mental health, stress, well-being

## Introduction

As the Great Resignation caused all sectors of the economy to rethink hiring and retaining talent, the National Education Association released the results of a poll showing that 55% of current teachers are considering leaving the profession earlier than planned due in part to the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic. A full 90% of teachers responded that burnout was a

serious problem, and 91% felt Pandemic related stress was also a serious concern (Rainey, 2022). Adding the impact of the Great Resignation to the concerns of the massive enrollment reduction in teacher preparation programs caused a serious concern for educational leaders. According to the Center for America Progress, enrollment in teacher preparation programs is down by more than a third since 2010. They project that there will be a deficit of more than 340,000 new teachers every year (Partelow, 2019). As the first five years of teaching are critical in determining if a teacher will continue in the profession, it is essential that educational leaders determine how to best support new teachers (Hopkins et al., 2019). In 2017, between 40 and 50 percent of teachers with five or less years of experience left the teaching field due to burnout (Ryan et al., 2017). If this trend continues, there will not be replacements for new teachers leaving the profession. Teacher attrition may be because many first-year teachers are not prepared to handle the stress created by the career (McCarthy et al., 2020). Educational professionals deal with an abundance of emotional demands throughout the workday.

Burnout is a psychological response developed from extended exposure to stressors within a career (Salovita & Pakarinene, 2021). Teaching is a profession likely to lead to burnout (Taylor et al., 2021), due to the high levels of daily stress and emotional demands (Fiorilli et al., 2017). The workload and demands of teaching have grown over time, yet the resources and training to combat burnout remain unchanged (Ryan et al., 2017). Teachers require sufficient training to deal with the stressors within the career (McCarthy et al., 2020).

Teachers are leaving the profession at increased rates due to workload, stress, and poor mental health (Partelow, 2019; Rainey, 2022; Ryan et al., 2017;). The reasoning behind poor mental health and burnout in teachers is documented in the research (Ouellette et al., 2018). However, more should be known about the connections between burnout and teaching factors,

grade range (eg. elementary, middle, or high school) and professional development (Ouellette et al., 2018). Teachers are trained to provide mental health support for students (Ouellette et al., 2018), yet teachers do not receive training for how to support personal mental well-being (Lever et al., 2017). Teachers need support and professional learning to learn how to manage burnout (Coldwell, 2017) which according to Rainey (2022) has impacted teachers along the entire career continuum. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore burnout of early career teachers with less than five years teaching experience. The study investigated teaching factors, grade range, and professional development to make connections to teacher burnout.

**Early Career Teachers**

Beginning teachers have great responsibilities at the beginning of their career (McCarthy et al., 2020). It is one of few professions where beginners are asked to perform all of the same tasks as experienced members of the profession (Gray, et al, 2017). beginning teachers may endure isolation, heavy workloads, navigating a new school, insufficient access to materials, and often burdensome responsibilities experienced teachers do not want to manage, such as coordinating extracurricular activities (McCarthy et al., 2020). The workload and demands of the educational profession have been growing over time, yet the resources and training provided to educators have remained relatively unchanged (Ryan et al., 2017).

The inability to successfully manage workload and emotional demands are issues in many occupations but appear to be especially prevalent amongst early career teachers. Stress is the clearest indicator for high turnover rates and burnout among educators (Ryan et al., 2017). The NEA survey found more than 90% of teachers felt burnout was a concern (Rainey, 2022). New teachers have reported how time constraints, such as not having enough time to eat or use the restroom, are additional physical and emotional strains that were not anticipated when

entering the field (Gray et al., 2017). Loewus (2021) states that approximately 8% of teachers leave the profession annually with early career teachers more likely to leave. Therefore, as the US experiences a significant teacher shortage, it is essential for educational leaders to determine how to more effectively support and retain early career teachers.

**Well-Being Theory**

Well-being theory assumes that people want to live a life with happiness, satisfaction, and meaning (Coffey et al., 2016). Well-being (eg. positive emotional strength) and flourishing (eg. physical health) contribute to these three states. Martin Seligman (2011) created well-being theory, comprising five indicators, to build understanding regarding human happiness These five indicators are positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement.

Seligman's (2011) five indicators of the well-being theory guide ideas surrounding teacher burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience. For example, teacher burnout is often caused by high levels of stress in the workplace (Salovita & Pakarinene, 2021), which decreases a teacher's experience of *positive emotions*. The well-being indicator of *engagement* occurs when a person is satisfied and absorbed in life's activities (Coffey et al., 2016). Research indicates this indicator correlates with teacher achievement as linked to overall satisfaction in the career (Du Plessis et al., 2020). Furthermore, McLean and Connor (2015) found strong student-teacher *relationships* promote overall well-being and decreases teacher burnout. Seligman's well-being theory states relationships allow a person to feel valued and supported (Coffey et al., 2016). Teachers who experience less support reported lower levels of well-being and higher levels of burnout (Salovita & Pakarinene, 2021). The fourth indicator is *meaning*, which is a person's sense of purpose (Coffey et al., 2016). When teachers enter the profession, the main purpose is wanting to make a difference in the lives of students. If this

purpose is not met, teachers may experience higher levels of burnout (Gray et al., 2017). Finally, *achievement* is a drive to obtain self-growth (Coffey et al., 2016). Self-growth for educators can occur through formal or informal professional learning (Coldwell, 2017). Teachers' learning and growth occurs through collaboration, interaction, experimentation, reflection, and overcoming obstacles (Kyndt et al., 2016). For this study, the five indicators of the well-being theory provide a framework to guide the generation of knowledge about burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience.

**Research Questions**

The goal of this study was to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What factors of teaching generate burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?

RQ2: Does grade range (elementary, middle, or high school) contribute to teacher burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?

**Significance of the Study**

Teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate, with upwards of 30-50% of beginning teachers leaving within the first five years of beginning a career (Lindqvist et al., 2014). With the current teacher shortage, it is necessary to create an environment to keep more early career teachers as the current pipeline does not have an adequate replacement pool. A considerable factor leading to the attrition of teachers is the inability to cope with job-related stress, causing poor mental health and burnout (Ryan et al., 2017). The turnover rate and mental health of teachers not only costs the United States $2.2 billion annually (Ryan et al., 2017), it is also negatively affecting the students (Harding et al., 2019). Similar studies in Germany and

Poland showed similar negative economic impacts (Jakubowski & Dominik, 2022; Kreuzfeld et al., 2022).

## Literature Review

### Burnout, Mental Health, and Well-Being in the Workplace

The professional work of many adults takes a considerable amount of time and is often very consuming (Czerw, 2019). Considering adults spend a significant amount of time at work, issues surrounding burnout are common in the workplace (Patterson et al., 2021Mental health is the most neglected of all human health conditions, with less than one percent of most countries' health budgets going towards mental health (Patel et al., 2016). Issues involving mental health can even be prevented by incorporating best practice interventions and focusing on a person's overall well-being (Patel et al., 2016; Troy et al, 2022).

### Teacher Burnout

Teacher burnout often develops gradually when resources are depleted, and stress levels rise (Salovita & Pakarinen, 2021). The resources in education include teacher efficacy, support from colleagues, principal engagement, recognition from the public, and professional development. The depletion of these resources can lead to work that is undesirable, unfulfilling, and unrewarding (Salovita & Pakarinen, 2021). The depletion of these resources also leads to emotional exhaustion, derisive attitudes, decreased job satisfaction, feelings of detachment, and diminished feelings of accomplishment (Fiorilli et al., 2017). Burnout is the end stage of resource depletion, meaning teachers need support prior to diminishing resource stores (Schonfeld & Bianchi, 2016).

Teachers who reported experiencing lower levels of support from principals, colleagues, and parents documented higher levels of burnout, thus highlighting the importance of the

availability and perceived availability of support (Salovita & Pakarinen, 2021). Work-related sources of support relate to a teacher's job-demands and feelings of exhaustion (Fiorilli et al., 2017). When teachers attain high quality social interactions and support from colleagues, they feel less ostracized which leads to less exhaustion (Salovita & Pakarinen, 2021). Professional well-being is directly linked to an individual's personal and social well-being (Czerw, 2019). It is crucial for teachers to have solid support networks both inside and outside of work to help limit the level of burnout experienced.

Teachers who have built strong relationships with students typically exude positive energy in the classroom which leads to lower levels of burnout. When a teacher can build strong relationships with students, student success and classroom management increase, helping to decrease burnout (Salovita & Pakarinen, 2021). Teachers in secondary schools (eg. middle school and high school) report higher levels of burnout compared to elementary school teachers (Salovita & Pakarinen, 2021). Secondary teachers report higher levels of depersonalization and reduced feelings of personal accomplishment. The higher rate of burnout in secondary teachers most likely stems from the greater number of students these teachers serve each day (Salovita & Pakarinen, 2021). Burnout and depression often overlap. Due to the overlap between burnout and depression, it is crucial teachers receive the necessary support and training to avoid burnout. When burnout and depression are viewed as two separate entities, it leads to diminishing thoughts on the severity of burnout and prevents individuals from seeking professional help (Schonfeld & Bianchi, 2016).

**The Crucial Years**

The first five years of a teacher's career are crucial for determining longevity in the profession (Hopkins et al., 2019). Roughly 24% of teachers leave in the first year, 33% leave by

year three, and an astounding 40-50% of teachers leave after just five years in the career (Farrell, 2016). Teachers who left the profession in the first five years often experienced burnout (Kelly & Northrop, 2015). The first three years of a teacher's career are often referred to as the survival and discovery years, and years four through six are focused on building stability (Hopkins et al., 2019). The years of survival and discovery are necessary because the expectations explained during teacher preparatory programs are often in stark contrast compared to the true reality of the job, leading to feelings of shock and stress for new teachers (Ryan et al., 2017).

The two main areas where new teachers feel under prepared are dealing with complex classroom situations (e.g., classroom management) and regulating emotional resources (Voss et al., 2017). Many teacher preparation programs do not allow novice teachers an opportunity to practice using classroom management techniques in an organic manner as the cooperating teacher is often available to step in or provide support that will not be available after student teaching. This causes new teachers to feel unprepared to handle the multifaceted social situations occurring in the classroom, most notably negative student behavior (e.g., talking out of turn, disrupting others' learning). These issues with discipline are one of the top causes of stress in teachers which can lead to burnout (Voss et al., 2017). Classroom management is linked to teachers' stress and student success. As teachers feel less control over classroom management abilities, teacher stress levels rise, student success decreases, and negative student behaviors increase (Voss et al., 2017).

Teaching is one of few occupations where a novice worker possesses the same responsibilities as more experienced colleagues. Beginning teachers are expected to perform at the same level as more experienced colleagues when determining how to set up a classroom, and deciding which standards are the most essential to teach (Farrell, 2016). Standardized test scores

lead to high levels of stress for beginning teachers. Research suggests experienced teachers help students earn higher scores on standardized mathematics tests when compared to first year teachers (Ryan et al., 2017). This can cause administration to put pressure on new teachers to raise student test scores. Test-based accountability pressure from administration can cause beginning teachers to experience increased stress, attrition, and burnout (Ryan et al., 2017). Building trust between new teachers and the school can improve teacher practice, enhance beginning teachers' resilience, and lead to less turnover or burnout (Hopkins et al., 2019).

### *Workload*

Over the past decades, the teaching profession has seen numerous changes regarding workload, defined as the amount of work an employee must complete in a certain amount of time (Huyghebaert et al., 2018). Some of the various job demands teachers may face on a daily basis include: time pressures, lesson planning, issues with student behavior, conflicts with colleagues, grading assignments, feelings of lack of support, low student motivation, and difficulty meeting the many diverse needs of the student population (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). Teachers' perceptions of the ever-expanding teaching role and ability to manage workload impacts the level of stress experienced (Huyghebaert et al., 2018). As workload increases, job demands, and job-related stressors increase, teachers' feelings of exhaustion and burnout increase while self-efficacy decreases (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018).

When prolonged exposure to high workload is experienced, teachers are more likely to feel physically and emotionally depleted. High workload can lead to burnout, especially if a person feels they do not have adequate time to complete the work (Avanzi et al., 2018). In the United States, teachers have an average of three to five hours a week to prepare lessons and communicate with colleagues (Sorenson et al., 2011). The limited amount of planning time,

paired with expectations from administration, parents, and the community leads to high workloads and increased feelings of burnout (Avanzi et al., 2018). When workload increases, emotional exhaustion increases while job satisfaction and performance decrease (Huyghebaert et al., 2018).

Teachers experience greater sleep disturbances and fatigue when the level of workload increases. The higher the workload, the more time is necessary to recover and replenish emotional resources. Unfortunately, a greater workload typically leads to more time spent at work and in return there is less recovery time available. With the school day devoted to completing mandated tasks, a teacher spends more time at school or working at home to get caught up (Gray et al., 2017). Compared to more experienced teachers, beginning teachers spend more time working at home to catch up due to a lack of experience (Gray et al., 2017). The lack of recovery time then leads to greater exhaustion. Teachers who are over committed experience even more sleep disturbances compared to other teachers (Huyghebaert et al., 2018). Teachers tend to have fewer absences when they have increased workloads. This is especially true for teachers who have a new grade level assignment, have large class sizes, or are new to the career. Research suggests this is due to not feeling comfortable enough to take a day off when there is too much to do. Not taking necessary days off can lead to lowered mental health, exhaustion, and burnout (Ost & Schiman, 2017).

To combat high workload and feelings of burnout, it is imperative teachers receive the necessary social and emotional support (Avanzi et al., 2018). Job resources such as positive relationships, opportunities for development and growth, and perceived fairness can help teachers feel less overwhelmed by workload (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). Schools can design compatible teams where teachers can discuss and receive support from colleagues. Some schools

may also be able to create teams of co-teachers who can share the workload burden. It is important to be intentional with these teams, otherwise it could lead to greater issues instead of helping decrease stress (Krammer et al., 2018). Professional development and teacher preparatory programs could better prepare teachers on what to expect for workload and how to manage the high demands of the profession.

### *Work-Life Balance*

Professional work impacts employees' private lives, especially when it comes to a work-life balance (Czerw, 2019). Maintaining a work-life balance can often be especially difficult for teachers to accomplish. Teachers repeatedly commit time outside of contract hours to plan lessons and even attend school sponsored events on evenings and weekends (McIlveen et al., 2019). Many teachers bring home physical (eg. papers to grade) and emotional (eg. misbehavior or student concerns) work items, causing difficulty in detaching from the job (Nilsson et al., 2018). The aforementioned physical and emotional work from school can cause high levels of stress, establishing the potential to impact a teacher's family life (McIlveen et al., 2019).

As technology has become more prevalent in society and classrooms, it has become even more difficult for teachers to maintain a work-life balance. Information and communication technology (ICT), such as phones and computers, allow for easy access to work. Digital learning environments (DLE) also increase the likelihood of a teacher working outside of contractual hours. Not only do DLE's require a significant amount of time to create, but they allow students to contact teachers outside of school hours and provide easy access for teachers to log in and check assignments (Bauwens et al., 2020).

Psychologically detaching during non-work hours is important for teachers to help decrease levels of burnout; that is more difficult when shifting to digital learning environments.

Regularly detaching from work restores depleted emotional resources and increases overall well-being (Bauwens et al., 2020). School climates that reduce time pressures and provide teachers with recovery periods during the day help teachers maintain a better work-life balance. When work environments encourage employees to have a work-life balance, employers tend to develop employees with greater well-being, higher self-efficacy, greater job performance, and less burnout (Nilsson et al., 2018).

### *Teacher Burnout & Student Achievement*

Students gain knowledge, various life skills, and valuable experiences within the classroom (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Depending on a student's classroom experience, there is the opportunity to build intrinsic motivation and enhance well-being (Madigan & Kim, 2021). If a teacher is not experiencing burnout, there is an increased likelihood of helping students achieve success. On the other hand, if a teacher has poor well-being or is experiencing burnout, it can lead to decreased student well-being and lower student achievement (Harding et al., 2019).

A positive classroom learning environment fosters student learning and builds strong relationships between teachers and students. Teachers' well-being directly impacts their ability to provide educational instruction (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Teachers who have strong emotion regulation, positive well-being, and powerful self-efficacy create more positive classroom learning environments and develop students who earn higher test scores. Studies show students who start the school year exhibiting weakness in math skills had significant gains when a positive classroom learning environment was experienced (McLean & Connor, 2015). Teachers who are not experiencing burnout build stronger relationships with students. These positive teacher-student relationships are critical for students' well-being (Harding et al., 2019), and can increase student achievement (Kraft et al., 2016).

When teachers become stressed, it can lead to negative classroom learning environments, limiting the amount of growth students are able to achieve (McLean & Connor, 2015). Teachers who experience burnout are more likely to experience depersonalization which could result in negative relationships with students (Klusmann & Richter, 2016). These negative relationships typically arise when teachers become annoyed by students or do not hold positive views of students' abilities (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Emotional exhaustion can lead teachers to demonstrate less favorable behaviors towards students (Klusmann & Richter, 2016), such as using fewer encouraging words or becoming annoyed (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Negative relationships can cause students to think the teacher does not care about them as a learner or an individual, which can be detrimental to the students' well-being and academic success (Harding et al., 2019).

Teachers underperform at work when experiencing burnout, exhaustion, and other mental health inhibitors (Harding et al., 2019). Teachers who experience burnout and exhaustion typically spend less time planning thoughtful lessons (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Burnout affects teachers' abilities to prepare for classes, therefore students who are taught by teachers experiencing burnout tend to earn lower standardized test scores compared to students taught by teachers who are not experiencing burnout (Madigan & Kim, 2021).

Teachers' mental health impacts student achievement, and student well-being (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Students can be susceptible to the contagion effect. This means students may mimic the emotional cues received from the teacher. Due to the contagion effect, students may experience fatigue, low levels of motivation, and cynical attitudes towards school (Madigan & Kim, 2021). When students lack motivation, performance on assignments decreases. This can lead teachers to doubt effectiveness, further increasing teacher burnout. By reducing teacher

stress, not only could teachers' well-being increase, but student success and well-being should improve as well (Klusmann & Richter, 2016).

## Methodology

This quantitative study investigated the relationship between teachers' daily experiences and feelings of burnout as reported on an eight question Likert scale instrument (see Appendix A). The study analyzed the Likert scale data to look for significant differences in the responses by age, amount of teaching experience, gender, and grade level.

### Sample

The study collected information from a random sample of 5000 teachers who received a teaching license from the Professional Education Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) in the state of Minnesota. PELSB provided a complete list of 56,628 licensed teachers via an electronic data request. The researcher selected a random sample of 5000 teachers from the PELSB list as the university limited the survey to 5000 solicitations. Participants varied between one and five years of experience, gender, age, and grade levels taught.

The 5,000 teachers were asked to respond if they had five or less years of teaching experience. Of those who received the survey, 348 teachers responded for a response rate of 7%. The first survey question filtered out any individual with more than five years of experience who responded to the survey. After factoring out these individuals, the survey received 289 complete responses that were able to be analyzed for this study. The sample consisted of 62 males (22%), 219 females (77%), and one non-binary individual (0.35%). The participants varied in age with 220 individuals between 20-30 years old (76%), 45 individuals between 30-40 years old (16%), 19 individuals between 40-50 years old (7%) and three individuals between 50-60 years old (1%). The respondents were broken down by grade level as 14 early childhood teachers, 105

elementary teachers, 55 middle school teachers, and 60 high school teachers. Thirteen respondents identified multiple grade level roles.

### Instrumentation and Data Collection

The research developed an eight-question online survey with feedback from faculty. Survey questions focused on teaching factors, grade range (elementary, middle, or high school), and professional development. Most of the questions required participants to use a Likert scale to rate experiences and opinions. All data was kept confidential. No participant names or key identifying information were collected. The survey was included as Appendix A.

## Results

### Description of the Sample

The study used a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to look for significant differences in the responses to each section of the survey. Where the ANOVA found a significant difference, Tukey's HSD (honestly significant difference) was used to determine between which various pairs of means were significantly different.

### Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, "What factors of teaching generate burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?" Question 5 on the survey correlated directly with Research Question 1. It said, "On a scale of 1-4 how much stress do you experience due to the following factors of teaching (4 is the most stress, 1 is the least stress)?" The following factors included: student behavior, time constraints (e.g., using the restroom, lunch, prep), time pressures (e.g., MCA testing, meeting all standards), classroom management, lesson planning, limited time to collaborate with coworkers, meetings (e.g., staff, team, IEP, curriculum, etc.), grading student assignments, and other. The ranking scale was as follows: 1 was not stressful at

all, 2 was somewhat not stressful, 3 was somewhat stressful, and 4 was most stressful. Table 1 below shows a summary of responses from Question 5.

**Table 1**

**Stress Rating for Various Aspects of Teaching**

| Stress Factor | Average Stress Rating | Percentage who rated it Most Stressful |
|---|---|---|
| Student Behavior | 2.972 | 88% |
| Time Constraints (e.g., using the restroom, lunch, prep) | 2.944 | 88% |
| Time Pressures (e.g., MCA testing, meeting all standards) | 2.84 | 78% |
| Classroom Management | 2.72 | 64% |
| Lesson Planning | 2.846 | 58% |
| Limited Time to Collaborate with Co-Workers | 2.626 | 56% |
| Meetings (e.g., staff, team, IEP, curriculum, etc.) | 2.554 | 55% |
| Grading Student Assignments | 2.108 | 18% |

*Note.* Ranking was based on a 1-4 scale. 1 represented the least stress (not stressful) and 4 represented the most stress (most stressful).

A one-way ANOVA between topics was conducted to compare the effect of the following facets of teaching, grading student assignments, lesson planning, time pressures, time constraints, classroom management, student behavior, limited time to collaborate with coworkers, and meetings as stressors on early career teachers. There was a significant difference on the amount of stress caused by the various aspects of teaching. [$F (7, 1976) = 22.529$, $p = 1.6019^{E-29}$].

Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that grading student work ($M = 2.097$, $SD = 0.901$) was significantly less of a stressor than any of the other topics. Student

behavior was the most significant stressor (M = 2.968, SD = 0.941) for early career teachers being significantly different from every other topic except for lesson planning with colleagues (M = 2.633, SD = 0.952). Classroom management was significantly less of a stressor than student behavior as well (M = 2.720, SD = 0.969).

Respondents who added items in the free response portion of the survey enumerated concerns about administrative expectations, parent concerns, lack of resources or direction, and time including work-life balance. The majority of additional concerns were administrative in nature, the next most common area of concern were interactions with parents. Aspects of time or time management including work-life balance was the next most common area of concern. Teachers often mentioned the need for administrators to consider meetings in alternative formats to allow them more flexibility to manage their time.

**Research Question 2**

The second research question asked, "How does grade range (elementary, middle, or high school) contribute to teacher burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?" The study analyzed the data collected from survey Question 4 to better understand RQ2. The fourth question explored the grade level taught by the participants who completed the survey. Participants had five options for Question 4: Early childhood (Birth-5 years old), Elementary (K-5), Middle School (6-8), High School (9-12) and Other. Table 2 shows the average response level by grade level.

**Table 2**

**Grade Level Taught and Stress Levels**

| Activity | Average Response by Grade Level | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Early Childhood | Elementary (K-5) | Middle School (6-8) | High School (9-12) | Other |

| | (Birth - 5 years) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Classroom Management | 2.500 | 2.731 | 2.927 | 2.550 | 2.867 |
| Grading Student Assignments | 1.462 | 2.00 | 2.407 | 2.283 | 1.533 |
| Lesson Planning | 2.538 | 2.854 | 2.926 | 2.800 | 2.929 |
| Limited Time to Collaborate with Co-Workers | 2.833 | 2.683 | 2.582 | 2.610 | 2.583 |
| Meetings (e.g. staff, team, IEP, curriculum, etc.) | 2.692 | 2.625 | 2.564 | 2.379 | 2.333 |
| Student Behavior | 3.077 | 3.068 | 3.036 | 2.650 | 3.200 |
| Time Constraints (e.g. using the restroom, lunch, prep) | 2.615 | 3.077 | 3.000 | 2.750 | 2.933 |
| Time Pressures (e.g. MCA testing, meeting all standards) | 2.692 | 3.097 | 3.000 | 2.750 | 2.933 |

Early Childhood accounted for 6% of the sample for this research. Elementary teachers made up 42%, and secondary teachers (middle school and high school) comprised 46% of the sample for this research study.

To complete the data analysis for RQ2, the study completed a one way between subjects ANOVA to compare the responses for each stressor by grade level taught. Classroom management showed no significant difference at the $p < .05$ level between teachers based upon the grade level taught [$F (4, 242) = 1.417$, $p = .229$]. Similar results were obtained for collaboration [ $F (4, 241) = 0.161$, $p = .958$], lesson planning [ $F (4, 240) = 0.828$, $p = .508$].

meetings [ F (4, 241) = 0.862, $p$ = .487], student discipline [ F (4, 242) = 2.401, $p$ = .0506], time constraints [ F (4, 243) = 1.496, $p$ = .204].

The ANOVA comparison for time pressure showed significant difference among the grade level samples [F (4, 242) = 4.411, $p$ = .002]. However, follow up Tukey HSD results did not show any significant differences between responses at any grade level. Therefore, the resulting differences should be considered not to be significant.

Grading student assignments did see a significant difference in the ANOVA test [F (4, 242) = 6.47, $p$ = .000]. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that early childhood teachers (M 1.42, SD = 0.76) and teachers with other assignments (M 1.53, SD = 0.90) were significantly less stressed by grading than middle school (M 2.41, SD = 0.88), or high school teachers (M 2.28, SD = 0.98). Elementary teachers (M 2.0, SD = 0.80) were more stressed than early childhood teachers but did not evidence a significant difference with teachers who responded other. When the early childhood and elementary respondents were combined and compared to combined secondary teachers, there remained a significant different in stress level between secondary teachers (M = 2.34, SD = .86) reported being more stressed by grading than the combined elementary and early childhood teachers (M = 1.94, SD = .66), t(114) = 3.50, $p < .01$.

## Discussion and Conclusions

The study examined what aspects of teaching impact burnout and how grade level impacts burnout. Well-being is beneficial for all individuals and can help guide understanding of burnout in teachers with five or less years of experience.

## Burnout Factors

Research question 1 asked, "What factors of teaching generate burnout in teachers who have five or less years of experience?" Two primary themes emerged regarding stressors: (1) behavior management and (2) time.

### *Theme 1: Student Behavior Management*

Managing complex classroom situations and student behavior is one of the main areas new teachers feel unprepared to deal with when first beginning a career (Voss et al., 2017). Managing student behavior was the highest ranked concern causing early career teacher stress. Classroom management itself was not identified as more significant stressor than other factors. School administrators and pre-service instructors need to focus on ways to better prepare teachers to address student behaviors. Eighty-five percent of respondents felt professional development about managing student behaviors would be helpful. Leaders should regularly provide support for student behavior. Pairing new teachers with faculty mentors is an excellent opportunity for early career educators to learn from experienced teachers. Making sure teachers have clear resources for student behavior management and where to go for assistance is essential for early career teacher success.

### *Theme 2: Time*

Workload is the amount of work an individual must complete within a certain amount of time (Huyghebaert et al., 2018). A high workload can lead to burnout, especially when an individual does not have enough time to complete all their work (Avanzi et al., 2018). The data collected from the survey supports the idea that limited planning time leads to high workloads and increased feelings of burnout (Avanzi et al., 2018). Time or work-life balance was mentioned as an additional factor in the other category. Meetings were listed by 55% of early

career teachers as very stressful. Leaders need to ensure new teachers have the necessary time to plan lessons and learn systems. One respondent mentioned that "unclear expectations from administration" was a stressor. Where possible leaders should try to ensure that teachers do not have too many commitments that take away from the limited planning time early career teachers have. At the secondary level, new teachers should be given fewer unique preps where possible or potentially a structural course release for their first year of teaching. This is a common approach at the collegiate level and should be implemented in K12 schools. Integrating time management processes into new teacher orientation and using technology to effectively automate tasks could also be helpful for early career teachers.

**Grade Level Differences**

One theme emerged from RQ2: (1) similar stress levels regardless of grade level. Recent studies show teachers in middle school and high school reported higher levels of burnout compared to early childhood and elementary school teachers (Salovita & Pakarinen, 2021). However, this research study showed stress levels were relatively consistent across the board. It might be that stress levels increase for secondary teachers in comparison to their elementary peers over time.

**Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

In this study, the sample was restricted to teachers who received a teaching license from the Minnesota Professional Education Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB). This means the participants received teaching licensure in the state of Minnesota. The university supporting the study restricted the survey to 5000 randomly selected solicitations out of Minnesota's 56,628 licensed educators. As PELSB did not provided the number of years of experience, a randomized set of 5000 license holders were selected to receive the survey solicitation. The survey relied on

self-reported data and respondents may not have all interpreted the Likert scales in the same way. The non-responses may have impacted the results as well. The survey did not look for differences by subject taught. It is possible that subject responsibilities may have an impact on teacher well-being.

## Conclusion

After conducting a survey consisting of 252 early career teachers from the state of Minnesota, reviewing the literature, and analyzing the results, the study drew the following primary conclusions. Time constraints and behavior management cause the highest levels of stress and burnout for early career teachers. Both of those topics are difficult for pre-service programs to fully address. Student teachers often focus only on the instructional aspects of the teaching position. They are not generally required to participate in school committees, complete supervisory assignments, or address parental issues. Not experiencing those issues may exacerbate time management issues once in a professional position. Similarly, student teachers are more likely to be placed in high performing schools with fewer discipline issues. Potentially, student teachers should be asked to address those non-instructional aspects of the teaching position more directly in pre-service education. Student teachers are nearly always placed with master teachers who have excellent classroom management skills. Potentially student teachers should be placed in more challenging schools and classrooms to better mirror their likely initial placements. Early career teachers would benefit from a reduced workload and that might reduce stress. Grade level did not greatly impact burnout factors in early career teachers.

### Leadership Implications

***Conclusion 1:*** Time constraints and behavior management were ranked as producing the highest levels of stress and burnout for teachers with five or less years of experience. School leaders

have the responsibility to ensure teachers are doing the best to meet the needs of the students. If teachers are feeling stressed due to meeting pressures or other time constraints, it is the role of the leadership to help alleviate this stress. Leaders within the school can also talk to leaders higher in the school system about longer lunch periods for staff (and students) and additional prep time for teachers; particularly those early in their career. Leaders need to make sure meetings are effectively used and consider other methods to share information. Leaders need to consider alternative strategies beyond traditional before or after school meetings to collaborate and build cohesive teacher teams.

***Conclusion 2:*** Grade level does not greatly affect burnout in teachers with five or less years of experience. The results from this research showed teachers in all grade levels experience about the same amount of stress for the various factors of teaching. Leaders must understand that regardless of the grade level a teacher works with, everyone is susceptible to stress in the workplace. Leaders should talk to staff about what is needed to best meet needs and reduce stress levels. Different grade levels may have specific needs or requests, so it is best to communicate openly to create the most cohesive work environment.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This research explored the aspects of teaching that lead to burnout in teachers with five or less years of experience. The first recommendation for future research would be to explore how teachers can be better prepared for dealing with behavior management in the classroom. Why is behavior management difficult for new teachers, and how can school leaders better equip new teachers to deal with student behavior? What can be added or enhanced during pre-service education, and new teacher orientations? A second recommendation would be what can be done to reduce meeting stress on teachers? Are their alternative formats or delivery methods that could

yield additional time for teachers? A third recommendation for future research would be to explore the types of school schedules have the least time constraints for teachers. Do year-round schooling or block scheduling options create less stress for teachers compared to the traditional school calendar? A last recommendation is to see if there is a difference in stress levels among elementary and secondary teachers who are deeper into their careers. Attempting to answer those questions could add valuable information to the body of knowledge.

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## Author Biography

Paige Peterson is a graduate student at Winona State University pursing her principal licensure. Paige obtained her BA from UW- La Crosse in 2018 with a degree in MC-EA Education. She received her MA from Winona State in 2021. Paige is currently a 6th grade science teacher.

Steven Baule is the chair of the Leadership Education Department at Winona State University. He served as a K12 educator for 30 years including more than a decade as a superintendent prior to moving to higher education.

## Appendix A: Survey

### Teacher Burnout

Q1 How long have you been teaching?

1 year (1)

2 years (2)

3 years (3)

o 4 years (4)

o 5 years 5)

o More than 5 years (6)

Q2 What gender do you identify as?

o Male (1)

o Female (2)

o Other (3) _____

o Prefer not to answer (4)

Q3 What is your age?

o 20-30 (1)

o 30-40 (2)

o 40-50 (3)

o 50-60 (4)

o 60+ (5)

o Prefer not to answer (6)

Q4 What age level do you teach?

- o Early Childhood (Birth - 5 years old) (1)
- o Elementary (K-5) (2)
- o Middle School (6-8) (3)
- o High School (9-12) (4)
- o Other (5)

Q5 On a scale of 1-4, how much stress do you experience due to the following factors of teaching? (4 is the most stress, 1 is little to no stress)

| | 1 (1) | 2 (2) | 3 (3) | 4 (4) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grading student assignments (1) | o | o | o | o |
| Lesson planning (2) | o | o | o | o |
| Time pressures (eg. MCA testing, meeting all standards) (3) | o | o | o | o |
| Time constraints (eg. using the restroom, lunch, prep) (4) | o | o | o | o |
| Classroom management (5) | o | o | o | o |
| Student behavior (6) | o | o | o | o |
| Limited time to collaborate with coworkers (7) | o | o | o | o |
| Meetings (eg. staff, team, IEP, curriculum, etc.) (8) | o | o | o | o |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Other (9) | o | o | o | o |

Q6 How much training have you received during professional development on how to cope with stress or feelings of burnout?

| | More than 8 hours (1) | 5-8 hours (2) | 2-5 hours (3) | Less than 2 hours (4) | None at all (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Please choose the statement that best answers the question (1) | o | o | o | o | o |

Q7 Do you think you would experience less stress if your school district provided more specific training in regards to teacher's mental health, stress, and feelings of burnout during professional development?

| | Definitely yes (1) | Probably yes (2) | Probably not (3) | Definitely not (4) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Please choose the statement that best answers the question (1) | o | o | o | o |

Q8 How helpful would the following professional development topics be in helping you feel less stressed or burned out?

| | Extremely helpful (1) | Somewhat helpful (2) | Somewhat unhelpful (3) | Not helpful at all (4) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Stress management techniques (1) | o | o | o | o |
| Managing student behaviors (2) | o | o | o | o |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mindfulness techniques (3) | o | o | o | o |
| Time management (4) | o | o | o | o |
| Lesson planning tips (5) | o | o | o | o |