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How Administrative Leadership Skills can Address Teacher Burnout

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How Prevalent is Teacher Burnout? What Leads to Burnout?

In the wake of the global pandemic, roughly four in 10 teachers have considered career changes (Walker, 2021). 55% are considering resigning earlier than initially planned (Walker, 2022).

Historically, marginalized and economically disadvantaged communities have encountered recurring educational inequities adding to educational funding gaps and inadequate resources across school districts. For inner-city school districts, teacher recruitment has become a struggle intensified by the pandemic.

Often, teachers are burdened with inefficient local, state, and federal funding for high-quality instructional materials and textbooks, technological devices, and supplies. Specifically, contributing factors range from role stress, conflict, and ambiguity as well as time pressure, poorly paid salaries, and perceived lower-status profession. As a result, school districts are faced with underachievement and decreased continuity for student and family engagement.

K-12 educational institutions must acknowledge a student's and family's socioeconomic status and psychological and physical health outcomes as advances or barriers to academic achievement. Moreover, school leaders should remain vigilant towards the negative effects of student demotion, dropout, graduation rates, and disciplinary practices along with suspensions and expulsions on teacher burnout.

Educational inequities and teacher burnout are not a new phenomenon. For as long as teachers have been educating students, there have been fallacies in understanding and resolving these disparities.

Why is It Important to Address Teacher Burnout?

Teachers are selfless servants managing increasingly high teacher-to-student ratios along with closing achievement gaps and diversifying the academic needs of all students. When confronted with students' emotional and behavioral challenges, limited preparation and training for real-time classroom instruction, and education policies linking standardized assessments to evaluations, teachers' physical and psychological health can ultimately become jeopardized.

Undeveloped leadership, high job demands, and long work hours can lead to low morale and teacher turnover.

Short-Term and Long-Term Signs of Teacher Burnout

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Psychological and physical fatigue
- Insomnia
- Increased or decreased appetite
- Weight loss or gain

- Reduced motivation and drive

Equally, financial stress, shifting expectations, and lack of appreciation can exacerbate teacher burnout.

Proactive Practices for the Prevention and Early Intervention of Teacher Burnout

- Initiating a collegial, supportive school environment
- Increasing opportunities for teacher autonomy and classroom decision-making
- Implementing social-emotional competency programs for faculty, staff, students, and families
- Equipping teachers with access to mentoring programs for boosting teacher satisfaction and retention
- Equipping teachers with evidence-based strategies for propelling student achievement
- Incorporating stress management programs to prevent teacher burnout and positively improve coping strategies for health and wellness

To circumvent teacher burnout, administrators can encourage emotional and mental check-ins along with mindfulness daily practices. Administrators can introduce new teachers to teacher support networks and optimistic peers emanating emotional intelligence. Most importantly, school leaders and teachers can adopt a growth mindset – permitting self-compassion and grace.

Valuable Skills Gained in Carson-Newman University's Ed.D. Administrative Leadership Program

While earning my Ed.D. in Administrative Leadership, Curriculum and Instruction Concentration, I felt Carson-Newman University's doctoral program further refined my coaching, leadership, and mentoring capabilities and accelerated my impact on the following:

- Collaborative decision-making
 - Reading, math, science, and social studies curricula
- Inclusiveness in school culture planning
 - Cultural sensitivity and social-emotional learning strategies
- Professional development
 - Rigorous teaching, execution, and critically examining student achievement data
- Professional ethics
 - Grounded in objectivity, integrity, competence, and ethical behavior

Ways Administrators can Support their Teachers to Reduce Burnout

Administrators can be powerful change agents advocating for a school-wide culture built on the 4Rs:

- Relationships
- Routines
- Roles
- Rigor

When shaping a positive educational climate, it is paramount for school leaders to create a shared vision among faculty, staff, students, and families. While promoting student learning and enrichment opportunities, there is an overarching need to invest in teachers' self-care, emotional, and mental well-being.

Essentially, school leaders are charged with communicating realistic expectations, providing clear guidelines and norms for student learning, and exercising patience with positive academic outcomes and praising the small steps to success.

During these unprecedented times, more than ever, principled leadership matters (i.e., accountability, humility, integrity, and reliability). While adjusting to the new normal and ever-evolving challenges of the pandemic, administrators face complex decisions relating to teacher shortages and scarce allocation of resources. This is all while strategically preparing and developing resilient students and schools.

Fundamental Concepts of Resilient Students and Schools

- Teacher advisory groups
- Student-led parent-teacher conferences
- Learning style-appropriate instructional practices
- Service and cooperative learning experiences

Administrators can encourage teachers by elevating their voices, strengthening positive family engagement, exhibiting transparency, fairness, and honesty, and recognizing teachers as trained professionals.

Successful school leaders cultivate and communicate a culture of equity, promote collective instructional leadership, and nurture reflective practice through professional development and coaching. Extraordinary teacher leaders, ambassadors, and champions deserve recognition for their exemplary fortitude.

References

Walker, T. (2021). *Getting Serious About Teacher Burnout*.

Walker, T. (2022). *Survey: Alarming Number of Educators May Soon Leave the Profession*.

📌 #AdministrativeLeadership, #CarsonNewmanUniversity, #TeacherBurnout



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