Sick and Tired: Teacher Burnout and What Can Be Done About It

An Honors Thesis (Honors 499)

by

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Abstract

It is estimated that as many as 21% of educators experience what is known as teacher burnout. Teacher burnout is a result of various stressors teachers are subjected to on a daily basis. Some teachers have identified increased accountability, lack of respect from students, and lack of appreciation from the community and society as contributing factors to their burnout. Interestingly, there has been little research on burnout conducted since the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was passed. The sweeping reform of this act has drastically changed the face of education as we know it, yet little is known about the effects of these changes on the issue of teacher burnout. Furthermore, very little research has been conducted to determine how familiar pre-service teachers are with teacher burnout. This study surveyed 27 pre-service, new, and veteran elementary school teachers and elementary school administrators. The information acquired through these surveys and secondary research was used to create a series of suggested strategies teachers can use to avoid and/or recover from teacher burnout.

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The Problem

Every year, thousands of teachers are affected by a condition known as teacher burnout. This condition is the product of various causes and can manifest itself in a number of ways. Many people can think back to a teacher they had who was unenthusiastic, moody, or was not engaged in teaching. This teacher was likely experiencing burnout. Teacher burnout has become a topic of interest for researchers in the past 40 years. Originally, burnout was considered a condition that only affected healthcare professionals such as nurses. Further research revealed that burnout affected professionals in careers that required them to constantly help and/or take care of another person. The stresses that accompany these professions contribute to burnout, which can lead to depression, irritability, and psychosomatic illnesses among other symptoms. The causes of teacher burnout have been researched extensively and researchers have discovered that while some causes of burnout originate within the teacher, many other causes originate from outside sources. In the age of educational reform and No Child Left Behind, there are more and more of these outside stresses. Increases in accountability and assessment requirements have added to the stress teachers are under and in turn have contributed to the incidence of burnout. Now, there is more to learn about burnout than ever before. By learning about burnout, a way to avoid or recover from burnout could be discovered.

The term “burnout” was originally used to describe healthcare workers who were experiencing physical and psychological exhaustion. This term was first used by Herbert Freudenberger in 1974 and has grown to be used by those wishing to describe this physical and psychological exhaustion in teachers, social workers, police officers, therapists, and healthcare professionals (Byrne, 1999). Burnout is generally considered to be a response to the emotional toll that constantly helping others in need takes on a person. However, a universally accepted
definition of burnout does not exist. One aspect of burnout that is generally accepted is its multidimensionality. Burnout is considered to be the result of three related factors: emotional exhaustion, reduced personal accomplishment, and depersonalization (Byrne, 1999). In teachers, the effect of these factors has been proven in the elementary, intermediate, and secondary levels.

Another important facet of burnout to consider is that it is not a single event. Burnout does not occur overnight. It is a process that occurs over a period of time and becomes progressively worse. Furthermore, it is important that burnout is not “confused with occasional feelings of discouragement and unhappiness” (Brock & Grady, 2000 (Byrne, 1999) (de Haus & Diekstra, 1999) (Dworkin, 1987)). Professionals in any field and people in general will occasionally feel unhappy or unsatisfied with aspects of their career or life. Burnout differs in that it is a chronic condition, not merely occasional feelings of dissatisfaction or discouragement.

As teachers progress through their careers, they become susceptible to emotional exhaustion. Teachers may grow to feel as though they cannot give to their students emotionally the way they could earlier in their careers. Teachers may feel reduced personal accomplishment when they cannot or do not see their efforts reflected in the progress of their students or in their students’ learning. When depersonalization occurs in teachers, they may develop negative, unsympathetic, and pessimistic attitudes towards students, parents, or colleagues (Byrne, 1999). Research has uncovered five reasons a teacher may begin to experience these factors of burnout (de Haus & Diekstra, 1999).

One reason for burnout is the experience of teaching may not live up to one’s expectations. A teacher’s students may not be as engaged in learning as he or she had expected, or one may not perceive his or her teaching to be as effective as he or he expected. Another reason a teacher may experience burnout is too much time is spent on work, especially
paperwork, rather than teaching. Teachers spend a great deal of time preparing for lessons, grading tests, etc. These activities are less “glamorous” and few teachers choose the career because they love doing paperwork. The less than ideal working conditions that teachers must combat on a daily basis can also contribute to the development of burnout. Class sizes are often times too large and teachers may feel as though they are constantly under time constraints, which can lead to more stress. Teachers may also feel as though they give more to their students in the way of emotional involvement and time than they receive in the way of appreciation. This, too, can contribute to burnout. Finally, teachers often view their relationship with administration as unfair. They do not feel as though they receive the salary or appreciation that their efforts deserve. Again, this contributes to a teacher’s development of burnout.

In their book, *Rekindling the Flame*, Barbara L. Brock and Marilyn L. Grady discuss other conditions that contribute to burnout. They call these conditions “flame extinguishers,” and group them into three categories: organizational issues, administrative leadership style, and personality characteristics of teachers (Brock & Grady, 2000). The authors describe these issues in detail because of the way burnout has traditionally been perceived. Burnout is often considered a problem with the individual. Teachers that burnout are thought to be flawed in some way and unable to “cut it” in the teaching profession. This mind-set towards burnout does not encourage us to consider other causes, and therefore solutions, to the problem of burnout. Work overload is one organizational issue that contributes to burnout. As mentioned previously, time is one of the major constraints put on educators. Limited time coupled with too many demands and insufficient resources can contribute to stress and feelings of exhaustion. Classroom climate and school safety are other organizational issues that can contribute to burnout. Constantly dealing with disruptive behavior in the classroom and concerns about
violence can potentially lead to a negative climate within the classroom and the school itself. A negative climate affects the quality of interactions within the school and these interactions can cause a teacher’s attitude to become quite negative and cynical (Brock and Grady, 2000). In the end this leads to the depersonalization that contributes to burnout. The lack of autonomy and decision-making is another organizational issue that can contribute to burnout. As standards-based and data-driven instruction become more and more popular, teachers may feel they have increasingly limited control over what they teach and when. Some schools have “one-size-fits-all” policies that limit the way in which a teacher presents content (Brock & Grady, 2000). Teachers in these situations may feel as though they have no control and this leads to depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment.

Administrative leadership style can also contribute to burnout in a variety of ways. Principal support, or lack thereof, can play a major role in the likelihood of a teacher burning out. If a principal does not provide a supportive environment for the teachers working in his or her school, there will not be a feeling of trust between them. Teachers may believe the principal is more concerned with maintaining an image and position than helping teachers or students (Brock & Grady, 2000). Administrative leadership style can also contribute to teachers feeling as though they have no control. Some administrators can either micromanage or organize the school to such a degree that teachers feel as though the have no voice or control over how the school or their classroom is run.

Despite external factors playing a large role in the likelihood of a teacher developing burnout, there are some internal factors that can contribute to burnout. Feeling as though one’s job has no meaning can lead to burnout. These feelings of discouragement lead to depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. Having low self-concept can also lead
to burnout, as the teacher will come to see any obstacle as insurmountable (Brock & Grady, 2000). Additionally, those with Type A personalities who are overly competitive and set unrealistic goals and expectations are more likely to experience burnout. When a teacher does experience burnout, he or she may experience a variety of symptoms that manifest in different ways.

Symptoms of burnout can generally be categorized into five areas: physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual. Just as no two teachers will develop burnout for the same reasons, no two teachers will experience the symptoms of this condition in the same way. Furthermore, these symptoms do not necessarily appear independent of one another. Often, they appear together and one may lead to another.

Physically, teachers who are experiencing burnout may feel chronically exhausted. They may be reluctant to get out of bed and be tired regardless of the amount of sleep they get. These teachers may also feel unable to take on projects or interact with people (Brock & Grady, 2000). Teachers may feel the need to sleep excessively, or may not be able to sleep at all. Weight gain, tense muscles, headaches, high blood pressure, depression, and anxiety are all common physical symptoms of burnout. Also, individuals with elevated stress levels may be more accident-prone and injure themselves by tripping or falling. In some cases, the physical symptoms of burnout may lead to alcohol or drug abuse to cope with the stress. Some believe burnout may also lead to psychosomatic illnesses (Rudow, 1999).

Teachers may also feel the effects of burnout intellectually. They may find it hard to make decisions, and may feel as though any decision they make will be the wrong decision as a result of their feelings of depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. Teachers may also experience difficulty focusing on single tasks or feel overwhelmed by large amounts of
information. They may also appear dazed or preoccupied and may anger easily (Brock & Grady, 2000).

Symptoms of burnout can also manifest themselves in the social interactions of the teacher. He or she may feel too tired to socialize with friends or participate in his or her hobbies. These teachers may isolate themselves, but this behavior only worsens the effects of burnout. Communicating his or her feelings could lead to stress relief, but by shutting out the rest of the world, the teacher removes this possibility. Teachers may also find themselves less sympathetic to students' problems and less patient with classroom disruptions (Brock & Grady, 2000). When a teacher who is experiencing burnout finally communicates with someone, it often takes the form of cynical jokes meant to relieve frustration. These jokes may target students, parents, colleagues, administrators, or the school district itself.

The depersonalization that teachers often exhibit when they become burned out is often meant to cope with emotional symptoms they are experiencing. Teachers may initially deny their burnout, and later project the blame for this condition onto others. This leads to paranoia and feelings of distrust (Brock & Grady, 2000). Teachers may begin to deal with students in an analytical way and not in an emotional way. They may become much more strict in regards to following rules and procedures, and isolate themselves emotionally from students, parents, and colleagues. Finally, these emotional symptoms may manifest themselves in the form of self-blame. Teachers may blame themselves for becoming burned out and may no longer feel they are qualified to be teachers.

Finally, teachers may experience the symptoms of burnout spiritually. Teachers may feel their life is no longer happy or satisfying. They have damaged relationships and may no longer be as convicted in their personal or spiritual values. They may not feel able to meet their goals
and may seek a new school, a new career, or retirement. These teachers may feel let down by the teaching profession and become bitter and resentful (Brock & Grady, 2000).

One of the more troubling effects of burnout is its impact on students. Increased teacher stress and decreased teacher morale has a strong correlation with decreased student achievement. This is especially true in urban schools (Haberman, 2004). Additionally, student achievement and teacher stress levels can have a reciprocal relationship. Often times, especially in the age of accountability, lower student achievement leads to higher teacher stress levels which could ultimately lead to increased incidence of teacher burnout (Haberman, 2004). That is not to say that all teachers whose students are not high achieving will burnout, nor that teachers of high achieving students are immune to burnout. Burned out teachers lack the enthusiasm and motivation they once had for education. The creativity that was once used to create interesting and engaging lessons is lost and instruction becomes dull for all involved (Brock & Grady, 2000). Students are not as engaged and do not retain the information that is presented. Also, burned out teachers are not as attentive to students' needs and questions (Brock & Grady, 2000). Burned out teachers may also have a tendency to focus what attention they do give on those students who are seen as “promising” and give little to no attention to the struggling students (Dworkin, 1987).

In addition to teaching ineffectively, students are also treated in a cold, uncaring manner. Burned out teachers are often irritable and may lose their temper over small frustrations (Brock & Grady, 2000). These teachers may be impatient and highly critical of their students. They become inaccessible to their students and avoid contact with them. Burned out teachers do not spend time working with individuals and do not encourage students. They may also be inaccessible physically as well as emotionally. Burned out teachers are absent more than their
peers. Without the sense of commitment that the teacher once had, he or she may call in sick for an illness that previously would not have been a reason to miss work. Obviously, a teacher cannot be effective when he or she is not present. This contributes to the effects students feel from teacher burnout. Furthermore, a teacher’s attitude is infectious. If the teacher is enthusiastic about what he or she is teaching, then students will be as well. However, the converse is also true. If a teacher is cynical and has a negative attitude, the students will have a similar attitude (Brock & Grady, 2000).

The effects of a teacher’s burnout are not confined to his or her classroom and his or her students. The presence of a handful of burned out teachers can drastically change the climate of the entire school (Brock & Grady, 2000). Burned out teachers often will not contribute to programs outside of the classroom or the professional community. Their attitudes bring down the morale of the school as a whole and their frequent absenteeism can be a financial burden on the schools. Some teachers experiencing burnout leave the school or the profession entirely. However, many teachers feel trapped in the profession and do not leave (Dworkin, 1985). In an effort to remove these ineffective teachers from their positions, administrators must go through the termination process and face the possibility of a lawsuit from the teacher in question (Brock & Grady, 2000).

The role of the principal in the occurrence of burnout has previously been overlooked. Burnout is commonly considered a personal problem of the teacher and not a problem caused by external forces. However, we now know that external forces and personal characteristics work in tandem to cause burnout. As discussed previously, organizational issues such as classroom climate and school safety are major contributors to burnout. To a degree, principals have control over some of the issues that contribute to burnout. It is a principal’s responsibility to create an
environment that is encouraging to teachers (Brock & Grady, 2000). In this age of accountability, principals as well as teachers are held responsible for their students' performance on state mandated assessments. In effort to maximize achievement on these tests, principals may push their teachers very hard. This can damage teacher morale and increase the incidence of burnout in a school. However, successful principals will recognize that teachers create effective learning opportunities and support them in this endeavor. Teachers in these types of environments feel valued and are being utilized in the most effective way. Successful principals will also build relationships with teachers, encourage their individual talents, and lead by example (Brock & Grady, 2000). Creating an environment that values teachers for their efforts and the unique assets they bring to the community can help teachers avoid those feelings of reduced personal accomplishment that contribute to burnout.

Teacher burnout is a complicated issue. There are a variety of causes and symptoms associated with this condition and this can make it hard to anticipate and recognize. Organizational issues, school climate, and a perceived lack of efficacy can all cause burnout. Burned out teachers are likely to be irritable, cynical, frequently absent, and unavailable to students. These teachers may feel trapped in their job and unsure of how to revitalize themselves. Improving working conditions for teachers and providing support from the principal can help alleviate this problem and keep good teachers in the classroom. Keeping good teachers in the classroom and excited about teaching will ultimately help students succeed and improve the overall climate of the school.

While conducting this research, it became apparent that there were two gaps in the information. The first gap was related to the knowledge and prevalence of burnout in pre-service teachers. It was difficult to find information on how much pre-service teachers knew about
burnout and its causes. It was also difficult to find information on how common burnout is among pre-service teachers. The second gap in the research was in the study of burnout in the age of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The majority of the research available was conducted prior to the inception of NCLB and some of it is over thirty years old. NCLB has had a dramatic impact on the educational system in the United States and researchers are yet to explore the effect these changes have had on the incidence and perceptions of teacher burnout. In an attempt to fill these gaps, another study was conducted.

Study and Data Analysis

Study

This study consisted of two components. The first component asked teachers and administrators to complete an online survey designed to assess their knowledge and experience with burnout. The teachers completing the surveys reflected various experience levels including veteran teachers, new teachers, and pre-service teachers. In all, 27 educators responded to the survey. The second component was comprised of three face-to-face interviews with representatives from the surveyed groups answering the same questions that were asked on the survey. The goal of these interviews was to assess the same knowledge and experiences educators had with teacher burnout, but also to gain other insights into teacher burnout through conversations with interviewees.

The survey and the interviews were designed to last fifteen to twenty minutes and encouraged participants to share as much as they felt comfortable sharing. The survey contained a variety of open-ended and multiple-choice questions to encourage this sharing while still respecting the time of the participants. The survey questions were designed to gather information about different aspects of teacher burnout and about the teachers and administrators
themselves. The first question asked educators to define themselves as a pre-service teacher, new teacher, veteran teacher, administrator, or retired teacher. The respondents were also asked to indicate how many years of classroom teaching experience they had. Asking for the experience level and years of classroom experience made it possible to determine if there was a correlation between experience and knowledge of burnout. Educators were then asked to rate their knowledge of teacher burnout. Survey takers could indicate they had no knowledge of burnout, very little knowledge, a basic understanding, an advanced understanding, or an expert understanding of the subject. As a way of qualifying this knowledge, educators where then asked to define burnout in their own words. Again, these questions made it possible to explore possible correlations between experience and knowledge of burnout. Survey-takers were then asked what they believe causes burnout and if they believe a burned out teacher could recover. With these questions, it was hoped an understanding of the perceptions teachers have about burnout could be gained and what stressors they perceived as contributors to burnout and if they believed becoming burned out was a permanent condition. Educators taking the survey were then asked to identify ways they believed teachers could avoid burnout and how they could recover from it if they were affected. These questions were intended to determine what strategies teachers might use to avoid or recover from burnout in order to compile these strategies to share with other educators. Survey-takers when then asked if they had ever known a teacher who was affected by burnout and how they knew him or her. These questions were designed to provide better understanding of how common teacher burnout is. Next, educators were asked to explain how they believed teacher burnout affected students and the larger school community. These questions were intended to help understand the impacts of teacher burnout beyond the way in which it impacts the afflicted teacher. The final questions all asked educators
about their personal experiences with burnout. Educators were asked if they had ever experienced burnout, if they recovered from it, what they believed caused it, and from whom they received support when they were burned out. These questions were designed to provide information about burnout and its causes from people who had experienced it firsthand and to discover who teachers felt comfortable reaching out to for help while they struggled with this condition.

**Data Analysis**

The number of educators who responded to the survey was pleasantly surprising. The group that was most represented was veteran teachers, with nearly half of all respondents belonging to this group. Pre-service teachers were the next most represented group followed by new teachers and administrators, respectively (Figure 1). Including administrators, over half of those taking the survey had more than five years of classroom teaching experience, with the remaining respondents having between zero and five years of experience (Figure 1.1). Veteran teachers also appeared to be the group with the most knowledge of burnout. All veteran teachers indicated they had at least a working knowledge of burnout and the majority of respondents who reported knowing a lot about burnout were veteran teachers. Pre-service teachers did not appear to be any less or any more knowledgeable on the
subject of burnout than the other groups (Figure 2). Most pre-service teachers who responded to
the survey indicated they understand the basic principles of burnout and only one pre-service
teacher indicated that he or she had no
knowledge of burnout. This
information was surprising. It had
been anticipated that pre-service
teachers would be more
knowledgeable on the subject because
it is a current problem and one that
would be taught in teacher education programs. However, the amount of knowledge of burnout
those taking the survey reported to have was impressive overall. Nearly three-quarters of those
taking the survey indicated they understand at least the basic principles of burnout and less than
ten percent of respondents reported having no knowledge of burnout. This was a pleasantly
surprising discovery. It had been predicted that more people would have little to no knowledge
of teacher burnout. Discovering this indicates one of two things. Either teachers are better
educated about burnout and its causes than anticipated, or educators are more familiar with
burnout because they have seen it or experienced it in their own life.

For the most part, those responding to the survey provided a good, basic definition of
burnout. Most indicated it was a state of exhaustion, both mental and physical, that results from
various job stresses. Many also indicated that burned out teachers do not exhibit the enthusiasm
and passion for teaching they once did. Some also mentioned being emotionally drained, which
is one of the main problems associated with burnout. Again, veteran teachers seemed to be more
familiar with burnout than their colleagues. They were able to give definitions that were much

Please rate your knowledge of burnout. (Fig. 2)

- No knowledge
- Have heard the term/Very little knowledge
- Understand the basic principles
- Know quite a bit about burnout
- Expert on the subject

20%, 39%, 23%, 47%
more detailed and much closer to the generally accepted definition than the pre-service teachers, new teachers, and administrators. Some who took the survey also referenced symptoms a burned out teacher might experience such as increased illness, irritability, and decreased enthusiasm in the classroom. Others noted that burned out teachers can become very cynical in regards to the educational system. For the most part, the definitions respondents provided were impressive. Most of the responses contained at least one aspect that was closely related to those identified through previous research. However, one misconception in these definitions was particularly troubling. Some respondents defined burnout as a condition that befalls teachers after many years. In reality, burnout can affect any teacher at any point in his or her career, not only after many years. This misconception is worrisome because teachers may be under the impression burnout only occurs later in one’s career might not take steps to avoid the condition early in their career when they are most susceptible.

Asking teachers to describe what they believe causes burnout was very revealing and delivered some of the most interesting results. One of the most common responses to this question was that having high expectations from local, state, and federal administrators is one of the biggest contributors to burnout. They cited rigorous standards, increased testing, and other accountability measures as job stressors that can cause burnout. Several respondents also mentioned behavioral problems as a contributor to burnout. Difficult students contribute to stress and can ultimately lead to burnout. In addition to causing behavioral problems, students can bring other stresses into the classroom. Students often come from difficult situations at home and this can carry over into the classroom. These stresses contribute to the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization that accompanies burnout. Another common response received was that burnout is caused by teachers not feeling appreciated. Many respondents
indicated that teachers feel unappreciated because of their low salaries. It is no secret teachers are not paid well compared to other professions. Studies have shown that teachers make nearly thirty percent less than other workers with similar skills and education (The economic policy institute, 2004). Many respondents indicated that this was a major contributor to burnout. Low salaries can lead to stress about financial issues, but more importantly teachers perceive their low salary as a reflection of how much they are appreciated. When teachers do not feel appreciated or rewarded for their efforts, they may begin to experience feelings of reduced personal accomplishment.

Those taking the survey also indicated that negative interactions with parents also contribute to burnout. Teachers often feel a great deal of pressure coming from their students’ parents. Some studies have shown that parents are the largest source of stress contributing to teacher burnout (Parker-Pope, 2008). Parents often place a great deal of pressure on teachers and may blame the teacher first if their child is not performing. Some respondents also indicated that parents do not encourage their children at home to work towards the educational goals the way teachers do at school. One of the responses to this question did concern me. It was mentioned that burnout may be caused when teachers do not truly love their job. This opinion was very much the minority, but it is still disconcerting. Teachers may not seek help when they are burned out because they are afraid of being stigmatized. If this misconception became widely believed, it could discourage burned out teachers from seeking help and working towards recovery.

Survey takers were also asked how they believe teachers can avoid burnout. One of the most common responses was to put a support system into place for teachers in order to provide encouragement and opportunities to relieve stress. These support systems would give teachers
the opportunity to share their feelings with colleagues and discover new ideas for coping tactics and classroom strategies that could reduce stress. In addition to support from colleagues, many respondents also indicated they believe administrative support is very important to avoiding burnout. By creating a supportive and positive work environment, administrators can reduce the stress teachers are under (Brock & Grady, 2000). Those taking the survey also indicated that including variety in one’s career could help a teacher avoid burnout. This variety can take many forms. Some respondents recommended including variety in the lessons a teacher plans for his or her classroom. Teachers cannot control what material is taught as this is mandated by the state, but teachers can control how they teach this material. Teaching the material in a creative way can help teacher feel as though they are taking some control of their career and their classroom back from the legislators and administrators. Other survey takers suggested switching grade levels as another way to increase the variety in their life. This adjustment could be the change a teacher needs to get out of a rut and avoid burnout (Lamb, 1995). Another common response from those taking the survey was that teachers should attempt to create boundaries between their work life and their home life. These boundaries can be created in different ways. Some respondents suggested taking time off from teaching. The suggested time varied from one response to another. Some suggested taking as much as a semester off, but most suggested shorter breaks. One administrator who responded suggested allowing teachers to take one personal day per month. It was interesting that an administrator would suggest taking time away from school, especially when student performance is so important to the school districts and the state. However, if taking one day off per month improved teacher morale, this could improve student performance overall by keeping effective teachers enthusiastic.
Another suggested method of creating boundaries between home life and work life was to avoid taking work home. This helps home become a place to escape from work stresses. If a teacher constantly brings work home, it may feel as if he or she is always working and does not have the opportunity to relax and cope with stress. However, it may not always be possible to leave one's work at school and still be an effective teacher. Taking on other commitments outside of the classroom can make this even more difficult. This issue was also addressed by many of the survey takers. Many advocated knowing oneself and being realistic about how much one can reasonably undertake. Teachers often take on other responsibilities such as sponsoring a club or coaching a team. This adds to the amount of time spent at school and limits the amount of work that can be completed away from home. These extra responsibilities can create more stress for a teacher and contribute to burnout. Overall, all respondents had great suggestions for avoiding burnout. They were all reasonable and easy to apply to a real-life situation.

Survey takers were also asked if they believe burned-out teachers can recover. Only one respondent indicated that they do not believe teachers can recover from burnout (Figure 3). This was a multiple choice question on the survey, but in the interview subjects were able to give more information. The pre-service teacher who was interviewed indicated she believes teachers can recover from burnout, but it will not be easy. For a burned-out teacher to recover, he or she would need to have the desire to recover. Even then, this process would take a lot of time and a lot of work.
The administrator that was interviewed also stated that teachers can recover from burnout, but they would need a great deal of confidence. A burned-out teacher would need to be confident in his or her abilities and confident that they are in the proper career.

Respondents also had many ideas about how a burned-out teacher could recover. Many suggested taking a leave of absence. There was not a consensus as to how much time should be taken off, responses varied from one week to as long as a semester. Taking time away from school could help relieve some of the stress associated with the pressures of teaching. However, the administrator who was interviewed brought up an excellent point in regards to this recovery suggestion. The time taken away from school must be used wisely. Taking a leave of absence to do nothing more than lay about the house would not be a good use of time. Burned-out teachers should use that time to grow professionally and work towards recovery. Many respondents also suggested making a change in grade-levels or schools. This change of scenery could be enough to relieve the stress of burnout, but it would likely be one component of a larger plan to recover. Changing grade-levels could add variety to the teacher's professional life by changing age group and content. This would make days less monotonous and help revitalize the teacher. Changing schools could help a teacher get relief from difficult administrators, colleagues, or parents. A more supportive environment could be a great advantage to a teacher attempting to recover from burnout. Another common response was for burned-out teachers to seek some sort of professional counseling. The administrator who was interviewed echoed this sentiment. This could give teachers an outlet to share their feelings and learn coping strategies. Several respondents also suggested attending workshops and conferences. These events could also help teachers learn coping strategies or new instructional and management strategies to use in their classrooms.
Respondents were asked if they had ever known a teacher affected by burnout. They were also asked how they knew that teacher. Approximately 70% of those taking the survey indicated that they had known a teacher who was burned-out (Figure 4). Most respondents reported teaching in the same school as a burned-out teacher. Almost as many survey takers reported knowing a burned-out teacher as a friend. Two administrators, including the administrator who was interviewed, indicated they had been an administrator in the school where the burned-out teacher had taught. The remaining respondents who indicated they had known a teacher who was burned-out reported being a student in that teacher’s classroom. The experience of being a student in the classroom of a burned-out teacher leaves a lasting memory and students can recognize when their teacher is not living up to his or her potential.

Those taking the survey were also asked to describe how students are affected by a teacher’s burnout. All subjects agreed that burnout impacts students in a negative way. Several respondents suggested that a teacher’s creativity could suffer when he or she is experiencing burnout. This would lead to less engaging lessons and this makes concepts less accessible to students (Ames, 1992). In fact, the classroom teacher who was interviewed cited the lack of opportunities to be creative as a contributor to burnout and not just a result of burnout. Student achievement will ultimately suffer due to this lack of engagement. When student achievement suffers, teachers are put under additional stress. Many subjects also indicated that burned-out
teachers might put their students under additional pressure to perform. This pressure may be due
to a push from administrators or because the burned-out teacher is very stressed and unwittingly
pressures their students. Several respondents also suggested that students might not feel as
though burned-out teachers care about them. Emotional unavailability is a common symptom of
burnout and students are perceptive to this change in their teacher (Brock & Grady, 2000).
Another common response was that classroom management would suffer in the classroom of a
burned-out teacher. Burned-out teachers might not keep their classroom under control as they
once did or behavior issues might escalate more frequently to a point that disrupts the classroom.
The underlying issue is that students do not perform well in the classroom of a teacher with
burnout. This may be caused by a lack of creativity and engagement, or because the classroom
environment deteriorates and students do not feel comfortable.

Subjects were also asked to describe their personal experiences with burnout. Over half
of all respondents indicated that they were currently or had previously been burned-out (Figure
5). Most survey-takers who reported
being burned-out at one point cited
increased pressures from federal, state,
and local administration as a cause of
their condition. Another common
response was that subjects' burnout was
caused by a decreased sense of personal accomplishment brought on by poor financial
compensation and criticism of their teaching styles. Several respondents also cited
organizational issues such as increased responsibilities outside of the classroom and large
amounts of paperwork as contributors to their burnout. These responses aligned closely with the
existing research on burnout. However, based on the results from this survey, it would appear burnout is more prevalent than previously thought. Current research indicates that teacher burnout may occur in 21% of teachers (Gaitan, 2009). The results of this survey indicate burnout occurred in over 50% of the surveyed population.

Of those respondents who indicated they had experienced burnout at one time or another, only three subjects stated they did not recover from their burnout (Figure 6). This supports the belief that burnout is not a permanent condition, but rather a temporary one that can be treated with hard work. Survey-takers were also asked from whom they sought help when burned-out (Figure 7). The majority of respondents indicated they reached out to other teachers for support. Seeking help from family and friends were also common responses. Interestingly, only one subject indicated that he or she had reached out to an administrator for support when experiencing burnout. Administrators do not appear to be a popular source of support for stressed-out teachers, and this could be due to teachers feeling as though administrators are one of the greatest sources of stress. However, existing research indicates that administrators can be an important part of a burned-out teacher’s support system. The majority of burned-out
teachers do not appear to be utilizing this support system and are not including administrators in the process of being burned-out and recovering from it.

Overall, this study was a success. Respondents represented a wide range of experience levels and knowledge of burnout. Subjects provided a great deal of quality information and were willing to share much of what they knew. Though some of the information that was gathered did not align with existing research, much of it did. The major difference between existing research and the results of this study was in the prevalence of burnout. If the prevalence of burnout indicated in this study reflects the prevalence of burnout in other populations, this condition is much more common than previously thought.

Implications

Avoiding Burnout

Teacher burnout is a real problem and teachers must be proactive in order to avoid falling victim to this condition. Existing research on burnout has led to several suggested strategies to help teachers avoid burnout. These strategies are practical and feasible for teachers and schools to implement. Many of these strategies were supported by responses from the survey that was conducted for this study. These strategies include forming strong support networks, taking on a workload that is reasonable, seeking professional growth opportunities, and maintaining a separation between one’s work life and home life.

Taking on a reasonable workload is one of the most critical steps a teacher can take to avoid burnout, especially for new teachers. Teachers often desire to be very involved in the school community and share their ideas by helping out with a new project (Brock & Grady, 2000). While this is admirable and teachers should be involved in the school community outside of their classrooms, they must be careful not to overextend themselves. Taking on too many
projects makes it difficult for a teacher to keep up with all of the demands that come with these projects. Taking on too many commitments is a common problem for new teachers (Bromfield, Deane, & Burnett, 2003). New teachers often feel the need to take on multiple responsibilities in order to make a name for themselves in a new school and be an involved member of the school community. Respondents to the survey also suggested that teachers take care not to overload themselves. The administrator who was interviewed stated that new teachers should learn to say "no" to projects and organizations they do not feel they can handle. Aside from possibly leading to burnout, overextending oneself could lead to diminished performance in the classroom. A teacher who has overextended himself with other commitments may not be able to dedicate the necessary time to planning and preparing enriching lessons for his or her classroom. However, teachers should be careful not to become too detached from the school community outside of their classrooms. Being involved in clubs, organizations, and events is an important way to become a fixture of the school and get to know one’s students better. This also shows students that their teacher is enthusiastic and involved in their lives. This feeling of trust will carry over to the classroom and lead to more engagement and a more positive classroom environment.

Another problem teachers face when they overextend themselves is not being able to maintain a separation between school and home. Maintaining this separation is a very important step towards avoiding burnout. Teachers are dedicated professionals with many responsibilities. Large amounts of paperwork, grading, and planning often force teachers to spend long hours at school and take work home. This can make it seem as though teachers never have the opportunity to take time for themselves or relax. Creating a separation between work and home gives teachers this time to relax. This separation can take many forms. Several survey
respondents suggested taking a vacation if possible to relax and take a break from the pressures and responsibilities of being a teacher. Others suggested simply not staying at school as long or avoiding taking work home as much as possible. Taking home too much work and not making home a place to escape from work can also lead to sleep problems (Bromfield, Deane, & Burnett, 2003). Not creating a separation between school and home can cause a teacher to think about work around the clock and prevents them from relaxing and getting quality rest. Another way to create this separation between school and home is to take up a hobby or activity that one enjoys (Bromfield, Deane, & Burnett, 2003). This could include jogging, shopping, or having lunch with a friend. Unfortunately, the culture of the educational system can encourage teachers to spend too much time at school. Teachers may feel that they are expected to get to school early and stay late at the end of the day. If they do not, their colleagues may make them feel guilty (Brock & Grady, 2000). As with involvement in clubs and organizations, there is a fine line between maintaining a separation and becoming uninvolved. Staying late every night and taking home large amounts of work every evening and weekend is a recipe for burnout. However, if a teacher’s performance suffers because he or she does not spend enough time planning and taking care of responsibilities this creates a problem instead of preventing one.

Another way for teachers to avoid burnout is to take advantage of professional growth opportunities. Professional growth opportunities allow teachers to learn new strategies to teach creative lessons, manage classroom behavior, and handle other occupational stresses. Teachers, including those who responded to the survey, often cite a lack of creativity in the classroom as a contributor to burnout. As education becomes more standardized and teachers are forced to “teach to the test,” they feel as though they no longer have any freedom in the classroom. Learning new, creative teaching strategies enables teachers to explore concepts in exciting ways.
Managing behavior in the classroom is another source of stress for teachers. Learning new classroom management strategies can reduce some of the stress caused by behavior problems in the classroom and ultimately help teachers avoid burnout. Attending conferences, lectures, workshops, and networking with other educators are all excellent professional growth opportunities for teachers (Brock & Grady, 2000). Several survey respondents and the administrator who was interviewed for this study all suggested attending conferences or workshops as ways to renew teachers’ interests and give them new techniques to use in their professional lives. In addition to professional growth opportunities, teachers need support from others to avoid burnout.

Strong support networks are valuable tools for teachers. They give educators an outlet through which they can share their feelings, seek advice, and collaborate with their colleagues in a supportive environment. These networks should include other teachers, support staff, and administrators. It is especially important for administrators to be a part of these networks. If teachers do not feel like they can share their feelings and concerns with administrators it can create an uncomfortable working environment (Brock & Grady, 2000). According to the results of the limited survey conducted for this study, the majority of teachers do not feel comfortable communicating their concerns to administrators. Changing this mindset will help create more effective support networks for teachers. These support networks are valuable for all teachers, but they can be especially valuable for new teachers. Teachers in their first few years are more vulnerable to burnout than their more experienced colleagues. More experienced teachers can be excellent sources of encouragement for new teachers (Brock & Grady, 2000). Senior faculty members can also benefit from these support networks. Working with new teachers can help
revitalize more experienced faculty members and allow them to learn new teaching strategies (Brock & Grady, 2000).

There are many ways teachers can avoid burnout and it is important for teachers to find what works for them. The above strategies are those that were featured in existing research and supported by the results of this study. Teachers should seek support, take advantage of opportunities to grow professionally, create a separation between school and home, and only take on as many responsibilities as they can handle. Unfortunately, many teachers will become burned out at some point in their career despite their best efforts to avoid this. If burnout happens, there are steps that can be taken to recover from the condition.

**Revitalizing a Burned Out Teacher**

In the past, many have viewed teacher burnout as a condition from which there is no recovery. It was thought that burned-out teachers were doomed to wallow in their overworked, stressed out state. However, research has shown that teachers can recover from burnout with a little help from others and a lot of work on their part. In fact, the results of the survey in this study indicate that the perception of the prognosis for burnout is changing. Only one respondent indicated that he or she did not believe a teacher could recover from burnout. There are several steps a teacher can take to recover from burnout. Some of these steps are similar to the actions one can take to avoid burnout. Strong support networks, taking advantage of professional growth opportunities, taking a break from school, and making a change within the profession are some ways a burned-out teacher can work towards recovery.

The same strong support networks that help teachers avoid burnout can be equally as important to teachers who have become burned-out. These teachers can begin to feel isolated and alone. Knowing there is a safe place to share their feelings and collaborate with their
colleagues can be comforting to teachers battling this condition. The administrator who was interviewed for this study stated that teachers in a school might begin to resent a burned-out colleague. They may see this teacher as lazy, while they are putting in long hours and dedicating the majority of their time to their career and their students. This resentment further isolates the burned-out teacher and does not create an environment that is supportive. The emotional and professional support that teachers receive through these networks is an important facet of the recovery process (Brock & Grady, 2000). Again, it is important for administrators to be a part of these support networks. Unfortunately, teachers do not feel comfortable reaching out to administrators with their stresses and concerns because they do not want to do anything to jeopardize their employment. Administrators need to make it clear that they are approachable and they are there to help teachers. Local administrators such as principals might become the “customer service agents” of the school. When a person has a complaint with a company he or she calls customer service and becomes irate with the first person to answer the call. The customer service agent has no control over company policy and had nothing to do with the events that led to the customer’s complaint. However, the agent is the only person available to be upset with. Many times, but not always, principals are only carrying out directions given by district, state, or national administrators. Teachers in a school find it easier to be angry with the principal than the superintendent of public instruction at the state department of education because he or she is more accessible. For this reason, principals must work doubly hard to make it clear to teachers that they are, in fact, on “their side” and there for support. Sharing their feelings and conversing with colleagues through these support networks can help burned-out teachers learn new strategies to address issues or gain new insight by having another pair, or pairs, of eyes looking at the issues from another angle.
Professional growth networks are as useful to teachers hoping to recover from burnout as they are to those hoping to avoid it. Classroom management issues are often cited as a contributor to burnout. Attending a conference or workshop focused on classroom management could be an effective way to learn new strategies to address these issues in the classroom. Learning to better deal with management problems could reduce stress and help a burned-out teacher enjoy his or her time in the classroom more. Other professional growth opportunities may allow a teacher to learn new ways to teach the curriculum and add variety to his or her classroom. As mentioned previously, teachers often feel as thought they no longer have the freedom to decide how to teach in their own classrooms. Learning to teach the required curriculum in new ways can allow teachers to exercise their creativity and regain some amount of control over the learning opportunities that occur in their classrooms. Perhaps most importantly, it gives the teacher another opportunity to meet others working in the profession and network with them. This can revitalize the teacher’s interest in education or spark a new interest in another facet of the profession (Brock & Grady, 2000). Attending a professional growth conference or workshop can also provide another service for a burned-out teacher. This opportunity could provide the teacher with a short “vacation.” It gives the teacher a chance to get out of the classroom, take a breather, and grow professionally at the same time. As mentioned before, working with a student teacher can also be an excellent way for a teacher to renew his or her passion for teaching. Working with a beginning educator, sharing ideas, and teaching a future teacher can be very exciting and rewarding. However, if a burned-out teacher is considering a student teacher, it should be for the right reasons. The experience is meant to provide opportunities for both educators to grow professionally and learn from each other. It is not meant to give a burned-out teacher a semester off and put all of the responsibilities on the
student teacher. Instead of helping a burned-out teacher recover, this could lead to a brand new educator becoming burned-out before he or she even becomes licensed. In addition to professional growth and support networks, some teachers may find it necessary to step away from the classroom for a period of time.

Taking a break from school is a common way for teachers to recover from burnout. This method of recovery is mentioned in much of the existing research on burnout and was suggested by most of the subjects participating in this study. Taking a break from school can be accomplished by maintaining a separation between one’s work life and home life. Not only does this help a teacher avoid burnout, but it can also help teachers recover from this condition. Maintaining this separation allows teachers to relax and take time for themselves. Teachers are then able to manage their stress and stay enthusiastic about their profession (Brock & Grady, 2000). Teachers could also take a “vacation.” Attending a professional growth conference or workshop would give teachers a day or two to step away from the classroom and relax while also learning to be a more effective educator. Depending on the severity of the burnout, it may be necessary to take as much as a year away from school. This break would allow teachers to do some “soul-searching” and determine if they still have the desire to teach. The administrator that was interviewed brought up an important point about taking an extended break from school. It is imperative that teachers use this time to become better educators. Taking a week or more off to lie around the house and watch television is not a productive use of this time off. Instead, teachers should take steps to better themselves as educators and ensure that teaching is still something they want to do. Teachers could use this time to acquire new skills and grow professionally (Brock & Grady, 2000). If the time is used wisely, taking a break from school can be an effective way to combat burnout.
Burned-out teachers often feel the need to make a change. However, making a change does not necessarily mean changing professions. There are several ways to make this change. One way a teacher can make a revitalizing change within their profession is to request a change in grade level. This change can give teachers the opportunity to work with a new group of students in a different age group and a new group of colleagues. If a teacher feels as though his or her career is becoming monotonous, this can alter the routine enough to renew the teacher’s excitement about school again. Another way to make a change within the profession is to change schools. At times, the administration, staff, or environment of a school can be difficult or discouraging. In these cases, changing schools may be a good choice for a burned-out teaching looking to recover. A burned-out teacher may also decide that he or she still wants to be involved in education, but no longer wishes to teach elementary or high school. In these cases, a teacher may decide to work as an administrator or counselor. He or she may also decide to teach at the post-secondary level (Brock & Grady, 2000). These choices allow teachers to remain involved in education even though they are no longer in an elementary or high school classroom. These changes are more drastic and actually remove teachers from the classroom, but they still allow the teacher to make an impact on education in a way that could be more gratifying.

The most drastic step for a burned-out teacher is to leave the profession. Many burned-out teachers leave the profession, but many others stay even though they are not helping their students by doing so. If a teacher determines that teaching is not the best profession for them, or cannot recover from burnout, it is best for them to leave the profession. It is not fair to the students of that teacher if he or she stays. The students will not receive the education they deserve if the teacher’s heart is no longer in his or her work (Brock & Grady, 2000). It is
unfortunate, but leaving the profession is the only option for some burned-out teachers.

Fortunately, many teachers are able to revitalize themselves and stay in the classroom.

Teachers can recover for burnout. It is not easy and it takes a great deal of work, but it can be done. Burned-out teachers can seek support, grow professionally, take time away from school, or make a change within the profession in their quest to revitalize themselves. Educators have a responsibility to themselves and their students to educate themselves about burnout and help their fellow teachers should they become affected. If everyone works together to combat this condition, there will be more enthusiastic teachers in the classroom and fewer burned-out teachers struggling to recover alone.
Resources


Additional Documents

Survey and Interview Questions

1.) How would you define yourself as an educator?
   a. Pre-service teacher
   b. New teacher
   c. Veteran teacher
   d. Administrator
   e. Retired teacher

2.) How many years of classroom teaching experience do you have?

3.) Please rate your knowledge of teacher burnout.
   a. No knowledge
   b. Have heard the term/very little knowledge
   c. Understand the basic principles
   d. Know quite a bit about burnout
   e. Expert on the subject

4.) How would you define teacher burnout?

5.) What do you believe causes teacher burnout?

6.) Do you believe burned-out teachers can recover from burnout?

7.) How do you think a teacher could avoid burnout?

8.) If affected, what could a teacher do to recover from burnout?

9.) Have you ever known a teacher affected by burnout?
   a. Yes
   b. No

10.) If yes, how did you know that teacher?
    a. I was a student in that teacher’s classroom.
    b. I am a friend of that teacher.
    c. I taught in the same school as that teacher.
    d. I was an administrator in the school where that teacher taught.
11.) How do you think burnout impacts the students?

12.) How do you think the burnout of one teacher impacts the school community?

13.) Are you now or have you ever been affected by teacher burnout?
   a. Yes
   b. No

14.) If yes, what do you think caused your burnout?

15.) Did you recover from your burnout?
   a. Yes
   b. No

16.) If yes, did you seek help from or share your feelings with any of the following? (Select all that apply)
   a. Other teachers
   b. Friends
   c. Family
   d. Administrators

17.) When affected by burnout, did you receive support from any of the following? (Select all that apply)
   a. Other teachers
   b. Friends
   c. Family
   d. Administrators

18.) If you have anything else to share about your views on teacher burnout, please do in the space below.
Informed Consent Form

Study Title  Sick and Tired: Teacher Burnout and What Can Be Done About It

Study Purpose and Rationale
This research study is being conducted to determine educators’ awareness of and experience with teacher burnout. This information will be used to determine a plan to avoid and/or recover from teacher burnout.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria
To be eligible to participate in this study, you must be 18 years of age or older, be a new, veteran, retired, or pre-service elementary school teacher or an elementary school administrator.

Participation Procedures and Duration
You will be asked to participate in a face-to-face interview. The interview consists of 17 questions and will take between 15 and 20 minutes. The questions relate to your knowledge of teacher burnout and any personal experience you may have with teacher burnout.

Data Confidentiality or Anonymity
All information provided during this study will remain confidential. You will not be asked to provide personal information and your responses will only be reported as group data. All questionnaires will be stored securely and only those directly involved with the project will have access to them. After the study is completed, the questionnaires will be destroyed.

Storage of Data
Paper data will be stored in a locked drawer in the researcher’s home until the end of the study and will then be shredded. Digital data will be stored on the researcher’s password-protected computer until the end of the study and then deleted. Only members of the research team will have access to the data.

Risks or Discomforts
The only anticipated risk from participating in this study is that you may not feel comfortable answering some of the questions. You may choose not to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable and you may quit the study at any time.

Benefits
One benefit you may gain from participating in this study may be a better understanding of teacher burnout, its causes, and how to avoid or recover from it.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at anytime for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before signing this form and at any time during the study.
IRB Contact Information
For one’s rights as a research subject, you may contact the following: For questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Director, Office of Research Integrity, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070 or at irb@bsu.edu.

Study Title  Sick and Tired: Teacher Burnout and What Can Be Done About It

*******

Consent
I, ___________________________, agree to participate in this research project entitled, “Sick and Tired: Teacher Burnout and What Can Be Done About It.” I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my consent to participate.

To the best of my knowledge, I meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation (described on the previous page) in this study.

______________________________  _______________________
Participant’s Signature  Date

Researcher Contact Information

Principal Investigator:  Faculty Supervisor:
Alexander Clary, Undergraduate Student  Mrs. Lynette Varner, Instructor of
Elementary Education  Elementary Education
Elementary Education  Ball State University
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The Institutional Review Board reviewed your protocol on March 27, 2012 and has determined the procedures you have proposed are appropriate for exemption under the federal regulations. As such, there will be no further review of your protocol, and you are cleared to proceed with the procedures outlined in your protocol. As an exempt study, there is no requirement for continuing review. Your protocol will remain on file with the IRB as a matter of record.

Editorial notes:

1. Exempt Level Review

While your project does not require continuing review, it is the responsibility of the P.I. (and, if applicable, faculty supervisor) to inform the IRB if the procedures presented in this protocol are to be modified or if problems related to human research participants arise in connection with this project. Any procedural modifications must be evaluated by the IRB before being implemented, as some modifications may change the review status of this project. Please contact please contact Jennifer Weaver Cotton at 765-285-5034 or jmweavercott@gmail.com if you are unsure whether your proposed modification requires review or have any questions. Proposed modifications should be addressed in writing and submitted electronically to the IRB (http://www.bsu.edu/irb) for review. Please reference the above IRB protocol number in any communication to the IRB regarding this project.

Reminder: Even though your study is exempt from the relevant federal regulations of the Common Rule (45 CFR 46, subpart A), you and your research team are not exempt from ethical research practices and should therefore employ all protections for your participants and their data which are appropriate to your project.
IRB Project Narrative

Section 1

The title of this research project is *Sick and Tired: Teacher Burnout and What Can Be Done About It*. The purpose of this project is to explore what is already known about teacher burnout by researchers and by educators. I also hope to discover how teachers that have experienced burnout recovered from it. I will then compile this information with the hope it will help future educators avoid burnout and/or recover from it. Research exists on this topic, but much of it is outdated and was not conducted in the age of educational reform and No Child Left Behind. This project will also gather information about burnout from a demographic that has not been included in the majority of research: pre-service teachers. This project will help fill this gap in the research and provide information on educators in this new age of reform.

Section 2

I hope to have a minimum of twenty subjects participate in this research project, but will accept all subjects that wish to participate. I anticipate this number to be between thirty and forty individuals. The population I will recruit subjects from will consist of pre-service elementary school teachers, new and veteran elementary teachers, and elementary school administrators who are 18 years of age or older. I hope including pre-service teachers will provide a unique perspective on teacher burnout that will fill a gap in the existing research. Surveying both new and veteran teachers will allow me to see if there is a relationship between years of experience and prevalence of burnout. Asking administrators to participate will provide insight into their views on burnout and how they impact this condition. There will not be any exclusion criteria, but subjects will only be allowed to participate if they belong to one of the four populations listed above.

Section 3

In order to recruit subjects for my research, I will send a recruitment email. This email will describe the project and provide a hyperlink to the online survey. The email will assure potential subjects that they are under no obligation to participate and may withdraw their participation at any time. If potential participants belong to the approved populations, they may participate in the study and complete a survey. A similar email will be sent to other potential subjects asking for a face-to-face interview. I will conduct several of these interviews in addition to the online surveys in hopes of gaining more insight into their views on burnout through additional conversation. This email will explain the project in the same way, but instead of including a hyperlink it will include a request for a face-to-face interview. Emails will be sent to teachers using email addresses that are publicly available on the school’s website.

Section 4

This research project will make use of two different research strategies. Most of the research will be conducted using an online survey. This survey will be available online for a two week period and I will obtain the results electronically. For this survey I will use kwiksurveys.com.
will also conduct several face-to-face interviews. These interviews will make use of the same questions as the online survey, but I hope to gain additional insights through conversation with these participants. I will take notes of the responses I receive. These notes will remain in my possession unless the subject wishes to withdraw his or her participation, in which case I will give them to the subject.

Section 5

The online survey will be conducted with anonymity. I will have no way of knowing which responses belong to which person or even who has participated. The information from this survey will be stored on my personal, password-protected computer until the end of the study, at which point it will be deleted. The face-to-face interviews will be confidential. They will not contain any identifiable information and identifiable information will not be used in the final project. The notes from these interviews will be stored securely in my home in a locked drawer until they are destroyed at the end of the study. Only my faculty advisor and I will have access to the information collected during the study.

Section 6

The risks to the subject are minimal. I cannot foresee any risks to the subjects. The surveys will be conducted anonymously over the Internet and all information collected during the surveys and interviews will be kept confidential and destroyed at the end of the study. To protect the subjects, no identifiable information will be collected and any information that is collected will be stored securely and kept confidential. There are several potential benefits to this study. One benefit is it adds to the existing knowledge of teacher burnout and explores this phenomenon in the age of No Child Left Behind. Another benefit is it could serve as a resource for teachers attempting to avoid or recover from burnout.

Section 7

There will not be any incentives offered to participants in this study. Participation will be purely voluntary and only for the advancement of our knowledge of teacher burnout.

Section 8

The majority of the research will be conducted online and can be done from any computer with Internet access. If subjects participate in the face-to-face interviews, the interview will take place at a location of their choosing. There may be some minor expense in transportation, but allowing the subject to choose the interview location should minimize this expense. Subjects will not be compensated for their participation; this will be made clear in the recruitment email.

Section 9

I will provide all potential subjects with a detailed description of the study, its purpose, their rights as participants, how their responses will be used, and how the anonymity of subjects taking the survey and the confidentiality of interviewees will be preserved. A study information
sheet containing the same information as the informed consent form will be posted at the top of the online survey. Subjects participating in the face-to-face interviews will be given an informed consent form to sign prior to any questioning taking place. (Gold, Smith, Hopper, Herne, Tansey, & Hullan, 2009) (Maxfield, 2009) (Yavuz, 2009) (Haberman, 2004) (Scherer, 2003)