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Embracing Resiliency: Practical Strategies to Minimize Teacher Burnout and Elevate Retention

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Abstract

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Teacher shortage constitutes a crisis in the U.S. and the education system at-large. In light of the crisis of teacher shortage and the severity of turnover rate, the purpose of this paper is to join in the dialogue to further the conversation regarding how believing or reinforcing stereotypes can contribute to burnout and unrealistic expectations teachers face in education. Suggestions for pre-service and in-service teachers to acquire a more realistic and resilient lens for themselves as educators and the profession is presented. The following themes will be explored: collaboration, embracing vulnerability, empowerment and agency, support and mentoring, and self-care and resiliency.

Keywords

teacher retention, resilience, self-care, mentoring, empowerment

Embracing Resiliency: Practical Strategies to Minimize Teacher Burnout and Elevate Retention

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Introduction

Teaching is the profession that creates all other professions. Teachers play a significant role in shaping the lives of children across the nation. They facilitate learning and educate young minds to become responsible citizens. Teachers contribute their knowledge and expertise to society and help prepare students for the workforce of the future.

Economic Policy Institute asserts teacher shortage in the U.S. is an increasingly recognized but poorly understood crisis (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). The shortage is recognized by the policymakers and media. Researchers have estimated the size of the shortage was about 110,000 teachers in the 2017-2018 school year, up from no shortage before 2013. However, the shortage is poorly understood because the reasons for it are complex and interdependent. The shortage occurs because there is an insufficient number of credentialed teachers to fill the positions. The reasons for unfilled vacancies include reduced attractiveness of teaching as a profession, increases in school enrollment, reductions in class sizes, and excessive number of teachers leaving the profession. Teacher shortage constitutes a crisis in the U.S. because of its negative effects on students, teachers, and the education system at-large.

Teacher Turnover Variables

Today, teaching is one of the most stressful occupations in the U.S. (Greenberg, Brown, & Abenavoli, 2016). High levels of stress have become one of the main reasons that leads to teacher burnout and highest turnover rates ever. National survey data also reveal severity of turnover varies remarkably (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Teacher turnover rates are 50% higher in Title I schools, which serve more students with low socio-economic status. Turnover rates are 70% higher for teachers in schools serving the largest concentrations of

students of color. Teachers of color, who teach in high-minority, low-income schools and who are more likely to enter the profession without having completed their training, have higher turnover rates (19%) than White teachers overall (15%). Also, among the key variables that drive turnover are the type of preparation teachers have received prior to entry and the administrative support they receive on the job. Teachers who come from alternative certification pathways, who have had less coursework and student teaching than those who are prepared through traditional programs, are 25% more likely to leave their profession. Teachers who strongly disagree that their administration is supportive are more than twice as likely to leave their school or teaching than those who strongly agree their administration is supportive.

According to Gray and Taie (2015), who conducted a longitudinal study of beginning public school teachers from school year 2007-08 through 2011-12, 17% of new teachers left teaching after the fifth year. There were two major findings: teacher salary and mentorship. The results showed that 97% of beginning teachers who earned more than $40,000 their first year returned the next year, compared with 87% who earned less than $40,000. By the fifth year, 89% of those earning more than $40,000 were still on the job, compared with 80% earning less than $40,000. Moreover, 92% of beginning teachers who were assigned a first-year mentor returned the next year, and 86% were on the job by the fifth year. However, only 84% of teachers without mentors returned in the second year, and then dropped to 71% by the fifth year.

Refocusing the Teacher Lens

Hogan's (2017) book, *Shattering the Perfect Teacher Myth: 6 Truths that will Help You Thrive as an Educator*, exposes six teaching myths. Hogan offers strategies and practical ideas for thriving as an educator. In light of the crisis of teacher shortage and the severity of turnover rate, dialogue is necessary to further the conversation regarding how believing or reinforcing these myths can contribute to burnout and unrealistic expectations teachers face in education. Hogan's established myths and thriving statements could be used as a springboard for teacher preparation programs and career educators to begin this conversation. Ideas and suggestions for both pre-service and in-service teachers to acquire a more realistic and resilient lens for themselves as educators as well as the profession will be explored through the following themes: collaboration, embracing vulnerability, empowerment and agency, support and mentoring, and self-care and resiliency.

Collaboration

Hogan (2017) states that one of the myths some teachers believe is that the best teachers can solve their problems by themselves. However, the truth is teachers thrive when they work with their peers and their students. In order to make a difference, teachers need to be catalysts of change. Hogan asserts, "The most meaningful change is the result of collaboration" (p. 31). To create meaningful change, Hogan suggests, first, teachers must determine to make the change together as a team. Next, teachers need to commit to stepping out of their comfort zones and learning what they do not know. Then, teachers must help and support each other in the best interests of students.

Gates (2018) discusses the benefits of collaboration among teachers. She shares the best way to improve an educational experience is to work together. Collaboration helps brainstorm unique and creative ideas. Working with a small group of trusted colleagues or peer-to-peer collaboration can turn a small idea into the seeds for quality assignments. Also, teacher collaboration impacts student achievement positively and allows teachers to explore new territories.

Caskey and Carpenter (2014) discuss three organizational models for teacher collaboration: (a) common planning time; (b) professional learning communities; and, (c) critical friends' groups. The features of each model are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: ***Organizational Models that Promote Teacher Collaboration***

Model	Features
Common Planning Time	• Interdisciplinary teams – teachers share same students • Coordinate team policies and procedures • Discuss students • Meet with parents • Plan team activities, thematic or cross-curricular units • Examine student work • Participate in professional development
Professional Learning Communities	• Disciplinary teams • Ongoing process of collective inquiry and action research • Collective analysis of student assessment data in relation to specific learning targets • Use of data to inform and assess effectiveness of instruction
Critical Friends' Groups	• Group gathers voluntarily to improve practice through collaborative learning • Uses coaches and specific protocols used to guide sessions • Identify school-specific student learning goals, reflect on practices for achieving the goals, collaboratively examine student work

Organizational models facilitate, but do not guarantee collaboration (Caskey & Carpenter, 2014). Teachers' personal standpoints about their participation in an organizational model determine the success of collaboration. Also, teachers need to understand how to engage effectively in their collaboration with colleagues. Caskey and Carpenter (2014) suggest five strategies to cultivate collaboration. First, teachers and administrators should create a truly shared vision and goals. The level of ownership teachers feel in the process of collaboration influences how much they invest in the collaborative work. A shared vision and goals can lead to that sense of ownership. Second, teachers need to develop a sense of community. Getting to know their colleagues and taking time to connect on a personal level can help community members gain mutual respect. Establishing shared values and commitments can help unify the group. Also, trust influences the

effectiveness of collaborative work. Being fully present at meetings and seeing the best in others helps build trust and a cohesive community.

Another strategy for building teacher collaboration is to identify group norms (Caskey & Carpenter, 2014). Collaboration can be uncomfortable at times. Group members can see the strengths and limitations of each other. However, a climate of trust can help establish a safe environment that is necessary for open communication. Identifying and establishing group norms can also help develop that safe environment. Taking time to get to know the learning styles, needs, fears, and hopes of each group member helps shape the norms for how to engage each other in the shared work.

Caskey and Carpenter (2014) maintain another strategy is to use discussion and dialogue, which are equally important to the group process. Discussion moves the conversation forward. Individuals share their opinions for the purpose of building consensus, which helps decision making. Dialogue invites multiple perspectives, values exploration, and questions the status quo. Dialogue can also cultivate deep professional learning and explore new ideas. However, dialogue may also lead to conflict. Therefore, it can be helpful to develop a conflict management plan and to monitor conflict. Teams can help manage conflict by providing time, space, and support for individuals as they work through their emotions. Individuals also should monitor their own emotions and practice self-care techniques. While sometimes uncomfortable, conflict often provides growth opportunities for individuals and the team as a whole.

Strong collaboration and collaborative cultures develop over time (Caskey & Carpenter, 2014). Teachers can cultivate collaboration by joining professional organizations (Gates, 2018) and using social media to reach out (Hogan, 2017). With time, teachers can develop authentic collaborative communities in which they address common issues, shared goals, and advance their knowledge and skills related to student learning (Caskey & Carpenter, 2014).

Embracing Vulnerability

Another related myth, according to Hogan (2017), is that the best teachers have all the answers to any question. It is natural to want to be successful and strong. People, including teachers, praise resilience, risk, and grit; but they spend a very small amount of time discussing how to overcome failure as teachers. Teachers, like many other individuals, tend to hide their weaknesses. “But what if the solution is being honest about our faults and our blunders? What if the very thing we need is failure?” (Hogan, 2017, p. 63).

Hogan (2017) asserts the truth that leads teachers to success is to value vulnerability. His thoughts on the idea of vulnerability were inspired by Brené Brown. Brown claims vulnerability is the origin of innovation, creativity, and change (Walters, 2012). In essence, in order to help students to be successful, one should embrace vulnerability (Hogan, 2017). Resolving to expose one’s vulnerability in a professional environment is frightening. However, Hogan states doing so would provide students with a valuable learning experience defined by innovation, creativity, and change. He continues to suggest there are a few places teachers can start.

First, teachers need to admit they do not have answers to all questions (Hogan, 2017). Certainly, teachers want their students to be confident in their ability and knowledge. However, such perception deters students from taking a risk when they are not sure what their next step should be. When teachers embrace vulnerability, they show their students it is alright to make mistakes; but, most importantly, it shows how students can correct and learn from their mistakes.

Second, teachers should ask for criticism (Hogan, 2017). One way teachers can show they are serious about making positive changes is to invite criticism. When seeking feedback from fellow colleagues and administrators, teachers need to establish parameters to avoid overly general or specific comments. Hogan suggests using a questionnaire that includes two to three choices.

Third, Hogan (2017) suggests teachers should try something new in front of their students as a first-time learner. For example, they may select a short story, article, or math problem. Discuss with their students like most first-time learners would do and be confronted with the mistakes. Hogan believes trying something new and failing at it publicly can serve as an effective model for other teachers who are struggling with the idea of taking on a specific challenge.

Lastly, as mistakes are inevitable, teachers should be willing to own them and use them for productive growth (Hogan, 2017). For many, strength is about covering up mistakes and appearing flawless and faultless. However, it is important for others to hear and see that teachers take responsibility, especially when they have made a mistake. If teachers truly want to foster a school culture that brings all stakeholders together, they must be willing to act at every level of leadership, including owning their mistakes.

Empowerment and Agency

Our United States population shares the experience of schooling. Due to this, there is an inherited stereotypical messaging in the field of education that educators are both unconsciously and possibly consciously encountering. Hogan (2017) reminds educators of these messages through the myths of a perfect teacher. Myths such as “The Myth We Believe [in is] The best teachers never have behavior problems from their students” (p. 1) and “The Myth We Believe [in is] The best teachers effortlessly earn compliance from their students” (p. 15) can become dangerous barriers for teacher success, if educators do not have a strong professional identity and agency.

Awareness of identity and agency are influential factors in empowering educators. Nieto (2003) states,

> Teachers do not leave their values at the door when they enter their classrooms. On the contrary, as much as they might want to hide or avoid them, their values and beliefs slip in the door with them. In fact, teachers bring their entire autobiographies with them: their experiences, identities, values, beliefs, attitudes, hang-ups, biases, wishes, dreams, and hopes. It is useless for them to deny this; the most they can do is acknowledge how these may either get in the way of, or enhance, their work with students (p. 24).

How do educators develop personal understanding or their own professional identity as well as agency? These attributes must be intentionally developed with practice overtime. If not, teachers may find themselves in ongoing situations where they doubt their professional decision making;

lack the ability to stand up for their professional beliefs; and lack confidence when navigating a day in the profession. As suggested by Hogan (2017), "Thriving, I believe, is about committing to a process that will produce growth overtime . . . What I perceived to be perfection was simply expertise that had been carefully honed over time . . ." (p. 26).

One way to further develop professional identity and agency is to understand one's professional beliefs and values more fully. When educators understand what they believe in professionally, they are more likely to lean on this understanding in critical thinking and decision making. Taking time to identify values that guide professional decision making, instructional implementation, curriculum adoption, and creating a classroom environment will allow educators to build confidence and security in who they are as professionals.

To begin this process, educators must take time to reflect on who they are as an educator. Using reflective practices and asking questions such as "What is my professional identity?" and "What do I believe in?" will begin to access some of the values and beliefs of a professional identity. This can be done through the use of a graphic organizer or visual notetaking.

Taking time to reflect allows educators more agency in understanding what foundational beliefs and values guide their decision making. By possessing a strong understanding of these beliefs and values, educators can understand the "why" behind the decision-making process they engage in every day.

"Our values orient us, drive us, and anchor us. We experience integrity when we act in alignment with them" (Aguilar, 2018, p. 24). A second example of reflection is to engage in a value sort. This allows educators to sort values, such as the one provided by *Think2Perform* ®. Taking time to sort values into categories such as keep/discard or important/somewhat important/not important allows educators to begin analyzing what values guide their professional interactions and decisions. Once values are sorted into these categories, educators can begin to narrow their values in the important category to three to five values that are most essential to their professional identity. These would be values educators find themselves returning to during interactions with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators. By knowing these core values, professionals begin to use these values as foundational attributes and demonstrate agency. Aguilar (2018) suggests, "When our actions are not aligned with our values it doesn't feel good. We may say to ourselves, *This isn't me, w*hich can indicate that our actions don't reflect a core value" (p. 24). Following this value sort, educators should return to brainstorming reflections and test their value sort. Educators may choose to further reflect by asking themselves reflective questions such as:

Core Value Reflective Questions

- What are practices I implement that reflect these values?
- What are practices I implement that do not reflect these values?
- Who in my building shares these values? What feelings/emotions are associated with this relationship?
- Who in my building does not share my values? What feelings/emotions are associated with this relationship?
- How are my values reflected in these interactions?

Educators should ask themselves, whether these three to five identified values align with the professional identity attributes. If not, educators can begin to be more honest with who they truly are as a professional versus who their profession may be asking them to be. It may be within this disconnect that burnout occurs. If practices do not align with values and beliefs, stress and trauma may be occurring. Even simple awareness of how practices do not align with a professional value is validating in understanding and identifying the reason the stress or discomfort is occurring.

A third example of intentionally understanding and establishing a professional identity is to revisit educational philosophies. Educators can complete assessments such as *Instructional Beliefs Questionnaire* (Reichert-Darnell, 2000) based on Models of Teaching (Joyce, Weil, and Calhoun, 2000), and *Inventory of Philosophies in Education* (as cited in Sadker & Zittleman, 2008). When educators add this understanding to their three to five core values, they can begin to develop practices of agency and networks of support. Consider asking questions such as:
Teaching Philosophy Reflective Questions

- What are practices I implement that reflect this philosophy?
- What are practices I implement that do not reflect this philosophy?
- Who in my building shares this philosophy?
- What feelings/emotions are associated with this relationship?
- Who in my building does not share my philosophy?
- What feelings/emotions are associated with this relationship?
- How are my values reflected in this philosophy?

By doing so, educators will begin to develop a stronger foundation for decision making and navigating interactions during the school day. By relying on these core values and philosophies, educators can feel more confident about why they make the decisions they do. Possessing a strong understanding of professional values and philosophy, educators build agency and demonstrate self-empowerment. When navigating the world of education, many new teachers want to make sure they meet the expectations of peers and administration. This pressure to belong can be draining. Especially, if educators do not have a strong understanding of their professional values and beliefs. Brown (2017) suggests,

> True belonging. I don't know exactly what it is about the combination of these two words, but I do know when I say it aloud, it just feels right. It feels like something that we all crave and need in our lives. We want to be a part of something, but we need it to be real—not conditional or fake or constantly up for negotiation. We need true belonging—but what exactly is it? (p. 31).

When educators take time to be reflective and develop a strong understanding of their professional beliefs and values, they can begin to develop a sense of belonging in their field of education and seek mentors and environments that support their professional identity.

Mentoring and Support

Coaching during induction or first year of teaching is a growing practice of professional development in school districts. The chance to *mentor* a new teacher addresses two serious problems in teaching: the abrupt and unsupported entry of novices into the field and the difficulty of keeping good, experienced teachers in the classroom (Feiman-Nemser & Parker,

1992). Typically, a mentor acts as a role model and gives advice and guidance about classroom organization and management, curriculum planning, and instruction. Feiman-Nemser and Parker (1992) identify three different purposes for mentors: (1) local guides who attempt to smooth the entry of beginning teachers into teaching by explaining school policies, practices, and teaching methods and materials; (2) educational companions who help novices cope with immediate problems and circumstances, but also to work toward long-term professional goals to improve their instructional practices; and, (3) agents of change who seek to dismantle the traditional isolation among teachers by fostering norms and practices of collaboration and shared inquiry.

According to Ingersoll and Smith (2004), the terms mentoring and induction are often used interchangeably. Typically, mentoring refers to "the personal guidance provided, usually by seasoned veterans, to beginning teachers" (p. 29). Odell (1986) suggests mentoring is usually an experienced teacher working with a beginning teacher to help ease the transition from learning in a college environment to that of full-time teacher in a classroom environment. Therefore, induction programs are usually considered the "bridge from student of teaching to teacher of students" (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004, p. 29). Both induction systems and mentoring programs, whether they are a component of induction or serve as the sole induction strategy for new teachers, differ greatly. Induction processes usually include a type of basic training that can involve a variety of elements, such as orientation seminars, workshops, and collaboration. Whereas mentoring is the personal guidance provided by a veteran teacher who has been assigned to assist a specific beginning teacher.

Furthermore, Ingersoll and Smith (2004) explain mentoring programs, in particular, tend to vary both in focus or purpose and in structure leading to variable outcomes and effectiveness. Thus, a mentor might focus on structural-related supports that include assisting the new teacher with acquiring the knowledge, skills, and strategies that will allow him/her to be successful in the classroom and school. Alternatively, a mentor might focus on psychological and emotional support for which the purpose is to build a sense of self through confidence building, feelings of effectiveness, positive self-esteem, enhancing self-reliance and learning to handle the stresses of transitioning to full-time teaching

Gaines (2020) conducted a review of best practices in new teacher mentoring. She summarized the findings from scholarly articles, state standards and consulting companies. The topmost frequently mentioned practices included (a) prioritize the mentee's student learning outcomes as main purpose of support; (b) help mentee analyze student data; (c) ensure equitable outcomes for all students; (d) gather data in observation and prompt teacher to reflect on their instruction; and, (e) provide clear and direct feedback to the novice teacher.

Young, Bullough, Draper, Smith, and Erickson (2005) investigated personal mentoring models among a group of 18 mentors working with 36 teachers over an academic year and found three patterns of mentoring: responsive, interactive, and directive. Further, most mentors shifted from one pattern to another over time. But most mentors tended to withdraw from the novice teacher at mid-year and become more distant and disengaged. Thus, mentors bring their own histories, experiences, assumptions, theories, and practices to the task of mentoring; all of which, without explicit discussion and support, can contribute to both the variability and the effectiveness of mentoring programs.

An analysis of the kinds of mentoring roles and activities that facilitate improved teaching practices for preschool teachers were the foci of a study by Ryan and Hornbeck (2004). Capturing an expert mentor teacher's work with three preschool teachers to improve their instructional practices was accomplished by using three distinct sources of data: time diaries (telephone interviews with respondents to account for all of their activities over a 24-hour period), observations, and interviews. In this case study, the mentoring relationship was one of an expert working with a small group of protégés over time to help them make sense of and respond to some of the complexities of classroom work encountered in the first year of teaching. Ryan and Hornbeck reported the mentor teacher was found to engage in 14 different activities within the categories of technical assistance, professional development, leadership, district-related work, and other. Despite utilizing skills identified as central to effective mentoring and teacher learning, such as rapport building, classroom observation, meeting with teachers, and planning and leading workshops, the mentor teacher found it difficult to assist some novice teachers because of lack of expertise, inappropriate training, and multiple job demands.

A study that analyzed how mentor teachers make pedagogical suggestions to beginning teachers during mentoring conversations and how beginning teachers respond was investigated by Strong and Baron (2004). Sixty-four conversations between 16 veteran teacher mentors and their beginning teachers were audiotaped and transcribed with a focus on content. Transcripts were reviewed for all instances of suggestions offered by mentors. Segments that included the suggestions and the beginning teachers' responses were then excerpted. Suggestions were categorized as either direct or indirect, while responses were tagged as either acceptances or rejections. Observations of conversational patterns revealed the extreme efforts made by the mentors to avoid giving direct advice, including many indirect suggestions, about one-third of which produced elaborated responses from the novice teachers. This may be explained by the philosophy of the Cognitive Coaching model (Costa & Garmston, 2002) which was used by the mentors and beginning teachers. This approach to mentoring focuses on developing thoughtful, reflective practitioners who can "make changes in their own thinking and teaching processes" (Costa & Garmston, 1993, p. 15).

While mentoring programs appear to be a way to provide ongoing teacher support, especially to new teachers, there are many factors that can influence the research findings. Ingersoll and Smith (2004) stated that control groups of non-mentored teachers are missing from mentoring studies. Often studies fail to control for other possible factors such as characteristics of the school or mentor teacher. Usually, the studies tend to focus only on teacher feelings or attitudes and do not include more tangible data such as teacher retention, teacher effectiveness, or improvement in student achievement. Mentoring relationships, which are typically a partnership between an experienced and beginning teacher, are different from peer or collegial coaching, which are designed to increase teachers' professional dialogue and help them reflect on their teaching practice.

Self-Care and Resiliency

In a profession that requires on-going critical thinking, decision making, and adaptability, self-care is essential. Environments that value and promote self-care create a space of trust and value

of human capital. Self-care can mean different things to different individuals. Webber (2013) provides the recent World Health Organization definition, "Self-Care is the ability of individuals, families and communities to promote health, prevent disease, and maintain health and to cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a health-care provider" (p. 102).

It is important to reflect on what areas of self-care are being neglected and consider how establishing awareness and routines may address these self-care needs. Webber (2013) suggests,

> . . . we may need to define comprehensively the behaviours that constitute the ideal, as a benchmark for comparison. When one is aware of all that can be done, it becomes possible to audit one's own personal self-care 'assets', while recognizing where there are 'deficits' as a means to plan behaviour change" (p. 104).

As educators face demands of social, emotional, and cognitive fatigue, they could consider strategies of resiliency, mindfulness, self-compassion, and gratefulness as means to intentionally refuel the emotional, social, and cognitive energy to sustain their professional identity and combat burnout.

Self-awareness and reflection are the first steps to understanding self-care needs. Becoming aware of daily experiences, environments, or interactions that activate emotions, mental and physical responses will allow individuals to understand what types of self-care habits will aid in navigating the professional environment. One way to become more aware of these responses is to engage in reflective practices using mood tracking applications such as Daylio (https://daylio.net/) and life balance wheels (sherylbullock.com). There are many applications for mobile devices that make it convenient to track mood throughout the day. Analyzing mood in relationship to events, experiences, and interactions can allow for educators to target parts of the day where self-care habits can be intentional.

Aguilar (2018) suggests, "A substantial amount of our ability to be resilient is fostered in our daily habits . . . Resilience is a way of being that allows us to bounce back quickly for adversity, and stronger than before, so that we can fulfill our purpose in life" (p. 3). Aguilar believes resilience can be cultivated by engaging in habits and fostering dispositions. She addresses three conversations educators must have regarding resilience: individual resilience, organizational conditions, and systemic conditions.

The act of mindfulness can be an influential self-care practice. Mindfulness (2021) is the intention to pay attention to each and every moment of life, non-judgmentally. While there are many possible definitions, the key aspects of any definition of mindfulness involves the following: purposeful action (do it on purpose); focused attention (one thing at a time); grounded in the current experience (being where you are in the present moment); and, held with a sense of curiosity (be open to what's there) (Delagran & Haley, 2021). According to Lucas (2018), being present is a part of many professions.

> Being present is simplistic, yet difficult. It's available to us at any moment, and it goes by many names. Athletes prefer to it as 'being in the zone.' For soldiers and first responders, it's 'situational awareness.' Artists see it as 'flow,' thinkers consider it 'contemplation' . . . The name doesn't matter; it's the feeling of peace and stillness that is important (p. 15).

In addition to resiliency and mindfulness, self-compassion is a self-care strategy. Self-compassion is treating oneself with the same kindness, care, and concern that an individual would treat a good friend. Accept who they are including flaws and all (Neff, 2021). Neff (2021) suggests there are three core components to self-compassion: Self-kindness (vs. Self-criticism), Common Humanity (vs. Isolation); and, Mindfulness (vs. Denial or Over-identification).

With intention and awareness, gratefulness can become a self-care strategy. "It enables us to have the tenacity to attend and respond in a more resilient way to our challenges. It is a perspective shift" (Nelson, 2020, p. 13). Habits such as keeping a gratitude journal, creating a gratitude jar or gratitude board are examples of creating self-care rituals.

Hogan (2017) proposes, "The Myth We Believe [in is] The best teachers excel by meeting existing expectations." (p. 43) and "The Truth That Lets Us THRIVE [in is] Teachers thrive when they dream big with the ways they can upset the status quo and reimagine what's possible for their students" (p. 43). Self-care and mindfulness practices can allow for educators to stay focused on imagining it better.

Conclusion

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2021), in the 2017-2018 school year there were 3.3 million public school teachers, 205,600 public charter school teachers, and 509,200 private school teachers. Among these teachers, 9% of them had less than 3 years of teaching experiences (NCES, 2020). Most of them (39.9%) had 10-20 years of experience.

As educators are valuable members of the society who can touch the future (FIRST, 2021), it is important to have strategies in place to recruit and retain effective teachers. This article provides different suggestions and ideas to help retain educators. These suggestions include (a) collaboration, (b) embracing vulnerability, (c) empowerment and agency, (d) support and mentoring, and, (e) self-care and resiliency. It takes a village to raise a child. However, it also takes a village to sustain and retain valuable educators.

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