

**TEACHER WELLNESS  
AND THE IMPACT OF EDUCATIONAL RESTRUCTURING  
IN THE HOLY SPIRIT CATHOLIC SCHOOL DIVISION #4**

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## **Abstract**

Entitled "Teacher Wellness and the Impact of Educational Restructuring in the Holy Spirit School Division," this study has sought to identify the level of wellness among teachers in this regionalized school division. Through a survey format, teachers identified and rated those factors which cause stress, and those which contribute to job satisfaction. In rating nine given factors associated with stress, inclusion of special needs children in the regular classroom provided the greatest amount of stress. Intrinsic rewards reaped through working with children proved to be the greatest contributing factor to job satisfaction. Female teachers in Divisions I and II reported greatest stress at school and while balancing personal and professional demands. Respondents reported that educational restructuring in Alberta has proven to have negative effects on the health and wellness of teachers and administrators.

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## **Introduction**

In the demanding teaching profession, the issue of teacher health and wellness has become an area that commands the attention of all who have an interest in education. Increasingly, the needs of children, parents, the government education department and the general public have taken their toll on the teaching profession. In 1993-94, teachers were asked by the provincial government to deal with massive educational reforms in addition to the stresses, pressures and rewards traditionally present in the teaching profession. Regionalization of school districts, site-based management, and increased parental involvement have taken their place in the landscape of Alberta's education system.

The school division in which I teach was one of those regionalized in 1992. Where once I was employed by a local school board, which was in charge of one school in the town of Picture Butte, I am now a part of the Holy Spirit Catholic Schools, a regionalized school division, with fourteen schools.

### The Holy Spirit Catholic School Division #4

This study was carried out in March, 1998 with the teachers and school administrators in the Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Regional Separate School Division #4, more commonly referred to as "Holy Spirit Catholic Schools." This school division has been in existence since December of 1994, and was formed to align with the regionalization of school divisions as mandated by the provincial government's educational restructuring initiatives in Alberta. Since regionalization, the Holy Spirit Schools have included Roman Catholic schools in the towns of Coaldale, Picture Butte, Pincher Creek and Taber as well as nine schools in the city of Lethbridge.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to

1. Assess the level of teacher wellness in the Holy Spirit Catholic Schools
2. Identify key areas of concern and of satisfaction in the personal and professional lives of Holy Spirit teachers.
3. Suggest future directions for the school system and its teachers with respect to teacher wellness.

## **Limitations of the Study**

Teachers of the Holy Spirit Catholic School Division were surveyed in March 1998, about three weeks before their Easter break. Although the timing was quite intentional, it is only fair to note that teachers generally are tired at this time of year. The results of the same survey may be different in October or June. It was my hope that the timing of the survey would assist in accurately identifying the state of wellness among teachers.

Some of the biographical data was left unanswered in many of the returned surveys, especially the town or city location of the school. Half of the respondents did not identify the location of their school. This made it impossible to draw any firm conclusions about the difference in wellness between the city and town teachers, but their request for further anonymity had to be respected.

About 14% of respondents did not identify their gender, which made less certain the findings specific to which gender experiences the most stress, which is



more likely to employ certain coping strategies, and which is more likely to hold certain opinions.

Almost one-third of the respondents did not answer the question concerning extended leave. They may have skipped this question because they had not taken an extended leave, so assumed it irrelevant, or did not see the box in which they could have indicated that no leave had been taken. There is also the chance that some respondents did not want to state that sick leave or stress leave had been taken, fearing some kind of identification (even though the survey was entirely anonymous).

Of the surveys returned, only sixteen were identified as being from school administrators. The greater response was from teachers. For the purposes of this study that was seen as beneficial since the survey has more reliability and accuracy when applied to the general teaching population.

## **Review of Relevant Literature**

### **A. Wellness and Job Satisfaction**

The definition of "wellness" may be an inherently personal one for every individual of any age, nationality or gender. Hatfield and Hatfield (1992) state that wellness can be defined as a "conscious and deliberate process by which people are actively involved in enhancing their overall well-being - intellectual, physical, social, emotional, occupational, spiritual." This definition supports a proactive, rather than reactive approach to wellness, and involves a philosophy of self-care and self-respect that nurtures its ongoing process. Particularly, Hatfield and Hatfield stress that the wellness process involves the striving for balance and integration in one's life, adding and refining skills, rethinking beliefs where required and appropriate. Chandler, Miner Holden and Kolander (1992) suggest that spiritual health should be considered as a component present within each of the interrelated dimensions of wellness, rather than simply one of the dimensions of wellness, stating that optimum wellness exists when each of these five dimensions has a balanced and developed potential in both the spiritual and personal realm. Witmer and Sweeney (1992) propose that wellness comprises an interconnectedness of all things; that is, a wholeness in mind, body, spirit and community. Under this definition, the characteristics of wellness are expressed through the five life tasks of spirituality, self-regulation, work, love and friendship. These life tasks dynamically interact with the life forces of family, community, religion, education, government, media, and business/industry. In this model, the components of wellness also form a wheel, with spirituality at its hub. A systems model of health emphasizes that wellness can be seen as multidimensional, variable, and self-regulating both within and across life dimensions (Croese, Nicholas, Gobble, & Frank, 1992). In this model, optimum health and wellness are affected by a defined group of life dimensions: physical, emotional, social, vocational, spiritual, and

intellectual health. Wellness is not a static endpoint; rather, wellness fluctuates and varies around defined upper and lower limits. These limits set the range of normal variability within which there is constant dynamic fluctuation. This particular model also seeks to ascertain the gender-specific differences in wellness and stress-related patterns. The authors state that women who work outside the home may struggle with multiple-role responsibilities, but may realise an easing of stress in the emotional dimension, social dimension, or both. Men who work long hours to be successful in their careers might experience lowered well-being in the social or emotional dimensions and might benefit from less work and more time at home with the family or increased social activities. These researchers have also concluded that contacts and connections with others seem to be at the base of spiritual well-being, and that spiritual well-being seems to be influenced by differences in development and identity formation.

Personal wellness and job satisfaction become particularly important when considering the definite link that exists between family and work. Dorn (1992) points out that an individual's identity is frequently anchored in the workplace. However, frequently it is the workplace itself which offers very little latitude in terms of individual control over career planning, which in turn has negative effects on the other dimensions of wellness.

Fahmy's (1990) study found that women have a clearly female definition of what factors may constitute workplace wellness. Participants in this study identified five leading components of wellness in the workplace: (a) work itself, and the accompanying remuneration (b) having work that one likes, or is interested in, (c) the opportunity to use one's competence and skills, (d) the opportunity to learn new skills, (e) participation in the decision-making process at work, (f) a good balance between personal and professional life.

Some ambiguity exists in arriving at a clear definition of "job satisfaction" itself. Renihan (1980) says that teacher satisfaction relates to the perceived relationship between what teachers want from the job and what they perceive it as offering, adding that a completely satisfied teacher may not really exist. Evans (1997) has stated that a more accurate method of defining job satisfaction may be to divide it into two distinct areas: job comfort - relating to the extent to which a person feels comfortable in the job; and job fulfillment - involving the extent of the personal achievement defined by self-assessment of the job performance itself. Evans then adds that the two components of job comfort and job fulfillment can combine to assist in determining job satisfaction - the extent to which the individual person perceives that job-related needs are met.

In defining characteristics of teachers who experience a great deal of job satisfaction in their teaching careers, King and Peart (1992) found that both female and male teachers of kindergarten to grade 3 were more likely than teachers of other grade groups to be highly satisfied. Also, this study showed that teachers who had considered only teaching as a career were far more likely than teachers who had explored other career possibilities to be in the high satisfaction group. As well, good relationships with students, colleagues and administrators were strongly related to general teacher satisfaction. The intrinsic reward of working with students, and seeing student progress is a vital part of teacher job satisfaction (King & Peart, 1992; Ferguson, 1984; Renihan, 1980).

### Threats to Wellness and Job Satisfaction

The concept of "stress" itself has been described and defined in many ways. Hiebert (1985) defined stress as a "complex psychological and physiological reaction to a situation that approaches or exceeds a person's self-perceived ability to cope with that situation," and that "virtually all ways of conceptualizing stress are subsumed by three categories." In this definition, Hiebert includes environmental models, individual response models or interactional models involving an interaction between the environment and the person. Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1977) have defined teacher stress, in particular, as "a response by a teacher of negative affect (such as anger, anxiety or depression) accompanied by potentially pathogenic physiological changes as a result of the demands made upon a teacher in *his* (italics added) role as a teacher." Selye's (1974) definition does not focus on stress as a necessarily negative aspect of life, but has defined two particular types of stress: "distress" (negative) and "eustress" (positive). Selye maintains stress should be viewed as something that cannot be avoided but that it is not always entirely dysfunctional. Ratsoy (1986) says that much the same notion may be included in a variety of labels. Stress, anxiety, frustration, hassles, conflict, pressure, tension, shell-shock, battle fatigue, or dissatisfaction may be treated the same by some authors, but the resulting phenomenon is known to produce a fight-or-flight response in the body when the individual encounters a challenging situation in the environment.

Regarding the effect that stress can have on physical health, McConaghy (1992) has said that teaching is a demanding profession with little latitude for decision making. People in such occupations may have higher rates of stress-related

diseases quite possibly causing an increase in short or long-term leaves of absence. As well, Long's (1989) study showed that teachers who were absent not more than three days in (a given) year had lower self-reported stress. In a study involving teachers who were currently on long-term disability leave, Jevne and Zingle (1991) found that persons with a psychologically disabling condition are more likely to have experienced extreme stress and are more likely to have sought counselling. However, these researchers also concluded that because this group also reported extreme levels of personal stress, that stress may have been affecting subjects' personal life, or subjects' personal life may have been affecting one's stress level.

Gender notwithstanding, studies have shown that teacher stressors include time management/ work overload pressures, interactions with disruptive students, interactions with administrators, parent-teacher- interactions, role ambiguity, and the feeling that the demands of teaching were so varied and so extensive that it was impossible to do an adequate job on all fronts. (Hiebert 1985; Kalker, 1984; Sarros, 1986; King & Peart, 1992; Klas, Kendall-Woodward & Kennedy, 1985). Johnstone (1993) found that teachers commonly gave up personal time for work-related activities, but the longer the hours worked, the more day-to-day stress was reported. Jenkins and Calhoun (1989) state that work overload and pressure, as major stressors, applied to both the school and home settings. In addition, government policies and policy implementation (Alberta Teachers' Association, 1994; King & Peart, 1992; Barlow & Robertson, 1994; Webber, 1995) have caused a great deal of frustration and stress among teachers, regardless of gender. Although numerous studies of this nature were done in the 1980s, new results (Klas, 1994) now show that

teachers currently find maintaining classroom discipline and dealing with problem students to be more stressful than before. Time management continues to be a major stressor. Klas concludes that changing job demands and student behaviours are creating an increasing amount of stress for teachers.

Research in stress and coping literature has relatively ignored gender-related differences in the appraisal of stressful events and few studies have examined role-related differences (Long, 1989). However, some studies have focused on the different concerns perceived by men and women teachers. McMurray (1986) has defined three job-stressors of extreme concern to many women teachers: upgrading skills/achievement, finding time for work with individual students, and the need to upgrade students' values. The Canadian Teachers' Federation (1993), in reporting survey results, found that teachers at the primary level were least likely to describe themselves as being among the high stress group in the study. Teachers in this level are overwhelmingly female. Long's study (1989) suggests that there are gender differences on role stress, supervisory support, job and life dissatisfaction; males feel more stressed than do females. However, Robertson (1992) says that many women teachers juggling the multiple roles involved with personal and professional life do experience a great deal of conflict in their lives. While men who become more involved with their families may be heavily supported, equal support for women who often must choose between home and work is lacking. Fahmy (1990) has reported that the preoccupation between balancing personal and professional life seems to be overwhelmingly present in women's lives, and women often feel that in order to appear committed to a career, the sacrifice of personal life is expected.

In a study of the effects of student behavior patterns on teacher stress, Friedman (1995) found that male teachers were significantly affected by the inattentiveness of students, whereas female teachers' stress level was significantly affected by students' disrespect.

Finally, the Friesen (1990) study of teacher stress in Alberta reported that male and female teachers were almost in complete agreement in their identification of their top twelve (of twenty-five) stressors: heavy workload, special needs students, class size, time pressures, disruptive students, unmotivated students, volume of students' evaluation activities, curriculum changes implemented before materials available, students evaluation of teachers, conflict situations, being forced to implement policies, frequent role changes, number of non-instructional duties, accommodating curriculum changes, problem teachers, and changing provincial program philosophies.

Given the nature of the teaching profession, there may be a critical need to examine the extent to which teachers view their ability to balance both the workload and time demands of teaching and family responsibilities. McMurray (1986) has suggested that women teachers with children place high priority on the availability of free time, the efficient organization of time, sharing responsibilities, and the pressures brought about by household tasks and being punctual. Other influential factors (Mirabelli, 1989) include finding quality child care, and dealing with child care for ill children, responsibilities which generally fall on a mother's shoulders; in addition, middle-age parents may be coping with their children as well as caring for their own parents. Although the CTF (1993) findings indicate that there was fairly even gender



distribution when noting the feelings of conflict between home and work, these feelings increased for women (and to a lesser extent for men) who had children under nineteen years of age. Role overload may foster both a socially traditional and revised form of commitment at the same time; it may trigger a traditional separation of work and family, but it may also stimulate an internalized commitment, one freed from the need for continuous, physical presence in the workplace (Seifert & Atkinson, 1989). Blasé and Pajak (1986) conclude that teachers often resolve the fundamental conflict between personal and professional life in favor of professional demands. They go on to surmise that the time and energy, moral, intellectual, and emotional demands typically placed on teachers may be inequitable with regard to compensation, status, recognition and other issues.

Much of the stress and dissatisfaction experienced by teachers originates from factors beyond their control. However, educators might consider exploring their own personal contributions to wellness in the workplace and ultimately in the home. Wangberg (1984) suggests that teachers must begin to examine their personal standards for success, and rid themselves of the "Super Teacher" myth. Those who have "caretaker" personalities must attend to their own needs, in terms of hobbies, other relaxing activities, or simply learning to say "no" to increased committee work. Wangberg also proposes that teachers need to take much better care of their physical health.

Some teachers may be more naturally resistant to stress than are their colleagues. Flett, Hewitt and Hallett (1992) conclude that teachers with a perfectionist type of personality structure that renders them sensitive to external demands and

criticism may be prone to experience stress reactions, both in terms of their personal reactions and their appraisals of the occupation itself. Anderson and Zingle (1987) maintain that some teachers who feel highly stressed may hold irrational beliefs about teaching, such as thinking they must perform perfectly at all times, believing that others must treat them precisely the way they want to be treated, and that working conditions must always exist exactly as desired. Albertson and Kagan (1987) propose that teachers who describe themselves as generally anxious and impatient, pressured by feelings of too little time and too many responsibilities, also indicate they would be highly stressed by every problematic aspect of teaching assessed by occupational stress scales - including relationships with administrators, students and colleagues. The researchers conclude that it might be just as important for teachers to understand the dynamics of their own temperament as it is for them to understand the psychology of learning.

### Dealing Effectively with Stress

Strategies and suggestions for coping with stress abound. Gmelch (1984) suggests that coping with stress is a holistic proposition, and that effective coping should consist of building repertoire of techniques equally balanced in the social, physical, intellectual, entertainment, managerial, personal, and attitudinal categories. Fetsch (1992) proposes that stressful predicaments would be more manageable if broken down into smaller parts, identifying what is within one's control and what is not within control, then mapping a strategy for dealing with stressful predicaments within one's control. Although sources of support for coping with stress do differ from teacher to teacher, the immediate family, colleagues at work, friends, activities,

and church are common sources of support (Ratsoy, 1986; Johnstone, 1993). Jenkins and Calhoun (1991) concluded that teachers are much more successful at coping with stress after they have had individualized training in stress management, and have drawn up action plans that are tailored to their needs. In dealing with the often overwhelming needs of children, Irvine (1992) suggests that teachers must be realistic and honest with themselves, and try to keep from feeling that they should be able to solve every problem presented by every child. Irvine's strategy encourages teachers to put students in a position of choice and ultimate accountability, which will lead to self-responsibility on the part of students, and avoid teacher burnout as well. Barkdoll (1991) also suggests that teachers have a great deal to offer in terms of managing their own level of stress. She presents the theory that positive mental health variables such as positive affect, optimism and self-esteem have been shown to be related to intrinsic motivation, coping with unavoidable stress, and increased job involvement. Kalker (1984) says that teachers must have a conceptual understanding of stress itself, in order to effectively apply his stress inoculation theory. Within this theory, a teacher must be able to make clearly aware of a problem, and also realise that the problem is situational in nature. This decreases the tendency to think the problem is entirely the fault of the teacher, which in turn lessens the feelings of guilt, anxiety and helplessness. The teacher is then more willing to seek help and support from colleagues or administration to help deal with the problem. Teachers may also access their Employee Assistance Program (ATA, 1991) to find help in coping with stress. The EAP is a service designed to assist people who are experiencing job-related and personal problems that affect work performance, general health and wellness.

The organizational structure may play a key role in reducing teacher stress. Cheng (1996) found that when teachers had strong feelings of professionalism there was a greater tendency to feel satisfied with extrinsic rewards, job autonomy and decision-making. Teachers were more confident about their responsibilities and job expectations and tended to feel that their workload was fair and the job meaningful. Cheng says that the principal's leadership, school formalization, and teachers' social norms may be important factors for promoting professionalism in schools. King and Peart (1992) discovered that Canadian teachers tended to be more satisfied in schools in which teachers' in-school relationships are good, disciplinary measures are consistent and enforced fairly, student support services are adequate, and good working conditions prevail. Blaydes (1995) describes five steps to building staff self-esteem: (a) building a climate of caring in the school - developing a personal and approachable administrative style, (b) building a sense of commitment - through such activities as working on professional growth plans together, limiting classroom interruptions, and making sure the accomplishments of the school are visible within the community, (c) building a sense of belonging - creating a team of teachers that works collaboratively to improve its school, (d) building a sense of security - creating a safe and orderly environment so students and teachers feel protected and secure, and (e) building a sense of personal competency - using positive feedback and reinforcement to enhance teacher self-esteem. Cruz (1995) adds to these steps by citing that an effective principal will also share decision-making power, establish credibility, and understand the norms, beliefs and attitudes that characterize the school culture. Ryan (1988) states that the principal has to exhibit a genuine concern

about both the personal development and the professional development of teachers. The principal must provide praise and encouragement for the strengths of the teachers, and provide support and assistance for weaknesses. The findings of Shreeve, Goetter, Norby, Stuecle, Midgley, Waunch and de Michele (1987) indicate that there is a trend toward higher job satisfaction when teachers are as actively involved as they desire in decisions which affect their classrooms, as well as the overall management of the building. The researchers also found that the principal powerfully affects the well-being of teachers under his/her leadership. The ability to strike a balance between principal leadership and teacher involvement requires an individual to act with sensitivity toward the people he or she is responsible for leading.

#### B. The Impact of Educational Restructuring on Wellness

Education in Alberta and all across North America is in a constant state of change and restructuring. Although virtually every Canadian province is undergoing some kind of educational reform, Wickstrom (1994) says that the real challenge is in trying to understand exactly what is being proposed. Considering the varied implicit and explicit expectations involved in educational reform, no educational leader will be successful unless he or she is able to find the appropriate balance between or among the various conceptions of the why, what, and how of educational change. Using all resources at the principal's disposal to provide leadership with wisdom and forethought is critical in this time of change. The words "educational" have become entrenched in the speeches of politicians, while business leaders link them to economic survival and quality workforces in their annual reports (Faircloth-Jones, 1997). Sideris and Skau (1994) say that the whole concept of school restructuring is

understood in diverse ways by different reformers, and the interests of these groups often conflict. Pansegrau (1996) states that educational restructuring is mainly about the redistribution of power, adding that a real danger exists that rather than restructuring to permit the development of synergistic educational communities, what may occur is the continuance of power with paradigm, with simply a change in the stakeholder groups. Webber (1995) has found that the effects of reform on educational stakeholders have been extremely negative. Because many of the proposed structural changes did not come from public discussions, members of key stakeholder groups feel frustrated and defeated, and teacher morale is very low. School personnel feel attacked and undervalued by society. Assigning sole responsibility for the success of a provincial education system to teachers and school administrators is simplistic and inaccurate. Webber concludes that there appears to be a significant lack of trust between the Alberta government and its educators, and that education is becoming increasingly politicized and confrontational.

According to Farber (1991), educational restructuring has placed an even greater emphasis on the relationship between the school administration and its teachers. School-based management offers greater participation in decision-making to teachers, parents and others at the school level, which may prove to be a welcome challenge to some. However, extrinsic motivation such as this will only lead to successful teacher empowerment if teachers within a school setting have a high sense of self-empowerment, high intrinsic motivation, and strong principal-teacher relationships based on trust and openness (Wilson & Coolican, 1996). Murray (1990) notes that it is critical for the roles of the teachers and the principal in school-based

management to be clear, understood and accepted by all participants. With acceptance of these roles, a sense of trust must be built in order to establish a credible framework of self-governance. If teachers are to take on greater responsibilities within school-based management, Lieberman (1988) suggests that a new breed of leadership may emerge in the form of "teacher-leaders," who should be recognized for their work. This could take the form of providing release time to meet and collaborate with colleagues, to pursue research interests, or to serve as a mentor for a colleague, thereby providing a new type of recognized leadership within the school setting. The view of Sideris and Skau (1994) is that four interrelated restructuring themes have great implications for staff development: developing purpose and shared vision, encouraging a collaborative culture, school governance - where the role of the principal shifts from being authoritative to being facilitative, and increased development in the concepts of reflective practice and critical inquiry

Hargreaves (1997) says that even though teachers may feel overwhelmed by pressures for change within their own schools and classrooms, it is critical for schools to make conscious and constructive connections in partnership with the wider world, the very organizations which are causing the stress itself. Hargreaves outlines six reasons for making connections with the wider world:

1. More than ever today, schools cannot shut their gates and leave the troubles of the world on the doorstep.
2. Schools are losing their monopoly on learning because of the easy accessibility of television, music videos, the Internet, computer technology, and virtual schooling.

3. Across the developed world, people are experiencing a crisis of community, and schools provide one of our last and greatest hopes for resolving it.

4. Teachers need a lot more help if they are to keep pace with the needs of students within the changing school environment. Hargreaves suggests that there is a great need for increased community involvement in volunteer and paid positions. There is a need for assistance with everything from preparation of classroom materials to clerical work to locating social work and youth services within the school so that teachers and social workers can collaborate for the welfare of the children. Teacher assistants may also find themselves assuming new tasks traditionally belonging to the teacher. Within the whole notion of needing more help, Hargreaves warns that teachers will have to redefine their relationships with other adults and within the professional realm itself.

5. Market competition, parental choice, and individual self-management are redefining how schools relate to their surrounding environments. School-based management and market competition may make teachers work more closely with parents, and with their immediate colleagues to ensure success in their own school. However, Hargreaves contends that this very condition tends to divide schools and their teachers from one another. Teachers who are in competition are less likely to share in professional development activities, which means that professional development may become more school-based and home-grown. The need for teachers to seek new ways of learning from their colleagues and the wider profession becomes important.



6. Schools can no longer be indifferent to the working lives that await their students when they move into the adult world. Schools are challenged to build partnerships with the world of work, but to be vigilant about creating partnerships that are morally defensible and educationally worthwhile.

McKinnon and Shute (1995) found that educational change among teachers will only be successful if three conditions exist: (a) there must be a clear understanding of an individual teacher's frame of reference or perspective, (b) the context of educational change must be fully understood, and (c) the individuals involved in the change must understand its facilitative processes. These processes may include establishing a supportive group culture, providing open leadership, using a learning approach to change, and making connections between the philosophical and the practical. Fullan (1997) recognizes that three of the most fundamental problems associated with educational change are (a) the growing and deepening alienation among teachers, (b) the balkanization and burnout of passionate reform-minded teachers; and (c) the overwhelming multiplicity of unconnected, fragmented change initiatives. Fullan's approach to dealing with these problems is centered on the importance of emotion and hope. He presents the notion that successful school restructuring may be possible if we understand the roles of emotion and hope that underlie successful individuals and groups, and if we strive to create the structural conditions that challenge and help create hopefulness. Being hopeful and taking action in the face of important lost causes (improving education being the one in question) may be less emotionally draining than being in a permanent state of despair.

## **Methodology**

For the purposes of data gathering, a survey format was chosen. This format enabled all of the 250 teachers in the Holy Spirit School Division to have the opportunity to express their views, concerns and comments surrounding the issue of teacher wellness. Teachers were invited to volunteer further comments in the open-ended section of the survey. This method proved to be successful, both in terms of the rich variety and depth of responses, and the number of voluntary participants. This survey was well received by the teachers; 136 teachers responded to the survey, marking a return rate of 54%.

## **Survey Instrument**

The survey content and design was heavily based on the Canadian Teachers' Federation 1992 survey and subsequent report Teachers in Canada: Their Work and Quality of Life by Alan King and Marjorie Peart.

This survey was entitled A Survey of Teacher Wellness. The survey was divided into four parts:

### **Part A: Biographical Information**

Participants were asked to provide biographical information which included employment status, gender, marital status, teaching assignment, length of career, grade level, personal rating of physical health, reasons for taking an extended leave, and number of sick days in the previous school year.

### **Part B: Measuring Opinions and Attitudes**

Seventeen statements were presented to the respondents in this section. Participants were asked to provide their opinions and attitudes about these statements on a five point Likert scale, with

ranges from Strongly Agree/ Agree/Disagree/ Strongly Disagree/ Not Applicable.

#### Part C: Measuring Teacher Stress

Teachers were asked to describe their perceived levels of stress on each of nine possible stress factors. A five point Likert scale was presented, which ranged from 1 being No Stress, 2 as Some Stress, 3 described Stress, 4 was Very Stressful, 5 being Extremely Stressful. Teachers were also provided with an opportunity to offer their own thoughts on stress-causing factors in an open-ended response area.

Part C also included a personal estimate of hours spent doing school related activities outside of the regular school week.

#### Part D: Measuring Teacher Satisfaction

Through open-ended responses, teachers were asked to define the following:

1. the aspect of teaching perceived to be most satisfying,
2. the most effective strategy employed to cope with stress,
3. one 'gem of advice' which could be given to a beginning teacher on how to maintain a sense of well-being, and
4. one thing the school or school division could do to improve teacher wellness.

Lines were provided for additional comments.

In all, a total of thirty-four questions were asked in parts B, C, and D, with two additional opportunities given for comments in Parts C and D.

## **Results of the Survey**

### **Typical Respondent**

The typical respondent in this study was a female (52.9%) married (66.2%) teacher (77.2%) with twenty-one to thirty years of teaching experience (26.5%), currently teaching in Division II (23.5%). The typical respondent described herself as being in "Very Good" health (63.2%), had not taken a recent extended leave of six or more weeks (43.4%), and had taken 0 - 5 days of sick leave during the 1997-1998 school year (86%).

Because 50.7% of the respondents declined to state whether they taught in a city school (Lethbridge) or town school (Coaldale, Picture Butte, Pincher Creek, Taber), it is difficult to attach one or the other to the description of the "typical" respondent. However, of those who did respond, 34.6% taught in a city school.

### **Part A: Biographical Data**

#### **Employment Status**

At the time of this study, the majority of respondents were working as full-time teachers, while about fifteen percent of respondents were working part-time.

Table 1 Employment Status of Respondents

<b>Employment Status</b>	<b>No. Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
	N=136	
Full-time	111	81.6
Part-time	21	15.4
No answer	4	2.9

### Gender

Over half of the respondents involved in this study were female, while about one-third were male. Fourteen per cent of the respondents did not provide information on gender.

Table 2 Gender of Respondents

<b>Gender</b>	<b>No. Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
	N=136	
Male	45	33.1
Female	72	52.9

### Marital Status

Almost two-thirds of respondents stated they were married. A smaller number said they were not married, and an almost equal number did not provide that information.

Table 3 Marital Status of Respondents

<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>No. Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
	N=136	
Single	26	19.1
Married	90	66.2
No answer	20	14.7

### Teaching or Administrative Assignment

Over three-quarters of respondents were classroom teachers, while about one-tenth classified themselves as Principal, Associate Principal or Administrative Assistant. The Resource/Learning Assistance/Special Education/Remedial Teaching category identified 6.6% of the respondents.

Table 4 Position held by respondents

<b>Teaching/Admin. Assignment</b>	<b>No. Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
	N=136	
Teacher	105	77.2
Administrator	16	11.8
Resource/Spec.Ed	9	6.6
Itinerant	2	1.5

### Years of Teaching Experience

Respondents were asked how many years they will have taught as of June 30, 1998. The majority of respondents had been teaching for twenty-one to thirty years. This group was closely followed by those who had been teaching for eleven to fifteen years. Together, these groups made up 60% of the participants in this study.

Table 5 Teaching Experience

<b>Years of Experience</b>	<b>No. Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
	N=136	
1 to 5	17	12.5
6 to 10	21	15.4
11 to 15	32	23.5
16 to 20	17	12.5
21 to 30	36	26.5
Over 30	8	5.9
No answer	4	2.9

#### Location of School

About one-third of respondents said that they were working in one of the nine Holy Spirit Catholic schools in Lethbridge. Less than one-fifth of respondents stated that they currently worked in one of the "town" schools, that being in Coaldale, Picture Butte, Pincher Creek, or Taber. However, half the respondents declined an answer.

Table 6 Location of School

<b>School Location</b>	<b>No. Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
	N=136	
Town	20	14.7
City	47	34.6
No answer	69	50.7

### Grade Level

Respondents were asked to identify the grade level(s) in which they teach by division. Almost half of respondents were teaching in either Division I or Division II. In compiling results, the category of "More than one division" was added. Nearly one-fifth of respondents were in this category.

Table 7 Grade level by division

<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>No. Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
	N=136	
ECS	7	5.1
Division I	30	22.1
Division II	32	23.5
Division III	23	16.9
Division IV	12	8.8
More than one	27	19.9
No answer	5	3.7



### Physical Health

Teachers were asked to rate their level of overall physical health. Nearly all of the respondents identified their physical health as being excellent or very good.

Table 8 Perceived state of physical health

<b>Physical Health</b>	<b>No. Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
	N=136	
Excellent	32	23.5
Very good	86	63.2
Fair	10	7.4
No answer	8	5.9

### Extended Leave

Participants were asked to identify the reason for taking their most recent extended leave of six weeks or more. Nearly half of respondents said that they had never taken an extended leave. Of those who had taken an extended leave, parental leave was most common. About one-third of participants did not answer.

Table 8 Reasons for taking an extended leave

<b>Extended Leave</b>	<b>No. Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
	N=136	
Parental	19	14.0
Medical stress-related	2	1.5
Educational	7	5.1
Medical unrelated to stress	8	5.9
None taken	59	43.4
Other reasons	1	0.7
No answer	40	29.4

### Sick Days

Teachers were asked to identify the number of sick leave days taken during the 1996-1997 school year. The majority of respondents took zero to five sick days in the previous school year, five times the total number of teachers who took anywhere from six to sixteen sick days during the school year.

Table 9 Sick days taken during the previous school year

<b>Sick Leave Days</b>	<b>No. Respondents</b>	<b>% of Respondents</b>
	N=136	
0 to 5	117	86
6 to 10	8	5.9
11 to 15	2	1.5
Over 16	6	4.4
No answer	1	0.7

## **Part B: Measuring Opinions and Attitudes**

### **Satisfaction in Teaching**

Nearly all of the teachers who participated in this study have stated that they are proud to be a teacher (Figure 1). However, when asked if they would choose teaching as a career again, a much lower number (65.4%), offered a positive response (Fig.2). About a third of the participants said they would not choose teaching again as a career.

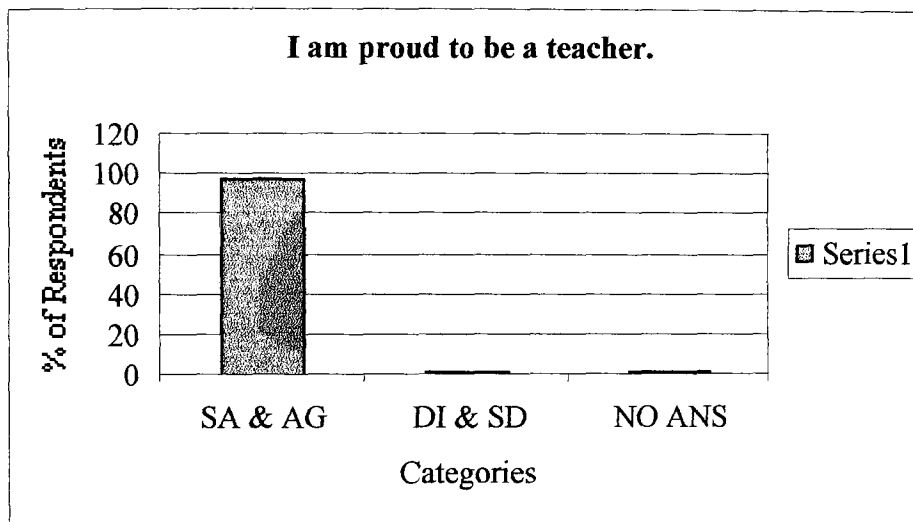


Fig. 1 Pride in teaching

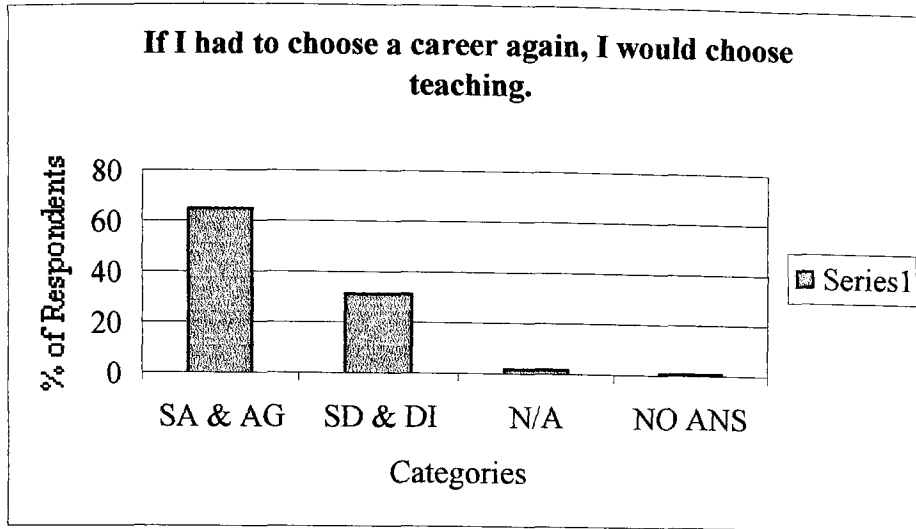


Fig. 2 Choosing Teaching as a Career

### Occupational Dissatisfiers

#### Personal versus Professional Life

Most respondents (72.1%) feel torn between the responsibilities of their professional and home lives (Fig. 3) and 52.2% say they have considered teaching fewer hours as a way to improve the quality of their home lives.

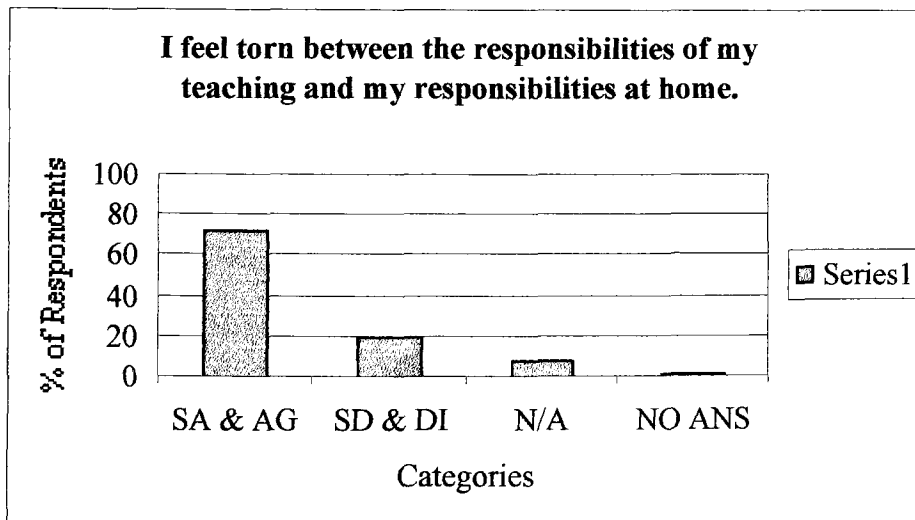


Fig. 3 Personal and Professional Life

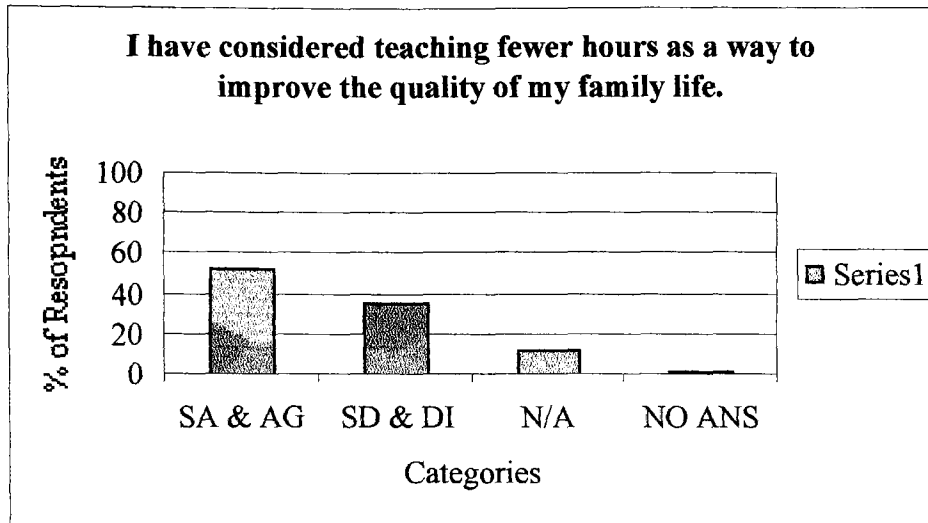


Fig. 4 Teaching Fewer Hours

#### Time Constraints

Time is consistently a struggle, as 83.9% of teachers feel they do not have a sufficient amount of time to provide adequate help for children who are having difficulty (Fig.5) and 75.8% feel they are not given enough preparation time during the work day (Fig.6).

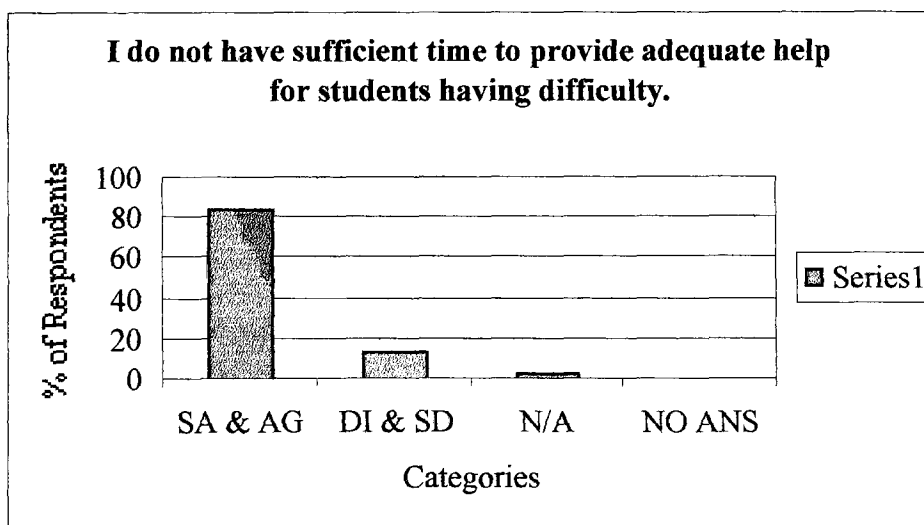


Fig. 5 Adequate Provision of Help

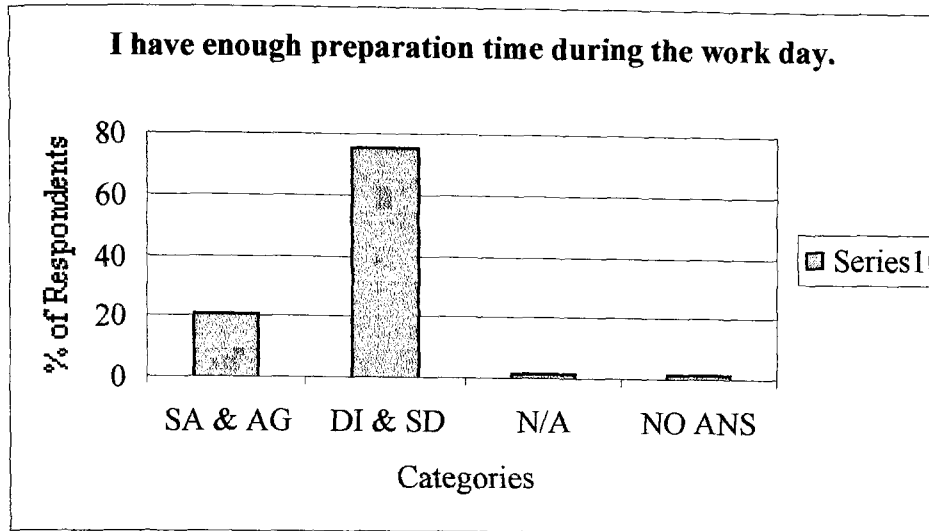


Fig. 6 Preparation Time

### School Reforms

Overwhelmingly, (95.6%) teachers recognize the quality of the school administration as a direct factor in levels of teacher stress. Respondents feel that school reforms have had a negative impact on the collegial relationship between administrators and teachers (69.9%), (Fig. 7) and recognize that site-based management has increased the workload of administrators (89.9%), (Fig. 8). As well, 65.4% of respondents feel that the site-based management model has given teachers greater input into the decision-making process at the school level (Fig. 9), while about one-third of respondents disagree with this premise.

The majority (80.1%) of teachers feels that the morale of teachers in the Holy Spirit school division has declined in the past few years (Fig. 10).

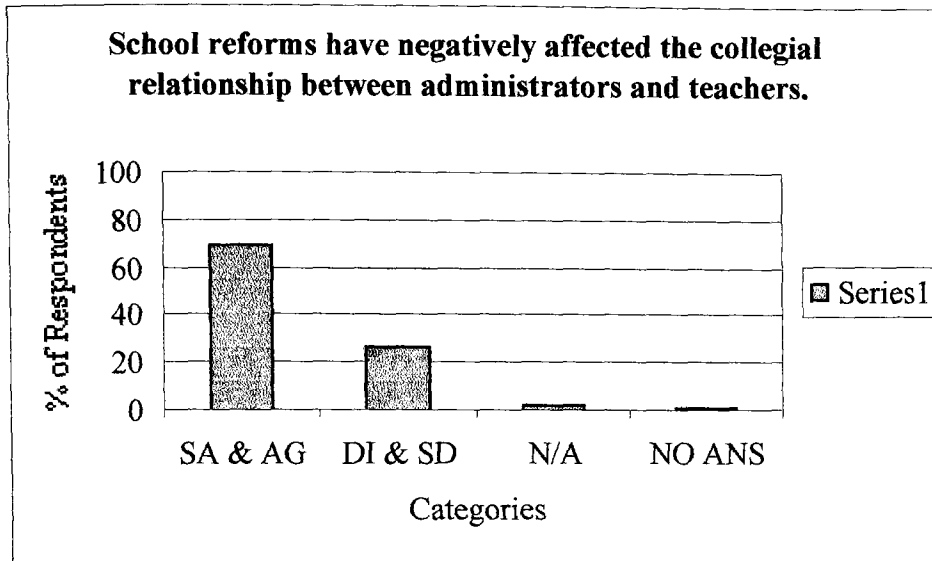


Fig. 7 Administrator/Teacher Relationships

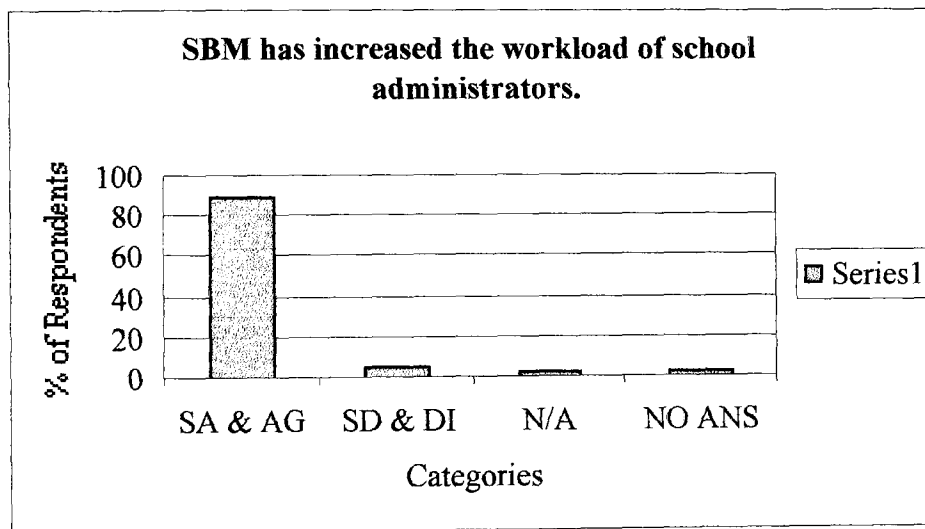


Fig. 8 Increased Workload of Administrators



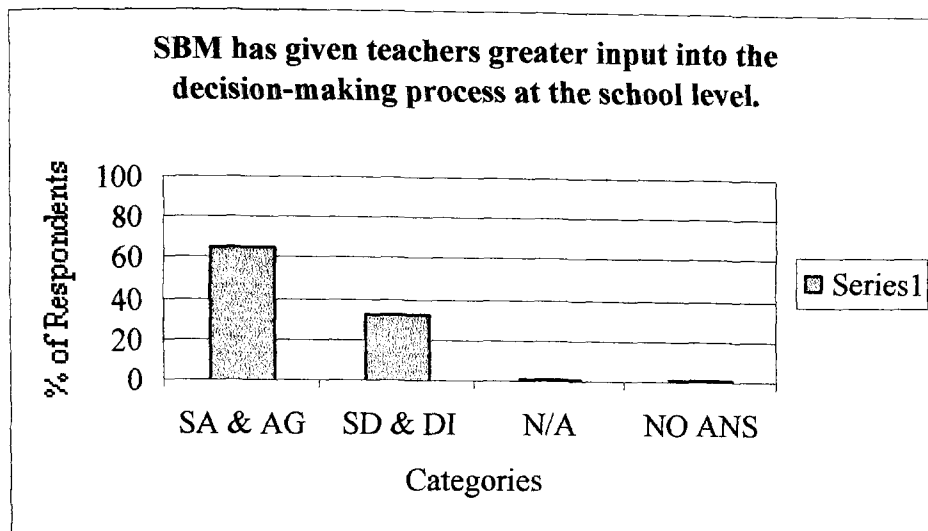


Fig. 9 Decision-Making under Site-Based Management

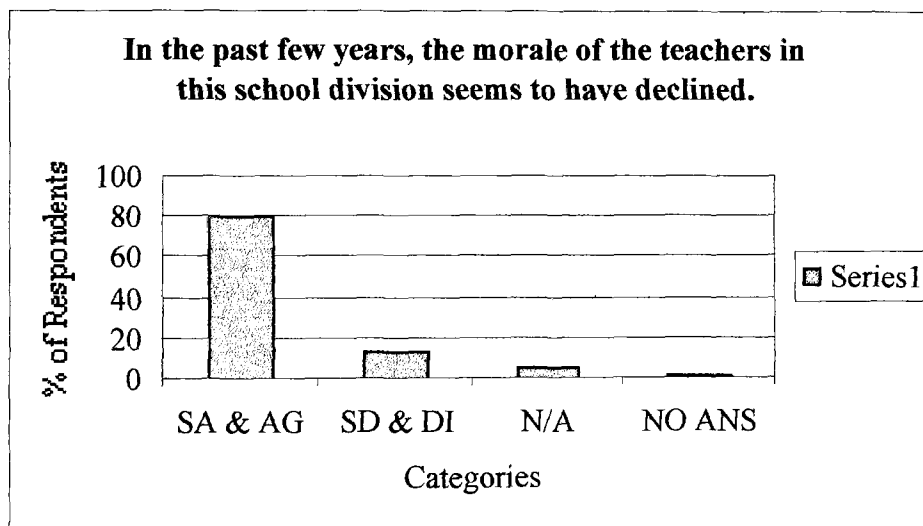


Fig. 10 Teacher Morale

### Finding Support

Nearly all respondents (94.1%) feel accepted by the people with whom they work (Fig. 11). 89.7% count on their colleagues to provide emotional support (Fig. 12), and 72.1% feel it is important to interact with their colleagues on a social basis as

well as a professional basis (Fig. 13). Almost the same majority of participants (87.5%) feel that the parents of their students are supportive of the teachers in their schools (Fig. 14). Also, the great majority of teachers (89%) say that their religious faith provides a crucial means of support in times of personal crisis (Fig.15), and virtually all participants (90.4%) cite their families as their greatest source of support (Fig. 16).

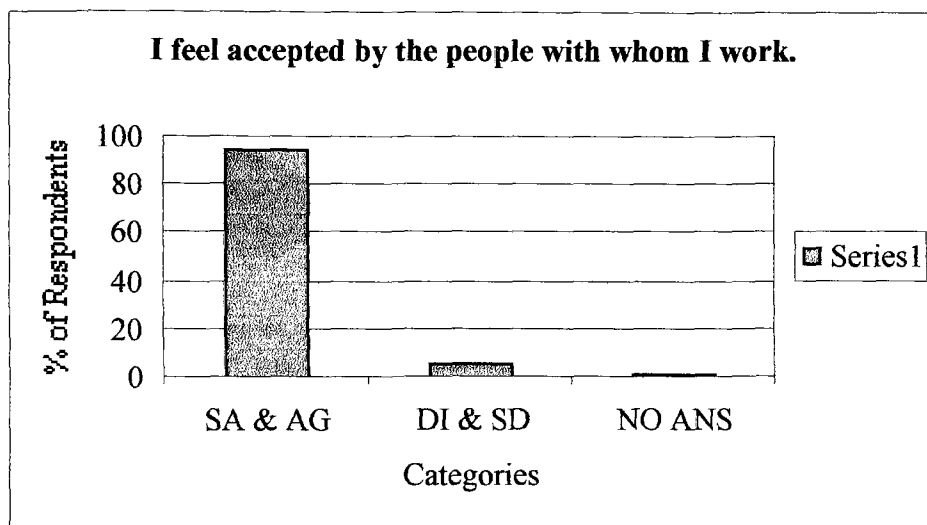


Fig.11. Acceptance by Colleagues

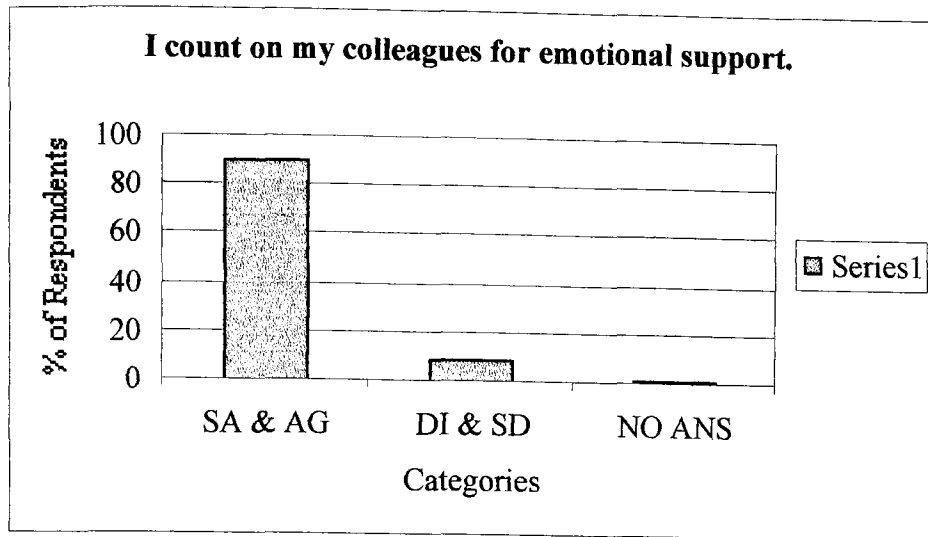


Fig. 12. Colleagues as Emotional Support

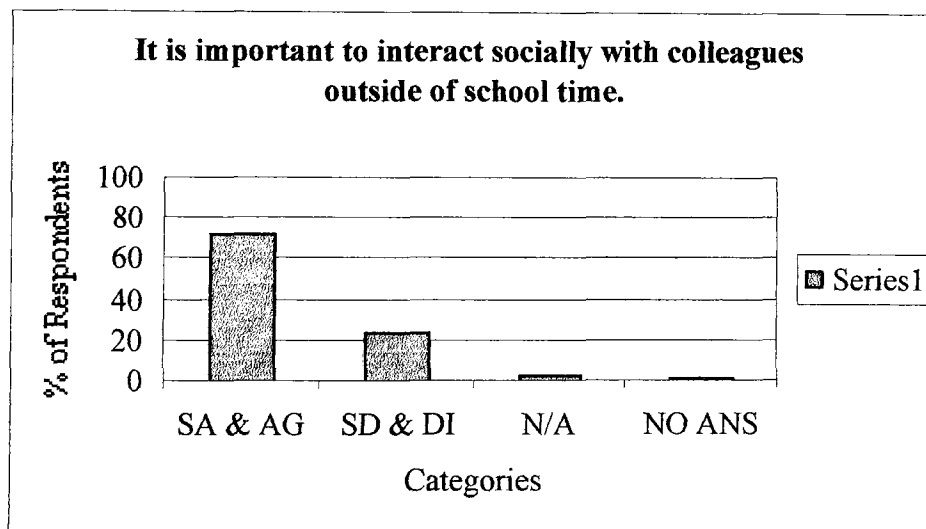


Fig. 13. Social Interaction with Colleagues

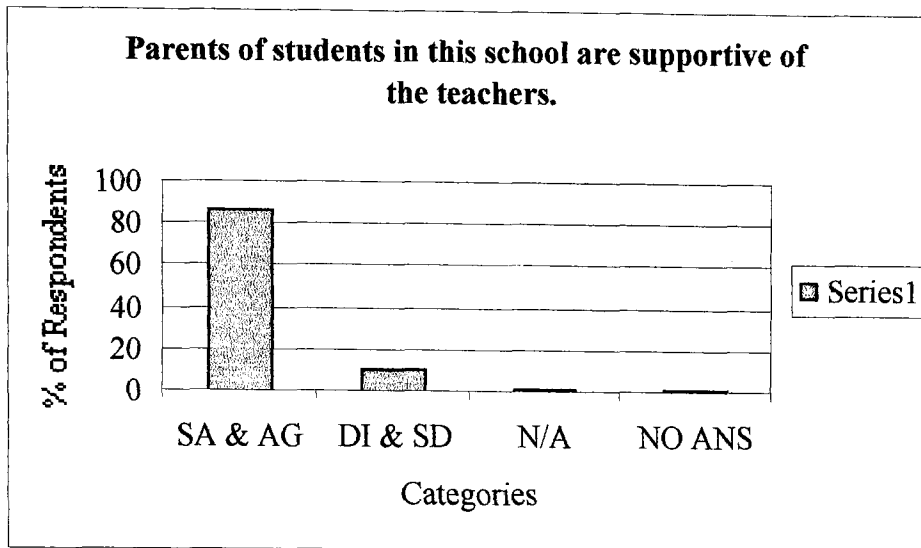


Fig. 14. Support of Parents

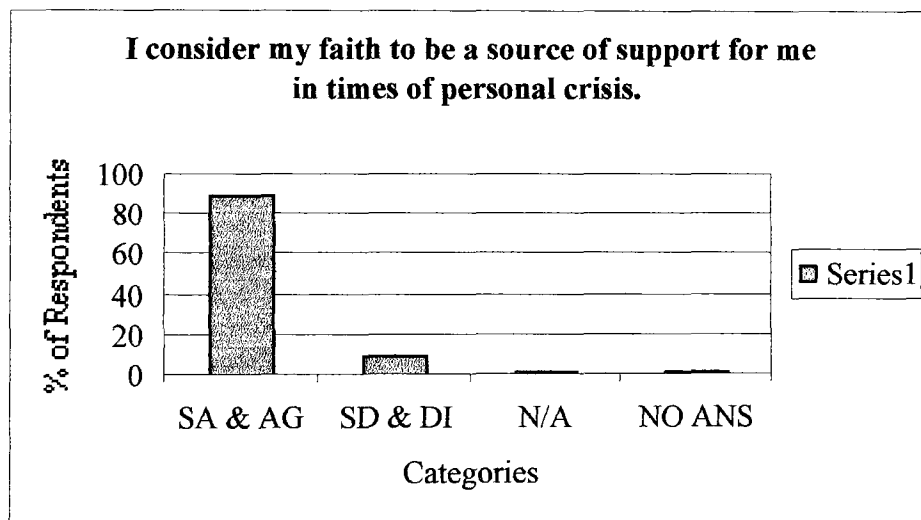


Fig. 15. Importance of Religious Faith

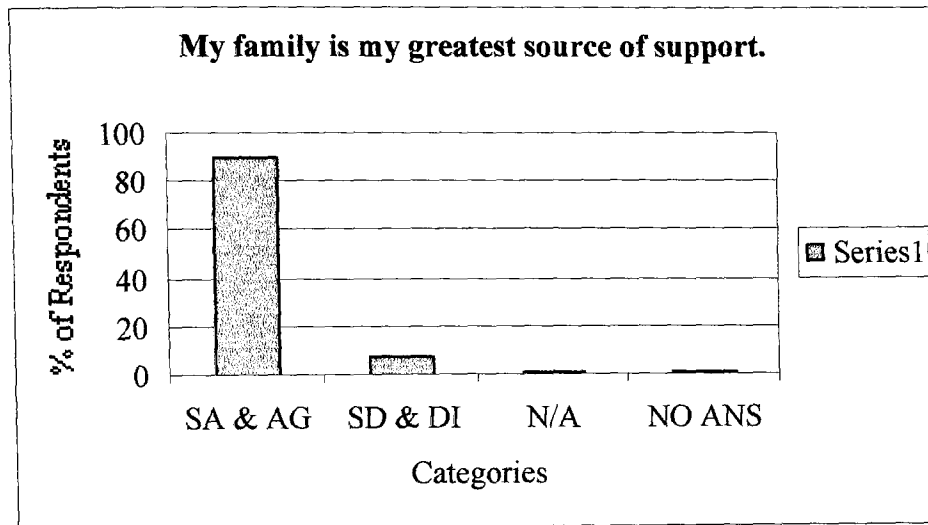


Fig. 16. Family as Support

### **Part C: Measuring Teacher Stress**

In this survey, participants were asked to rate nine potential stressors on the Likert scale. In order from greatest source of stress to least stressful they are:

1. Special needs children in regular classrooms;
2. Student attitudes and behavior;
3. Role overload;
4. Instructional load;
5. Keeping up with curriculum changes;
6. Balancing personal and professional life;
7. Parent pressures and concerns;
8. New situations brought about with site-based decision-making
9. Achievement tests/diploma exams

### **Summary of Responses**

#### **Meeting the Needs of Special Needs Children**

Nearly all of the participants in this survey (91.1%) said that trying to meet the needs of special needs children in the regular classroom was stressful, very stressful, or extremely stressful (Fig. 19). Teachers in Divisions I and II were highest in their rating (33.8%) of this area as very or extremely stressful. Of full time employees, 52.2% rated this area as very or extremely stressful, and another 21.3% rated it as stressful. At a total of 73.5%, the stress rating of full-time teachers is far higher than that of part-time teachers (14.7%). Also, female teachers (49.3%) find this area stressful/very/extremely stressful, more than their male counterparts (29.4%).

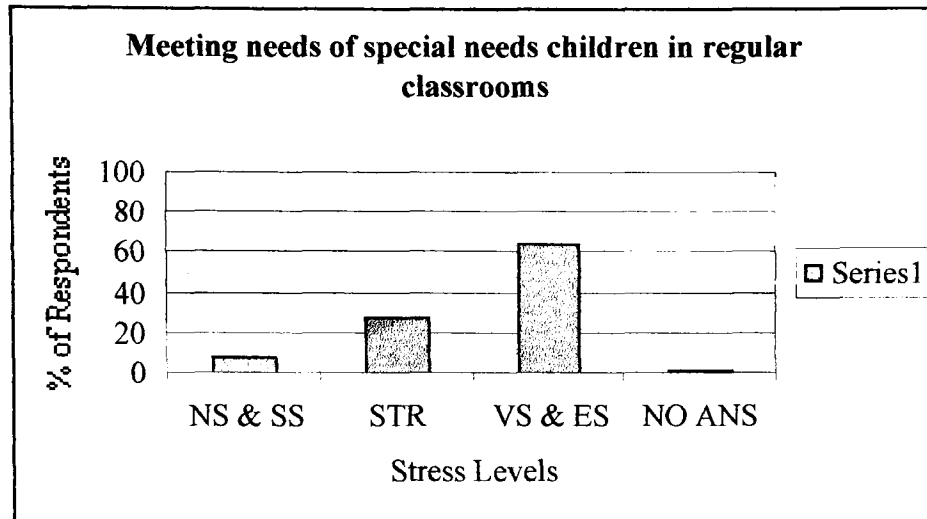


Fig. 17. Special Needs Children

Student Attitudes and Behavior

Student attitudes and behavior was ranked second most stressful with respondents, at 88.3% (Fig. 20). Of this group, 61.8% found students' attitudes to be very or extremely stressful. Teachers in Divisions I and II were highest in rating this category as stressful/very/extremely stressful, at 40.4%. The combined Division III and IV results were much lower, at 23.5%. Women reported higher stress levels than men, at 46.3% as opposed to 27.9% for men. Student attitudes and behavior affect full time teachers substantially more (73.5%) than their part-time colleagues (11.8%).

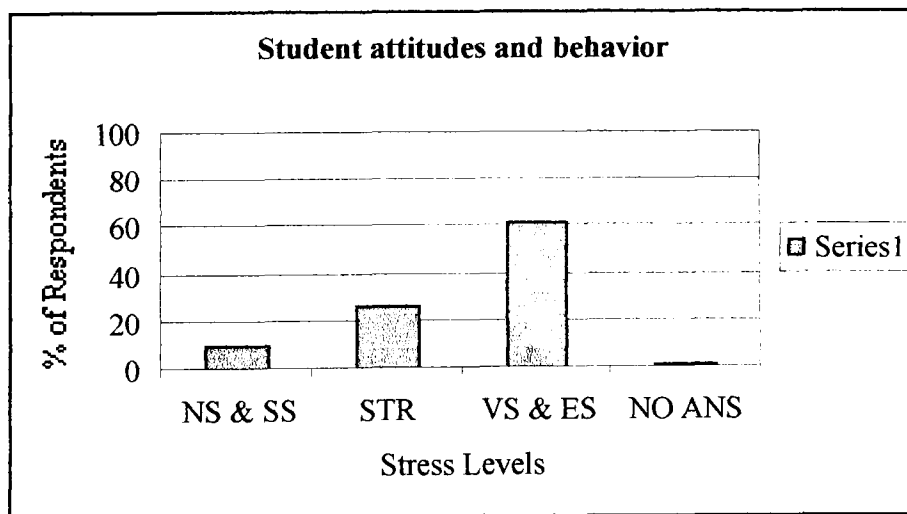


Fig. 18 Stress from Student Behavior

### Role Overload

Role overload (trying to do the duties of teacher/counsellor/parent/coach/etc.) was cited as the third most stressful activity among teachers (Fig. 21). Eighty-six per cent of respondents rated role overload as stressful. Of this group, 65.4% rate role overload as very stressful or extremely stressful.

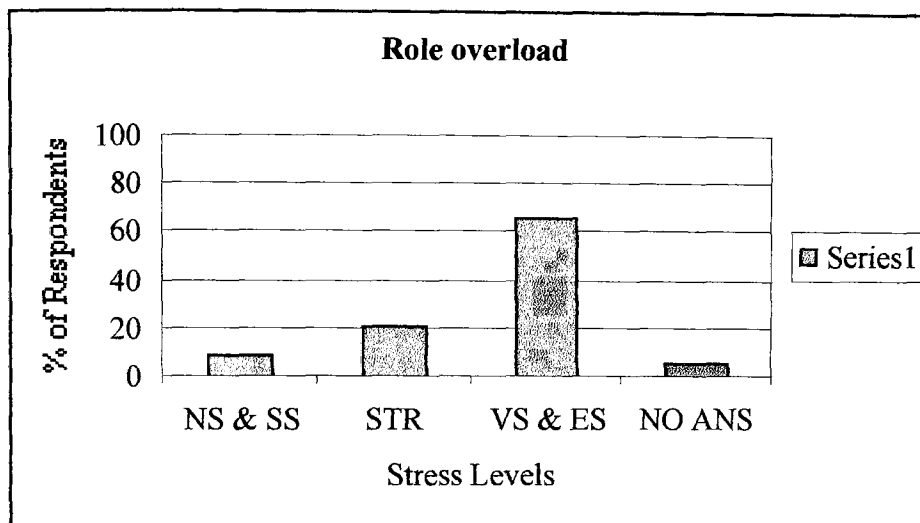


Fig. 19 Stress Caused by Role Overload

### Keeping Up with Curriculum Changes

Keeping up with curriculum changes was considered a stressful activity by 83.0% of respondents (Fig. 22), with 44.8% of them stating that it contributes to very high stress. Nearly twice as many women as men described curriculum changes as causing stress, and teachers in Divisions I and II reported much more stress than their colleagues in other levels. Predictably, full-time teachers perceived more stress (77%) about curriculum changes than were part-time teachers (15%).



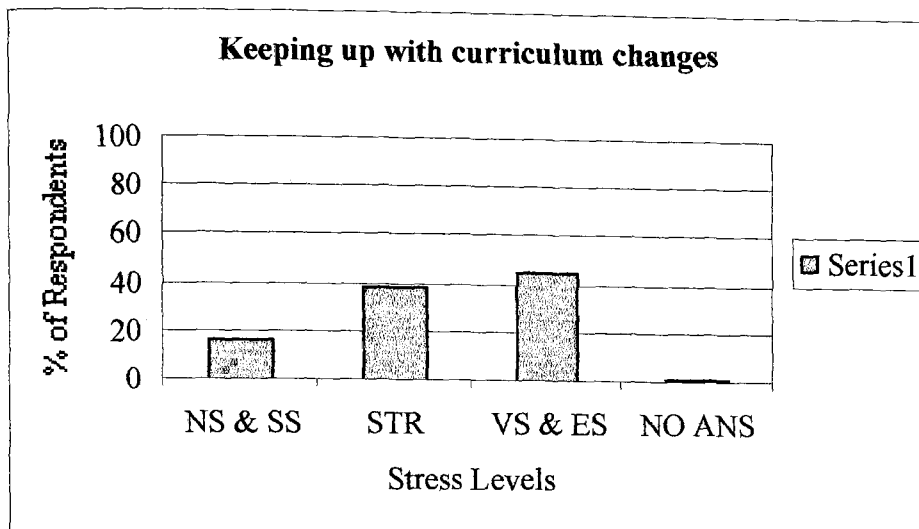


Fig. 20 Stress Caused by Curriculum Changes

#### Balancing Personal Life with Professional Life

Of those who responded, 80.8% replied that balancing their personal lives with their professional lives caused stress to extreme stress. (Fig. 23) Female teachers felt especially pressured by the demands of personal and professional life, with 41.9% reporting that the demands were stressful to extremely stressful. About one third of male respondents reported experiencing stress to extreme stress in this area. Division I and II teachers report the highest stress levels, at 24.3%. Among the total number of participant in the study, 69.1% stated that the area of personal versus professional life caused stress to extreme stress.

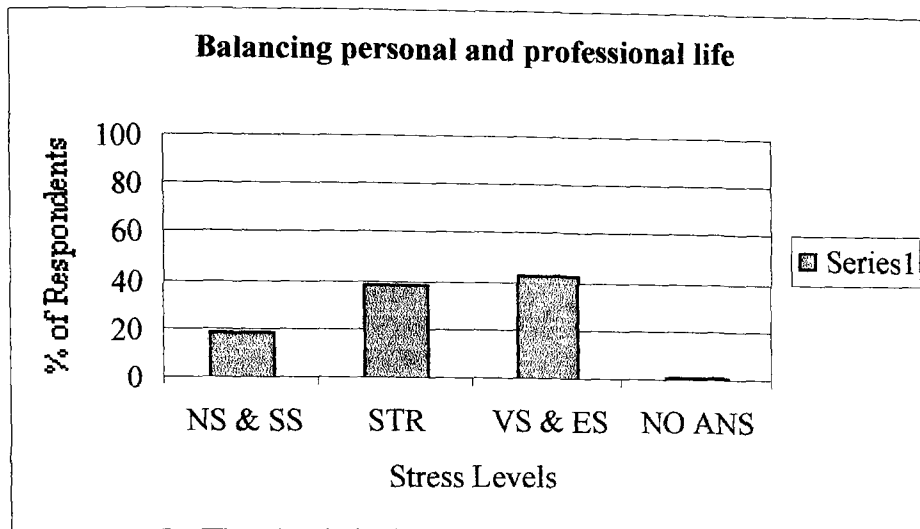


Fig. 21 Stress Caused by Personal/Professional Life

#### Parental Pressures and Concerns

Of those who responded, 79.4% cited parental pressures and concerns as causing high levels of stress (Fig. 24). There was little difference between the perceptions of male and female teachers in this area. However, teachers in Divisions I and II again reported more feelings of stress than teachers at other levels. As well, full-time teachers reported considerably greater stress (66.2%) than did part-time teachers (11.8%).

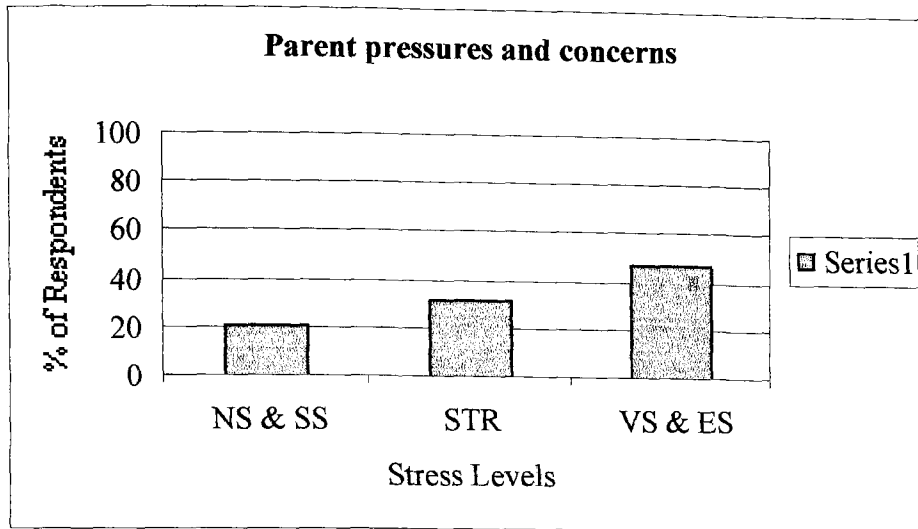


Fig. 22 Stress Caused by Parental Pressures

#### Site-Based Decision-Making

At 72.1% of total respondents, new situations brought about by the advent of site-based management was the issue ranked seventh in causing stress to extreme stress (Fig. 23). Again, a greater percentage of female teachers (38.9%) than male teachers (22.0%) reported high levels of stress. 25% of respondents stated that this area provided little or no stress. Division I and II teachers were again higher than all other teaching levels in describing site-based management as causing great stress. As well, full-time teachers were far more stressed (66.1%) than their part-time colleagues (11.0%).

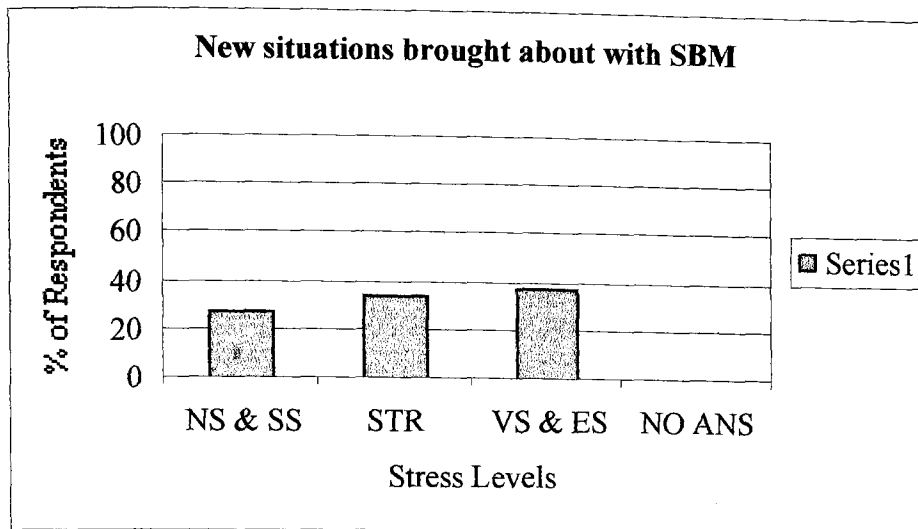


Fig. 23 Stress Caused by Site-Based Management

#### Achievement Tests and Diploma Exams

The stressor described as least in the ranking order was achievement tests and diploma exams (Fig. 26). Just over half of the respondents described this as stressful to extremely stressful. Female teachers (36.7%) reported more stress than male teachers (21.3%). Again, Division I and II teachers reported more stressed than teachers at any other teaching level, and full-time teachers (58.8%) reported much greater incidence of stress over their part-time counterparts (7.3%).

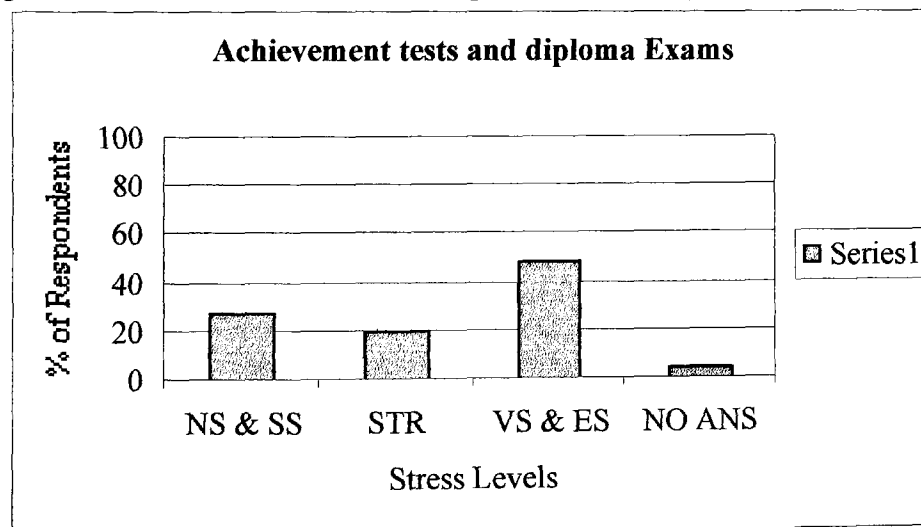


Fig. 24 Stress Caused by Achievement Tests/Diploma Exams

An opportunity was provided for respondents to add stress-causing issues of their own. However, the majority of respondents chose not to do so. Those who chose to respond cited such items as overwhelming public expectations and staff relationships as causing personal stress.

#### Time Spent out of School on School-Related Activities

This section of the survey asked respondents to estimate the number of hours they spent outside of school on certain school-related activities. The areas in question were (1) marking, lesson preparation and planning (2) school-related committee meetings (3) ATA activities - local and /or provincial; (4) school extra-curricular activities. The results were grouped in the following categories: zero to five hours; six to ten hours; eleven to fifteen hours; sixteen to twenty hours; twenty-one hours and over.

Respondents spent the most time - about six to ten hours per week- on lesson preparation, marking and planning. Each of the other areas in question were mostly reported as given from zero to five hours per week, although it should be noted that 15.4 % of respondents thought they spent about eleven to fifteen hours each week on extracurricular activities. A number of respondents noted that the extra-curricular hours they spend throughout the school year would vary, depending on the sports season or fine arts production at hand.

### **Part D: Measuring Teacher Satisfaction**

Teachers were given with an opportunity to provide their own responses to the following:

1. What aspects of teaching do you find most satisfying?
2. What is your most effective coping strategy in dealing with stress?
3. If you were to offer one gem of advice on how to maintain a sense of well being throughout a 25-30 year career, what would it be?
4. What is one thing the school or school division could do to improve teacher wellness?

### **Summary of Open-Ended Responses**

#### **Factors which provide satisfaction**

The wide majority of teachers (76.5%) said that working with children and being a part of their education and their lives was the aspect of teaching they enjoyed the most (Table 1). Another 8.1% mentioned that working with their colleagues provided great satisfaction, as did the appreciation of the children.

Table 1 Sources of Job Satisfaction

<b>Grouping of Similar Responses N=136</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Seeing children learn/grow/succeed/accomplish	62	45.6%
Overall interactions with children	46	33.8%
Teaching environment/well-planned lessons	8	5.9%
Learning new ideas/challenges	7	5.1%
Colleague relationships/support	6	4.4%
Thanks from students/parents	4	2.9%
Doing God's work	2	1.5%
Nothing	2	1.5%

#### Methods of Coping with Stress

In describing strategies which assist teachers in coping with stress (Table 2), 30.1% cited involvement in sports and exercise as their primary means of coping with stress. Some (18.4%) found that talking with friends provided relief and support, while others (16.9%) involved themselves in other relaxing activities. A smaller percentage (11.0%) relied on spending time alone to help deal with stress.

Table 2 Coping Strategies

<b>Grouping of Similar Open-ended Responses</b>	<b>N=136</b>	<b><u>No.</u></b>	<b><u>%</u></b>
Exercise/physical fitness		60	44.0
Talking with colleagues/friends/family		47	34.6
Hobbies/relaxing activities		31	22.8
Prayer/meditation		17	12.5
Stay organized		15	11.0
Family holiday/recreational activity		15	11.0
Keep a sense of humor		10	7.4
Accept personal limitations/keep things in perspective		9	6.6
Proper nutrition/rest		8	5.9
Socialize with colleagues outside of school		6	4.4
Medication		3	2.2
Avoidance		1	0.7

### Advice to Beginning Teachers

When offering advice to beginning teachers about how to maintain a sense of well-being throughout their career (Table 3), many of respondents (36.8%) suggested that teachers should make every effort to balance their personal and professional lives. “Don’t sweat the small stuff” was a fairly common response. Having a good sense of humor was seen to be important, as was taking an active role in faith life. Many teachers suggested that new teachers take one day at a time, and try not to be



overwhelmed by the busy life of the school. Also, being well planned and organized was seen to be important.

Table 3 Advice to Beginning Teachers

<b><u>Grouping of Similar Open-ended Responses</u></b> <b>N=136</b>	<b><u>No.</u></b>	<b><u>%</u></b>
Find a balance between personal/professional life	55	40.4
Keep a sense of humor; have an optimistic attitude	28	20.6
Take one day at a time; don't be overwhelmed by small things; 'Don't sweat the small stuff'	19	14.0
Become involved in your school/extra-curricular activities;	18	13.2
Be organized, well-planned	14	10.3
Realise and accept personal limitations; see expectations realistically	11	8.1
Exercise; stay healthy	9	6.6
Accept the challenges of teaching	8	5.9
Seek a different profession	5	3.7
Pray; maintain your faith life	4	2.9
Rely on colleagues for support and help	4	2.9
Be yourself	3	2.2
Guide students; treat everyone with respect	2	1.5

### Suggestions for Improving Teacher Wellness

In suggesting one thing the school or school division could do to improve teacher wellness, respondents offered varied opinions (Table 4). Treating teachers with respect, honesty and integrity was seen as being most important. Another large group of respondents saw more preparation time and professional development in-services as necessary. Some thought that smaller class sizes would improve teacher wellness. An equal number pointed out the importance of the relationship between staff in the Catholic Education Centre and school staffs. Other suggestions focussed on encouraging teachers to exercise by having some contribution made toward gym memberships. Very small percentages of responses cited promoting a more positive public perception of education; more retreat days; teachers having to live in the community in which they teach; meetings needing to be held within school hours; and more time being allowed for teachers to work collaboratively with colleagues.

Table 4 Suggestions for the Holy Spirit School Division

<b>Grouping of Similar Open-ended Responses</b>	<b>N=136</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Support/trust/respect/ teacher decisions, disciplinary decisions;		27	19.6
Reduce Pupil/Teacher ratio		20	14.7
Increase preparation time		17	12.5
Reward/recognize extra time, effort; improve ERIP as reward		12	8.8
More visible public relations support; attitudes of public		11	8.1
Increase salaries/funding/resources		10	7.4
Provide exercise/wellness programs/gym memberships		9	6.6
Increase/provide help for special needs		5	3.7
Allow well days/family leave/personal days		5	3.7

## Discussion

The teachers in the Holy Spirit School Division are clearly proud to be educators. They appear to derive great intrinsic satisfaction from their daily interactions with their students, and find immense value in being contributors to the overall education of the children in the Holy Spirit schools. Their responses to the open-ended questions give evidence of their satisfaction, as exemplified by the following:

*Seeing the growth, either academically, socially, emotionally or spiritually in the students...*

*Seeing children's joy when they've learned a new skill and can apply it to different areas...*

*Seeing growth in students and myself, relationships begin developing...*

Considering the overwhelming show of pride they have in teaching, it may seem odd that fewer teachers would choose teaching as a career if they had it to do all over again. However, there could be a host of reasons for not choosing the same career. A reluctance to choose teaching again should not overshadow the fact that these particular teachers are nearly unanimous in their pride in the work they do in their schools.

Most teachers who responded to this survey have stated that their physical health is in very good to excellent condition, and nearly half of the participants in this study have indicated that they rely on exercise and general physical activity to keep healthy. If the low numbers of sick leave days taken is any indication of physical health, the teachers may be a very healthy lot indeed. However, it is important to note

that teachers in general tend to come to work when they are not feeling well, rather than take sick leave. The added comments of two teachers sum this up rather well:

*I have not taken sick leave, but I should have. Teachers have a tendency to run on fumes... .*

*I did not take sick days because our school is so busy that I cannot afford to take sick days. I have come to school with pneumonia and laryngitis and bronchitis without taking a day off...*

*... many teachers do not take sick days because planning for a sub is too difficult to arrange. Teachers also don't take stress leave because of pride, looking like a failure.*

Given the positive response in determining the state of physical health and the pride in teaching it might be tempting to conclude that all is well with the educators of the Holy Spirit schools. However, closer scrutiny indicates that the majority of respondents in the study are finding teaching to be a very stressful profession. When they rated nine potential stressors on a scale of one to five, their most frequent responses were in the four to five range, indicating great or extreme stress. The overall study results show that, consistently, teachers who work full-time are more stressed than their part-time colleagues. Moreover, female teachers feel more stressed than do male teachers, and teachers in Divisions I and II report greater stress levels than those in Divisions III and IV.

Full-time teachers predictably experience greater stress than part-time teachers. Those who teach full-time may be expected to teach in more subject areas as well as teaching more periods per day. For most full-time teachers, this means

increased planning and preparation for new curriculum areas. It may mean more background planning for special needs students, which includes writing Individual Program Plans and attending team meetings. The overarching theme of responses for full-time teachers in this study is the matter of time itself. Those who teach full-time find themselves struggling to balance the expectations of teaching with their personal needs and the needs of their families.

Female teachers perceive they are subject to greater stress than do their male colleagues. Virtually every potential stressor in the rating scale was rated more highly by women than men. It should be noted that more women than men responded to this survey, so higher results for women may be expected. However, the higher participation rate among women teachers may be because they are stressed, and took the opportunity to express their concerns.

Teachers in Divisions I and II report more stress than those in Divisions III and IV. Nearly half of the respondents identified themselves as Division I or II teachers, while approximately one-fourth were in Divisions III or IV. Most of the female teaching population work in Division I and II; it follows that if more females than males responded to the study, and more females were experiencing greater stress than males, then Division I and II teachers (who are mostly females) would be experiencing greater stress than the other two divisions.

That teachers in Division I reported a high level of perceived stress contradicts the findings of the Canadian Teachers' Federation (King & Peart, 1992). The CTF study concluded that teachers in the Division I level reported a lower level of stress than teachers in Divisions II or III.

## **Conclusions and Future Considerations**

As teachers, we cherish our relationships with children. Along the way in our busy careers, we need to take a bit of precious time to think about those relationships in positive ways, and to reflect on our reasons for being teachers. Perhaps this time of personal insight will provide encouragement and hope when the immediate situation seems unbearable. Professional reading, journal writing or prayer and meditation may provide greater understanding, clearer insights, and more valuable material for reflection.

Today's teachers find it increasingly difficult to meet the needs of special needs children within the regular classroom. Since the first waves of reform in schools, special needs children have been expected to be integrated into regular classrooms if at all possible. Having special needs children in regular classrooms can be enriching and rewarding for everyone involved. Given this opportunity, however, the classroom teacher must feel adequately prepared to participate in special programming for each special needs child, and this takes time (and funding). Parents of special needs children are very strong advocates for their children, and teachers are expected to work closely with these parents as well as therapists, counselors and doctors - while still keeping the needs of the whole class in mind. The teacher's challenge is to recognize and nurture the talents of special needs children, as well as each individual child in the classroom. This whole area must be considered as a critical area of need in terms of professional development, honest communication between all stakeholders, and the realisation that schools as institutions have many limitations simply by virtue of being schools.

The issues of time management and school expectations are important for teachers in this study, as demonstrated by the following comments drawn from survey responses:

*... With higher workloads, many grade changes (5 grades in 11 years), curriculum changes, larger classes, higher parent expectations, and more discipline problems, teaching has become more difficult...*

*... Teaching/instruction is not stressful - it's all the other things that overload me - counselling, modelling, supervision, displays, performances, technology, parent concerns, student behaviour, accountability...*

Considering the demands of teaching itself, educators find it even harder to balance both professional and personal life. For example, their advice to beginning teachers centered mainly around finding and maintaining a healthy balance between work and home, as the following comment shows:

*Work hard - play harder. Be good to yourself. Be good to others ...*

It seems that experienced teachers understand the consuming nature of education, and are quick to warn others about it, but have a very difficult time following their own advice. Many teachers, however, do find positive ways to handle stress, as the following statements indicate:

*... Thinking ahead and planning well to minimize "deadline" stress...*

*... Finding activities that get you physically away from the school and its related activities...*

*... Keeping my sense of humour ...*



*... Working out - taking out ones frustrations via physical activities - running, etc...*

Exercise and physical fitness was very important to the participants in this study. Possibly, some attention could be given to organizing a Division wellness program which motivated teachers to become more physically fit, thereby helping them cope with stress through improved physical health. Also, teachers could be encouraged to attend staff social functions and to view this kind of participation as integral to being part of a cohesive group.

The whole area of educational restructuring seems to be puzzling to many teachers. Teachers recognize the extra workload that site-based management puts on administrators. They also feel that educational restructuring has put a great deal of strain on the collegial relationship between administrators and teachers. However, it seems that the roles and responsibilities of administrators, teachers and senior administration need some clarification. For example, many teachers commented that the school division should provide more preparation time and smaller class sizes. These decisions are now made at the school level under the site-based management model. If these issues are important to teachers, they should be able to discuss their views with their staffs and school administrators, perhaps influencing some changes, where possible. The current state of confusion could easily intensify any feelings of mistrust between school administrators and their staffs. The majority of participants in this study view the quality of school administration as having a great influence on teacher stress. The already fragile administrator/teacher relationship is likely to erode even more in the future unless the roles and responsibilities of teachers and

administrators under site-based management are clarified and accepted by all stakeholders.

Although most respondents feel that they are accepted and supported within their schools, the majority of teachers feel that the morale of teachers in the whole school division has decreased in the past few years. Given that the regionalized school division itself has only been in existence since December 30, 1994, this is an area of concern. Why do teachers feel this way? Has the whole process of regionalization been more difficult than first thought, or are there other factors involved? This area clearly requires further study.

Due to educational restructuring, the senior administration of the school division is not as involved in the daily management of schools as it had been before the advent of the reforms. Teachers in this study have stated that they would like the senior school division administrators to be strong advocates for the work of teachers and students, especially in the public eye. They would like to be assured by those administrators and the school board that their decisions will be trusted and supported, and that their ideas will be listened to.

Perhaps because of the sheer number and type of changes in education which have been introduced in recent years, teachers are experiencing heightened feelings of mistrust and confusion, aimed however haphazardly or accurately at the hierarchical education structure in general. Accepting the fact that teaching is not the same as it was a mere ten or fifteen years ago is not enough, and fervently wishing that life would return to the way it used to be is fruitless. Teachers must become a more proactive force; they must find out more about exactly how educational reforms have

impacted their professional lives, and seek future direction. Specifically, the whole area of site-based management must be explored and clarified, so that teachers, principals, senior administration and school board officials all understand the changed roles and responsibilities brought about by the site-based management model. Certainly, educational reforms were handed down in a rapid-fire, paper-blizzard pace, and shook our education system to its core. Metaphorically, we must now pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and set new directions for ourselves and our students.

## **Recommendations**

A number of ideas and a few recommendations for teachers, the school division, and the university, have evolved from this study.

### A. The Holy Spirit School Division could:

1. Continue to be advocates for education, both at the local and provincial levels. The open support of senior administration is vital in a time of political and public pressure on education.

2. Continue the work of the Teacher-Board Advisory Committee to promote communication between teachers and the school board.

3. Promote physical and emotional wellness within the division.

Some examples: set up a running club where individuals could report their times and distances for recording throughout the year; look into gym memberships; investigate wellness programs in other places; explore many ways of promoting good health and physical fitness.

4. Facilitate further opportunities for teachers to interact. Perhaps a grade level list-serve could be set up through which teachers could share ideas, frustrations and advice with each other.

5. Establish a mentor program for beginning teachers. This would ease the strain of the often-overwhelming first few years of teaching, and perhaps prevent future burnout.

6. Continue to promote such things as the planned Leadership course.

### B. Teachers could:

1. Make a commitment to good physical health and fitness.

2. Keep striving to find that balance between professional and personal life. Recognize that teaching is a demanding, rewarding profession, but be vigilant about having personal time and family time as well.

3. Pursue an area of professional interest, something that rekindles enthusiasm. This can be part of the yearly Personal Professional Development Plan. Attend a conference; find an Internet professional listserv that is interesting. Remember that a teacher cannot hide indifference or personal boredom from his or her students. Our professional responsibility is to make education as interesting, meaningful and enjoyable as possible for our students.

4. Be an advocate for all students, especially special needs students. However, within this advocacy, find realism. It does not do our students any favors if we burn out by losing ourselves in their lives. Our role is to help students be happy, productive, decision-making, responsible citizens.

5. Become a part of the local Alberta Teachers' Association. Through this contact, teachers meet and interact with others within the school division, thus broadening the scope of friendships and professional contacts.

Opportunities for committee or executive membership are always open.

#### C. The University could:

1. Ensure that teacher preparation at the university level gives new teachers much more training in handling student behavior, and some background in everyday mediation and counseling. Currently, the political emphasis is on increasing use of technology in schools. New teachers must

be prepared to integrate technology into their classes, so they should have ample opportunity and instruction in this area at the university level.

2. Continue to work closely with experienced teachers. It is vital to encourage a strong connection between the university and the world of the practicing teacher, especially in this turbulent time of change. Student teachers will benefit from the effort made by the university in cooperation with classroom teachers, to provide current, applicable teaching techniques. Practicing teachers will appreciate new professional development and graduate level courses that pertain to the changing classroom.

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## Appendix

### Compilation of open-ended responses to survey questions C and D

#### **C. Measuring Teacher Stress**

Lack of time and resources to do an adequate job.

Dissatisfaction with quality of my work

Feeling prepared every day is stressful

No money for basic resources

Funding for classroom supplies - stressful not enough monies to run programs

Relationships amongst the staff affect our stress load. People who live in the community feel they have to do more than those who don't live in the community

Colleague/custodial/admin relationships

Lack of communication when decisions are made with regard to my students

Central office - school relationship

Administrative "ideals" imposed on staff

A weak principal creates teacher stress - if he/she does not handle parental problems and simply passes them on to the teachers

Staying after school for computer classes for instance (inservice)

Implementation of technology - big stress now

Having behaviour problem children in the classroom and not having the proper support and help in the classroom

Teacher/admin. Conflict over type of discipline used in the school

Writing IPP's

Report cards

Christmas concert

Teaching/instruction is not stressful - it's all the other things that overload me - counselling, modelling, supervision, displays, performances, technology, parent concerns, student behaviour, accountability

Filling out questionnaires when I should be doing other things

With higher workloads, many grade changes (5 grades in 11 years), curriculum changes, larger class, higher parent expectations, and more discipline problems, teaching has become more difficult

We have fewer teachers on staff - and more expectations, committees, etc., bigger classes

Extra curricular expectations can be very stressful. Meetings, committees, etc.

Supervision - I rarely get a complete coffee break or lunch break - I need a rest during the day

I'm now teaching in a temporary position so coming in to the job and then leaving within 4 months can be difficult and stressful

Public attitude - especially - press/funding

Government attitude

Societies attitude toward educators. More and more is being dropped at our door and yet respect and wages decline

While most parents quietly remain supportive of our efforts, it is the vocal parents who will find fault in anything we do that adds to the stress. If only we weren't so accountable to the manner in which we have to speak to some of these parents

#### **D. Measuring Teacher Satisfaction**

##### **What aspect of teaching do you find most satisfying?**

Seeing the children "learn"

The actual classroom teaching

Rewarding to feel that the students are catching onto info being taught

Student progressions

Student success

Interaction with children - seeing students succeed

Seeing students succeed

Seeing students succeed

The students; their accomplishments

Student achievement

The growth the students show at the end of the year

Seeing the growth, either academically, socially, emotionally or spiritually in the students

Seeing growth within the students - both academically and socially

Watching children grow emotionally, physically and intellectually

Working with the children and seeing them learn and grow especially in the area of faith

The part with the kids - when I'm actually teaching and they're actually learning

Seeing children's joy when they've learned a new skill and can apply it to different areas

Watching the children grasp new concepts and apply them



Watching the kids understand something

When the light goes on over the head of a student and learning has taken place

Seeing the “light” go on in students’ eyes when they catch on to something

Working with the children and seeing the light in their eyes when learning

Getting the students to enjoy learning & being proud of themselves

Being with students as they experience success

Observing children learning and solving problems and being a part of that process

Working with students, making a difference

Helping students increase their skills and make appropriate choices

Helping students with social /emotional problems

Watching children learn and develop

Watching students achieve their goals

Being with the students and seeing them achieve

Being involved in the growth of young musicians - developing skills and disposition required in the Fine Arts

Knowing that I have shared knowledge that results in a development of young adult views

Making some positive difference in children’s lives

Having an impact on students

Children realize they have learned something new

Watching students achieve success (at various levels) and seeing them grow in self-confidence

Watching students become successful and confident in the tasks they work on

Seeing a student succeed

Seeing growth in students and myself, relationships begin developed

Seeing the kids proud of their learning and abilities

Seeing the children learn something new

Seeing student achievement

Student success, especially by year's end

Success of students in activities, skills and learning/knowledge

The excitement and joy shown by students when they learn

Working with the children (elementary ) they are so eager to learn and please

Working with children who are eager to learn

Helping interested students achieve results and create innovative projects

Seeing their successes/gains at the end of the school year

When I see that I have made a difference in a child's life

Personal growth of students and relationships that are developed

The students - developing relationships and seeing them grow

Student/teacher relationships - development of positive Student/teacher relationships

Teacher-student relationships gaining their trust

Relationship with students

Relationship with students

Relating with students

Relationships with children

Watching children achieve! I've also enjoyed the surprise, amazement and enjoyment parents have had over their children's accomplishments

Being able to facilitate growth in some students with affirmations of their parents

Interacting with children & parents - especially when they or I learn something new

The rare thank you from a student and the visits from former students

When a student thanks me for helping them, or tells me I'm a great teacher

When the kids appreciate you, your efforts

The children and parents who do appreciate the hard work that goes into teaching

Love the kids

I love the kids

The kids

The kids

The children

The children

The children

The children

The students

The students

The students

Teaching the children

Working with kids and watching them learn

Working with the kids

Working with children

Working with children

Working with children

Working with children

Working with students

Working with students

Working with students

Working with students

Working with the students

Working with the students

Working with the students

Working with my students

Working with my students

Working one on one with the students

Assisting students

In the class with the students

Spending time in my classroom with students

My time in the classroom with my students is the most satisfying

General interaction on a daily basis

Student-staff contact

Interaction with students

Interacting with the students

Interaction with students

The interaction with kids

Positive interaction with the students, especially one on one

Interaction with students - making a difference in their lives

Interaction with student (learning)

Outside interaction with students (extra-curricular)

Interaction with students outside classtime

Instruction of students - directly

Working directly with my students

Helping serve children

The enthusiasm of the children, my love for learning with them

I enjoy teaching students ...We spend a lot of our time on non-teaching areas

Contact with students and colleagues

Sharing with colleagues

My colleagues and positive students who try to do their best even if they are not brilliant

Working with students who have an appreciation for learning

The camaraderie within my staff

To be surrounded by quality people, teamwork

The interaction between staff members

Interaction with colleagues (being part of a group)

To be part of a successful innovative program. Example: Safe Entry within an immersion setting; ARL Assured Readiness for Learning

Organizing a teaching situation that engages the children

Using various methods to motivate and stimulate

Well planned lesson

Teaching/learning situations that go well

Creativity - I can try new things

Creating new units of study

The self-directed and creative process in planning and implementing

Working in changes that will improve the school and how it meets the needs of the students

The challenge of changing things in a positive way is most satisfying

Problem solving

The challenge

Learning/teaching is always fresh and new

Learning new ideas

The days fly by and each one is different

The coaching aspect is also very satisfying for me

Teaching French Language Arts and Math

Bringing children to a love of literature

Field trips

Witnessing my faith to students and staff

Doing God's work in helping students find "Him" while finding themselves

During this 97-98 school yr. I am find very little satisfying

After 25 years not much

**What is your most effective coping strategy in dealing with stress?**

Talking

Talking about things

Talk

Communication

Peer talking

Discussion

Discussing with a colleague

Talking to colleagues

Talking it over with other teachers

Talking with a colleague

Camaraderie of staff

Bitch session with staff members

Talking with veteran teachers who are also family members or good friends

My colleague who are supportive get me through the toughest times

Talking with my wife

Talking to my husband

Talking to my husband about my day/problems

Support from home

Go home, pour a drink, put my feet up and talk it over with my spouse (also a teacher)

Talking to my spouse and colleague

Discussing my stress with colleagues & family

Talking to my spouse and fellow teachers/friends

Getting my feelings out through talking with friends and family

Talking with friends

Talking with friends

Talking with friends

Visiting with close friends

Have a good buddy to talk to

Spending time with friends

Cry at home with husband around

Share concerns

Spending time with friends who are not in education

Talking about it with people who understand

I also have a teaching assistant with whom I am very able to vent

Sharing with family

Getting a hug from my son

Sharing with a colleague

Sharing/talking with colleagues & friends & family

Support of family/staff

Unloading on others

Sounding off to family or friends

Vent and then sleep on it

Emotional breakdowns in the privacy of my home

Family

Family support

Family/friends

Peer support along with prayer

My faith - prayer

Prayer



Prayer

Prayer

Prayer - alone (with God), Communal with my wife

Prayer helps me somewhat

Prayer/Reflection

Prayer/Meditation

Prayer life

Time by myself

I seek time out

Quiet time for myself

Quiet time along - put things into perspective

Time to myself

Taking an hour a night for myself

Time out (or quiet time) alone or with family

Do something relaxing

Relaxing at home

Relaxing with friends

Being involved in physical activity (weight room work out, running, other sports)

Physical activity - long walk and run or refereeing basketball game

Activity, like walks and skiing ...general sport

Physical exercise - walking, aquafit

Exercise

Exercise

Exercise

Exercise

Exercise

Exercise

Exercise

Exercise

I do exercise after school

Exercise

Exercise

Exercise

Exercise

Physical Exercise

Physical Exercise

Exercise

Exercise

Exercise

Exercise

Exercise

Exercise (walking, biking, squash)

Exercising

Exercise - sweat it out

Jogging - exercise

Jogging

Aerobics

Physical activity

Physical activity

Physical activities outside of the school

Get out and do something outdoors (sports)

Playing a sport

Participation in sports

doing sports

Sports

Going to gym

Gym exercise

Physical exercise @gym

Judo

Golf

Walking or jogging

Walk

going for walks

Going for walks

Walking

Walking

Walking

Walking

Walking

Walking

Walking

Long walks in neighborhood

Working out - taking out ones frustrations via physical activities -running, etc.

Working out - exercise/then going home to spend time with family

Breathing and exercise

Big Breath

Exercise and art (both a physical and emotional release)

Proper nutrition

Eating well

Adequate rest

Rest

Sleep

Sleep

Change of pace

Slow down!

Trying to keep a sense of humour

Sense of humour

Laughing

Laughter

Laughter

Humour

Humour

Humour

I laugh easily

Keeping my sense of humour.

Fun activities with staff

Taking a break from school duties and doing something with my kids and husband

Family outings

Taking a break - temporary time out to a holiday to taking a weekend off of school work

Treating myself to an early day to leave school once a week

I got out for lunch at least once a week

Take a R & R day when needed - not just when sick

Getting involved in family life

Getting away on weekends

Getting away on weekends

Family time and get aways

Camping

Recreation

Recreational activities

Leisure activities

Getting outdoors

Outdoors

Food

Medication

Anti-depressants

Excedrin

Get away from school and try to focus on any other activity, ie Family, home, hobbies

A hobby

Hobbies

Hobbies, crafts

Engage in a hobby

Holidays

Doing something totally unrelated to teaching

Finding activities that get you physically away from the school and its related activities

Play guitar

Singing

Music

Praising

Alternate activities that have nothing to do with work

Reading

Reading

Reading

Leaving problems at school

Doing something for "me" - reading, a walk

Shopping

Personal time away, eg. A week trip away

Readings, music, exercise, talking, prayer

Other interests - golf, hobbies, gardening...

Hot baths

Steam room

Watching t.v.

Watching t.v.

Movies

Meditation

Clear thinking

Finding practical ways to “lighten the load”

Organization

Being organized

Delegation

Good planning

Attacking little bits of my “to do” list at a time

Make lists and do what I can one day at a time

Think ahead and plan well to minimize “deadline” stress

Try to break a task down into smaller manageable units

Establishing timelines for meeting goals

Work harder/faster

Get it done and resolved

Tendency to get results

Not losing sight of the kids

Mentally accepting my limitations in making the significant different I want to in students attitudes and learning performance

I've learned to take on more of a "I'm just a single little fish and can only do so much" kind of attitude, and I know when to shut the work down now

Reminding myself that most stress is self-imposed

Putting the students attitudes, my role, etc. In perspective

Look at the big picture...everything is developmental

Don't worry about it

Don't sweat the small stuff

Go with the flow

I tell myself I'm not superwoman - I can only physically do so much- no more

Going for a coffee after school so that I can make the transition to home concerns

Friday after school at the bar

Having beer and bullshit sessions on Friday

Friday night - Boston Pizza lounge

Not myself, but I think a lot of teachers drink a lot

Alcohol

Avoidance

**If you were to offer one gem of advice to a beginning teacher on how to maintain a sense of well-being throughout a 25-30 year career, what would you say?**

When a job is done, zero in on things other than school-related work

Remember to take care of yourself and always take time for yourself as your teaching will still go on



Don't let it become your whole life - balance it

Have a life outside of school

Occasionally take time for yourself - something not work related

Make sure you have a life outside the classroom

Leave your work at school as much as possible - have another life besides your job

Maintain outside interests and friends

Work hard - play harder. Be good to yourself. Be good to others

Be thorough but have fun

Be a whole person - ie have other interests besides school work so you have more fun and are more fun to be with

Do not forget to do fun things for yourself. You also need a social life besides school activities

Give/take time for yourself (impossible often due to professionalism and expectations of others and accountability)

Don't forget yourself, take care of you first

Take time for yourself, laugh lots and learn new things

Take time for yourself. Do not let your job swallow your life and relationships

Although it is extremely difficult, you have to put yourself and your own well being first - you are not going to do your student any good if you are not well (physically and emotionally)

Make time for yourself

Plan some time for yourself

Do something for yourself daily - exercise, music or whatever

You need some time for you, personal relaxing time

Keep balance in your life

Strive for balance in your happiness, the students happiness and your family's

Keep your friends outside school

Separate school from home

Maintain outside interests and friends

Balance - don't give up your personal life when you start - It becomes an expectation

Try to find a balance between school and personal life - sometimes it is important to say no

Find balance - Teaching can consume you. Limit the number of hours @ your job.

Remember you have a life.

Balance school/life - in terms of priorities

Balance your schedule - you can do too much planning, etc. Which wears you out - plan time for yourself

Keep a balance between home life and work life even if it means earning less money to maintain your sanity

When you go home - let it go/laugh with your family

Try to achieve a balance between work and personal life

Try to find a balance between your home and school

Make sure you keep things in balance personal/profession. If you add something; take something off

Remember that you do not have to take these kids home with you

Remember - teaching is only your job, it's not your family, nor your health, nor your hobbies

Balance - work/play/family etc.

Be aware of the whole person

Keep a personal life

Contribute to the profession, but relax on off-hours: let the housework slide, hand out with family

Remember that you can have big impacts on those whose life you touch, but never forget to fit your own life in there too

Try to maintain a balance between prof. Activities/life and things you enjoy on a personal basis. I was lucky and was able to stay home for 10 yrs until my youngest child was in grade 2

You can't do it all - do what you can - make time for "life" outside of your working day

Find outside activities to cope with stress

Have a life - ie - don't let school be your life

Make time for yourself; don't try to be all things to all people

Have a life outside of school ex. Family

Have a family - stay at home partner - if children involved

Have outside activities

Enjoy your non-teaching time

Not plausible to give advice. Teaching (professionally) is too intrusive on personal time

You can't do it all

Don't take on too much

Don't take on too much

Don't take on too many extra tasks

Be aware of the behind the scenes workload

You can't please everyone - staff, admin, stud., parents

Remember you can't please everyone all the time

Do what you can. Don't try to solve everyone's problems

Learn to say no! Be selective in the extra things you choose to do for your job

Don't be afraid to say no to all the many extra meetings, etc. expected of you - put

your life and family first - choose what is important ie: attending School dances

Don't dwell on the politics of education, most of it is "garbage." Just focus on doing your best job in the school

Do the best you can with the situation you are in. Do not set your standards so high that even you cannot achieve them

Remember that the greatest teachers in the world, including Jesus, can't reach everyone all the time. Just keep trying

Do the best that you can - don't waste time worrying about things that are not in your control

Focus on the positive. There will always be some students fail no matter what you try to do

Pace yourself

Stay physically active and spend time with your family

Exercising

Moderate exercise

Make time to exercise

Keep in shape

Stay fit

Good diet, supplement vit. C-B12-D

Fresh air

Get lots of rest

Priorities - God first

Family first, job second

Get as involved as you can in your school

Get involved with extracurricular activities

Really get involved with students outside the class setting and you will have a much improved attitude

Get to know and deal with pupils on a personal level

Be involved in some outside activities

Working hard is more fun than having it easy

Give 100% to the job but then leave what you can't do and don't feel guilty

Give 100% of your attention to teaching while you are at school. When you walk out the door, leave it all behind

Do the best you can and try to laugh each day

Stay involved with students

Really like children

Be fair to all students

Enjoy the students

Enjoy your students - laugh

I am a new teacher. I would say enjoy the students

Keep doing what you like every day

Change roles, levels regularly

Change jobs

Take one day at a time

Be organized

Be organized

Be well planned/prepared for classes

Take time management courses

Be sure to keep records of situations and incidents

Prepare early and thoroughly, not day to day

Develop good work habits and patterns from the very beginning

Learn from the best and never stop improving

Professional development

Be open and responsive to change

Don't procrastinate

Don't procrastinate - don't get behind on any task

Ability to prioritize and to concentrate on what you are doing well

Write down long term and short term goals and reevaluate regularly

Discipline is not a bad word and can reduce stress and problems through the year.

Children basically want to be in a consistent, safe, controlled environment. This enables them to function better.

Treat all with respect and kindness for you will be working with them on your staff some day

Don't take teaching too serious. Do the very best

Relax

Try not to get upset over small things

Don't let all the little things drag you down. (Easier said than done)

Don't sweat the small stuff

Don't sweat the small stuff

Don't sweat the small stuff

Don't sweat the small stuff and almost everything is small stuff

Don't take students' attitudes personally

Not to take things personally

Don't take anything personally

Don't take things personally in school

Will it - stress, things that happen - be important in the end?

It happens to everybody, do not take it personally. If you have experienced it = you are a real teacher

Be prepared for stress

Keep things in perspective - don't make mountains out of molehills.

Try and keep your cool - try not and get that overwhelming feeling (one day at a time)

Take things one day at a time

Take it one day at a time (Rome wasn't build in a day)

Don't take anything too serious in education - it'll change

Have and keep a sense of humour - smile a lot

Keep a sense of humour

Keep a sense of humour

Keep a sense of humour

Keep a sense of humour

Keep a sense of humour

Keep a sense of humour

Keep a great sense of humour

Keep your sense of humour

Keep your sense of humour

Maintain a sense of humour

Maintain a sense of humour

Lighten up

Laugh!

Laugh/Laugh...don't take yourself so seriously

Try to find humour in situations and share it with others

Maintain a sense of humour and always look for the positive

Stay positive, avoid negative people



Count your blessings and successes.

It's okay to ask for help

Never stop believing in your ability to teach

Trust your judgement

Know that you make a difference

Be optimistic of the children learning to use their potential

Try to maintain your optimism and faith in the intrinsic goodness of people

See the goodness in each person both students and colleagues

Accept the fact that a person who is not in your shoes has no idea how difficult your job is. So ignore their comments/suggestions

Prayer

Pray

Have a faith life

Dedicate time for prayer every day for yourself

Be yourself

Be yourself

Be yourself and accept new challenges

Don't get frustrated at the slow pace of change or progress in the students or the school

Don't be naive; accept the fact that teaching is a tough, stressful profession: if you can't handle it, don't enter!

It will never be a perfect world

Stay teaching only as long as you see yourself growing in authentic humanness and you see evidence of that growth in many of your students each year

Try to keep parents informed of student work

If you need a group, large or small, to settle down or quieten down -use fire. Light candles and turn off the lights

N/A - I'm a new teacher

Be one with the Lord, Marry another teacher or just stay away

Appointing Ministers who don't have a strong background in Ed. And seek the advice of business before educators, etc.

Ask for help when you need it

Find support within your school so you do not deal with discipline alone

Team work

Don't keep areas of concern to yourself

Go into another profession

Change careers

Think about a different career

Don't go into education

Don't teach, it's only going to get worse

Take a break every 6 or 7 years, and don't make teaching a complete life

Go to the bar with your colleagues once a month

**What is one thing the school or school division could do to improve teacher wellness?**

Support administrator and teacher decisions made at school level; workshops;  
personal contact.

Somehow provide or facilitate opportunities to “visit” and share prof. concerns/ideas  
with teachers in same grade, etc.

Teachers do not have anytime to share (in the same discipline). It would be positive  
to get together to share ideas/approaches/problems/materials, etc.)

Allow for “real” teacher input - not lipservice

Genuinely give teachers a say and don’t be obsessed with the “bottom-line”

Ask us once a year to sit down with central office and tell them what our concerns are  
- ask us “how can we help?”

More staff retreat days

More PD days to plan and workshops

More days like the spiritual development day in September

Ensure that teachers feel comfortable to approach others to voice concerns

Inspire trust between central office and staff

Trust

Let people go part-time with a guarantee that the % won’t change

Stress the importance of leading a balanced life

Make it easier to take a day for personal reason

Give teachers a stress day off - no reason

Offer well days

Plan for teacher “wellness” days

Time off without restrictions

Give people a chance to do something creative with time off

More strongly consider the importance of teacher's families in their lives - attending my children's special events at school, caring for them when they are ill, etc. Is an extremely high source of stress for me!

Allow "family leaves" when children are young

Treat people with compassion and generosity, including allowing a personal day without loss of sub pay once in awhile, especially when family members are ill

Treat school staff with respect (central office)

Treat people as human and not like machines

Show us that they (administrators and central office) really care about us personally

Show caring - e.g. "old" newsletter - staff news

Central office - admin - get to know staff - Visit schools

Board members could take more interest in what is actually happening in schools by visiting them more. This includes central office administration

School Division - Superintendent or/and assist. Should spend time in schools and classrooms

(Site) School-based management means isolation for us in many ways. Nobody in central office knows who we are. We only see their faces if there's a problem.

Better communication between board office & teachers

Move towards school rather than a "top heavy" approach - I feel may be what is happening

Show that they care about and are interested in the various staff - come into the schools as friendly supports so we are a team

The school division should continue to pay for needed counselling for teachers when a doctor prescribes the need for such

Provide them with better P.R.

More support

More support

Back the teachers more - don't stick up for the parents all the time simply because they pay education taxes

Back and support teachers

Support their teachers - provide resources for them to make their jobs easier

Support teachers more - work to have teachers' place in society more highly regarded

Emotional support

Be supportive

Continue and increase affirmation

Provide real support in action (words are cheap!)

Back up any disciplinary measures

Consistent discipline policy

Stronger discipline policy in junior high to support the teachers. This is a major source of stress

Use a discipline policy as it is written instead of making exceptions for everyone

Encourage parents to maintain discipline with students in and out of school

Be willing to enforce school suspensions at school and district level for violent students. It is not fair to others that at-risk students be allowed to keep bullying, threatening others, etc.

More help with difficult students

Support teachers in dealing with parents

Offer some counselling at elementary schools for severely troubled students

More preparation time

Allow as much preparation time as possible

Preps would be good - uninterrupted ones preferably

More prep time during the week

More planning time

More prep time

More prep time

More prep time

More prep time

More prep time

Give us more preps

Give us more prep time

Provide planning days in which we can plan

One free period/day for preparation

Lower instructional hours

Increase time for planning, preparation and professional development

Give more prep time (& inservice) to elementary teachers

More inservice

More inservice on related topics

Pay for teachers to do technology updates

Offer a mandatory professional development year every 5-6 years

Give us workshops (free)

More PD

Let us teach. Enough with the pressures of prof. Growth plans, 6 page report cards, etc.

Teachers should live in the community in which they teach. Then they have a genuine concern for the people of their community.

Hire teachers who are willing to live in the community

Have someone come into schools (Gordon College) to help teachers “openly” discuss problems on staff and staff relationships

Organize more camaraderie between staff - make the staff a more personal, stronger unity

Higher pay

Pay me more

Fairer wage settlements

Increase money available for materials such as text books, work materials for new programs being dictated

Spend less money on things done “for show” - fancy binders, prayer books, etc. And allow instructional dollars to be directed to the classroom

More resources - less “money” worry

Coequate ? Funding to schools

Provide classroom lots of resources

Get rid of “extra” resource people in central office. They often create extra work for teachers to justify their positions. Are these fulltime positions necessary? How about part-time?

Reduction of teacher student ratio and this is not by adding more aides in the school.

More teachers: less students per teacher

Hire more teachers (impossible as prov. Gov’t funding is restrictive)

Keep student teacher ratio as low as possible

Teacher/student ratio

Reduce workload

More funding - so less students per class

Continue to recognize that smaller class sizes benefit everyone

Decrease class size

Decrease class size

Limit class size

Reduce class sizes and ability mixes

Reduce class size

Smaller classes

Smaller class sizes

Have smaller class sizes

Small class size

Small class size

Find additional funding to create a better atmosphere - reduced class sizes, better remedial resources, etc.



Need a lot more help with special needs children

Special ed for special needs students at smaller schools

Give us help with special needs

Ease the load of the principals

Provide more admin time to elementary principals

Reward extra time spent or extra effort

Reward long service - recognition of no absences with time off

Reward teachers who do not use (or abuse) sick days ie. Days off at end of year

Provide incentives for teachers who are never absent - perfect attendance (1 day/yr)

More "thank yous"

Thanks for work and extra work would be nice.

Public acknowledgement of teachers

More focus could/should be put on the positive things that teachers do

Reward people for healthy lifestyles

Offer incentives to teacher, bonuses, days off, more availability of job changes

Early retirement with a package that would entice a person to retire

More meetings within school hours - not after school

Time for organizational meetings between teachers of the same division, i.e. primary, elem, jnr. High, sr. High within a school day

I think Alberta Ed. Is the guilty party for putting stress on teacher - they're always coming up with new ideas and half of them are ridiculous.

The problem is at Alberta Ed. - too political

I think that the school division needs to become more politically involved. We need more funds so we can reduce class size and increase administration and prep time.

Major dollars are needed

When making changes consider (more) the teacher first not political, parents, perception

We are now often made to feel uneasy/worried about changes within our school - some concerns stem from site based management.

Be more honest with staff - treat us like responsible adults

Be open, honest and consistent when dealing with staff issues

Less hierarchy, be honest

Have confidence in the staff they hire

Continue helping us grow spiritually

Stop the hypocrisy of trying to act so "Christian" and yet have so little human feeling or contact with the staff

Be more Christian - Christ-like not team players

In each community, having a gym with apparatus to exercise and pay for the membership. Treadmill, bike, rowing. We can go there anytime. It can be very satisfying.

Arrange for a cost reduction at a physical fitness place

Allow more time or money for teachers to exercise physically

Offer an after hours fitness class and give the instructor co-curricular pay (seriously)

Gym membership

Subsidize gym membership

Participation in college wellness program (assessments/individual programs)

Continue to support the wellness program

Try to be united and realize that “well” teachers work towards “well” students and classrooms

I’m not sure

No suggestions

Bonus pay?? More holidays?? Better students?? Seriously - I’m stumped

Teach parents how to be responsible for their children’s homework

Nicer staff room

Offer year-round schooling with more breaks

Let us do what we’ve been trained to do - Teach!! Keep the politics out of the classroom

Get rid of supervision

Include eye care

Quit making so many dumb personnel decisions

C.E.C. Secrecy

Longer days - 3 day weekends

### **Additional comments**

I feel like I hang by a thread, every day, all year long.

The competition unleashed on the schools due to site-based management is the worst thing that could happen to education - we are not a business - we deal with people, social issues.

Site-based management has reduced possibilities of movement through system - staffs may become stale and stagnant

Changes to the School Act, advent of Site-Based decision making have added greatly to administrator work load. Nothing has been taken away.

Most teachers are willing to give 125% to their career as long as they feel that their efforts are appreciated! (Too much media focus on the negative)

Some requests from central office tend to create more work for teachers and sometimes it seems this work is more for the justification for their position (at central office)

Give us a fair deal in salary settlements. Cost of living increases are necessary  
Support for teachers and understanding of their concerns by senior administration would go a long way to raising morale. Stop worrying about being politically correct and act with integrity

In the past 10 years my class sizes have doubled. Integrated students without aides are often lost or sabotage the learning of their classmates.

Staff Morale - host a division wide Christmas party

Please note many teachers do not take sick days because planning for a sub is too difficult to arrange. Teachers also don't take stress leave because of pride, looking like a failure.

An improved early retirement incentive to teachers who have 25 years of service as a teacher.

Sift through the importance of some of the requirements passed on to schools.

We have to do more with less. From a teacher's point of view, we see parents having more access/say/rights/...and our professional status seems to be eroding. It takes way more time to try to become current than even 5 years ago and too much pressure on us to do the job of family, church and state.

Accountability & expectations of others are stressful. A professional already places them on themselves. Also, society and some parents do not hold some of our youth accountable - many responsibilities are assumed for them/or dropped in some cases - family breakdown/deterioration hurts students & can lead to stress-related situations  
Ten years ago teaching was so much more satisfying as students were more manageable.

I am married to a teacher; this help with my "job" stress because he is an understanding listener. My teenaged children are also very empathetic and helpful. So is my extended family. I also had a wonderful principal who helped me through some tough "personal-stress" years.

Encourage community development as to why students must learn.

I have found in the past few years that the demands of the profession have increased dramatically and the rewards and recognition are fewer. Behaviour problems have increased markedly and parental skills and support, at times, seem non-existent. I find that I have to spend so much more timeteaching parents to parent. Why do I have to do that?

Keeping up is very difficult to do. I plan well, but cannot keep up with what's going on. I want to be effective in the class, but some days it's a challenge.

Administration needs to support its teaching staff, not just with talk - but with/thru action. We are asked to fill out form upon form for kids...once we've done that nothing is done in regards to the pages/pages/pages we've filled out about the problem. Happy teachers - happy students - good results across the board.

Administration exists for the professional convenience and support of teachers.

The school and staff make a difference. Strong admin. Leadership with sound people skills makes for a better school

Life, by definition, involves stress. Therefore it is not necessarily bad to have stress.

But excess stress can cause distress. And teaching is definitely becoming more stressful

Aids could be used for special needs students or classroom preparation, material preparation, etc.

Some of the questions could have been answered better by other responses

The results of this survey may be skewed by the Easter break. (Teachers would be more rejuvenated after the break)

Your Welcome! Good luck with your program!

I hope this is useful!

Thank you for caring enough to do this survey

Will you be sharing your results with the school division?

Thanks for your concern and time

Good luck with the survey - great idea