

TEACHER PERFORMANCE AND
PERSONAL LIFE STRESSORS: IMPLICATIONS
FOR URBAN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

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Abstract

This article examines the effects of personal life stressors that impact teacher performance. The authors also discuss the types of human relations skills teachers perceive that principals utilize to respond to the effects of the personal life stressors relative to teacher job performance.

The hidden effects of stress are costing American firms untold millions of dollars annually in lost productivity, absenteeism, and health care expenses (Maturi, 1992). United States corporations have utilized stress management programs over the past decade to reduce the costs of employee absenteeism (Bainbridge & Sundre, 1992; Schanes, 1992). Approaches in stress reduction procedures include seminars on anger management and relaxation; classes for those going through a divorce and for single adults; and programs for parents of young children and teens (Lewis, 1993; Smith, 1993; Werther, 1989). Kemmer (1989) observed that the problem of working outside the home while trying to meet family responsibilities has become so overwhelming for many people that the question of health-care benefits rose to prominence on the national political agenda. The Family and Medical Leave Act requires employees to give unpaid family leave to parents of newly born, newly adopted or seriously ill children and for workers with ill parents (Doherty, 1990).

The types of issues addressed by The Family and Medical Leave Act are important for single working parents and working couples. The number of one-parent family groups has grown since 1970 from almost 4 million in 1970 to close to 7 million by 1980 (Meyer & Kern, 1990). The number of divorced women nearly tripled from 1970 to 1984, from 1.3 to 3.7 million (Meyer & Kern, 1990, p. 113). This trend also reflects an increased number of separations and single parents who never married. Wolf (1988) contended that unmarried children, especially sons, were more likely to share a household with an elderly mother than

were married children. The number of individuals who cared for dependent family members or friends was expected to increase and companies anticipate an expansion in the number of employees with caregiving responsibilities (Denton, Love, & Slate, 1990; Sullivan, Gilmore, & Crandall, 1992).

American corporations have established Employee Assistance Programs which provide employees who were experiencing personal life stressors with confidential counseling services, ranging from mental health problems to substance abuse problems (Rosenweig & Kramer, 1992). Since 1976, the growth of employee assistance programs reflects the belief by corporate leaders that it is more cost effective to channel a problem employee into counseling or treatment programs (Bureau of National Affairs, 1987). An employee assistance program could reduce inappropriate health-care utilization and prevent job burnout, which may lead to reduced productivity, high turnover, employee theft, litigation, and lost business (Stuart, 1992).

Teachers are not immune to stress. The relationship between work demands of a highly technological and complex society and personal life-stress and pressures has contributed to an increasing teacher crisis in the public schools (Emener, 1988). Societal dynamics and increased public demands on education have produced adverse stressful classroom situations that have led to increased emotional and physical disabilities among teachers (Chance, 1992; Moe, 1979). These work-related sources of stress and the potential difficulties of personal life stressors have impacted teacher performance (Dickman & Emener, 1982).

Hodge and Marker (1978) identified workplace related sources of teacher stress as relationships with colleagues, administrative staff, clerical staff, and students; complex communication needs; inattentive students; and discipline. Additional occupational factors cited included the daily abuse from students and parents and high community standards for teacher conformity to social values (Grossnickle, 1980; Kyriacou, 1984; Swick & Hanley, 1980). The effects of stress can lead to burnout among teachers and a sense that norms are unenforceable, which creates a feeling of powerlessness and isolation (Dunham, 1992).

The feeling of isolation is linked to the ongoing public criticism and the lack of respect for teachers as professionals by students, parents, administrators and society. Research by Cox and Wood (1980) found that teachers felt isolated in schools contributed to the stress that teachers experience. Among former teachers, 64% noted that their professional prestige and morale was worse than they had expected it would be before they began to teach (Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, 1986). The stress of public scrutiny and educational reforms over the past three decades underscored teacher burnout as one of the most common and serious afflictions of this nation's educators (Dunham, 1992; Timpane, 1982).

The current reform movement can be ostensibly traced to the 1983 publication of *A Nation At Risk*, issued by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. This was the first of many reports that, according to Orlich (1989), called for fundamental changes in both the way students and teachers learned and were evaluated. During the 1980s and 1990s, candidates campaigning for governorships highlighted education and touted their plans to give their states better schools (Bell, 1993). Since the publication of *A Nation At Risk*, every state has implemented higher standards for all students and teachers (Clinton, 1990). Teachers were sharply criticized and expanded state mandates were introduced to ensure the quality of instruction in the public schools (Chance, 1992). "There was a clear signal that teachers were the problem, rather than the solution" (Boyer, 1988, p. 10). Bell, (1993) noted that the reform initiative programs of the early and mid-80s had not worked and that we should try to redesign the entire approach to teaching and learning. Many of the educational reformers noted that the alleviation of teacher stress and burnout depended upon the leadership skills of the principal at the building level (Blase & Kirby, 1992; Hersey & Blanchard, 1988; Sergiovanni, 1984).

The Role of the Principal

Goodlad observed in *A Place Called School* (1984) that principals should be trained to create positive learning environments in their schools. Starnaman and Miller (1992) determined that workload and support from their principals influence teacher burnout, job satisfaction and occupational commitment. The relationship between a principal's leadership style and the level of teacher stress and satisfaction indicates that teachers' performances are influenced by their perceptions of principals' behavior (Blase, Dedrick, & Strathe, 1986).

In the decades of the 1970s and 1980s, the role of the principal underwent a modest transformation from school manager to instructional leader and educational restructuring became the pervasive theme in effective school research (Valentine, Clark, Irvin, Keefe, & Melton, 1993). The characteristics of an effective school, identified by Edmonds (1979), consisted of strong administrative leadership, a school climate conducive to learning, a school-wide emphasis on instruction, high teacher expectations for student achievement, and systematic monitoring of pupil performance. Effective schools research revealed some recurring patterns in the characteristics of effective schools that were either directly or indirectly related to principal effectiveness (Chance, 1992; Fullan, 1982; Manasse, 1985; Venezky & Winfield, 1979).

Isherwood (1973) found that principals who demonstrated charisma, expertise, and human relations skills heightened teachers' loyalty to the principal and improved teacher satisfaction. High and Achilles (1986) concluded that such behaviors as enabling, norm setting, and expertise were effective means of influence with teachers in high-achieving schools. Treslen and Ryan (1986) determined that teachers were much more responsive to principals' influence attempts based on human relations skills and technical expertise than the use of hierarchical authority. According to Thomas and Vornberg (1990), an effective principal demonstrates the ability to recognize and deal with the needs, concerns, and problems of others. The interpersonal competence of the principal includes the skill to be perceptive, to listen, to be empathic and to resolve conflicts.

These skills were important for a principal to care for the personal welfare and provide emotional support for the teachers (Gersten & Carmine, 1981; Sergiovanni, 1996; Stallings & Mohlman, 1981). Teacher stress and burnout were found to be significantly related to principals' lack of participatory management, lack of sensitivity to school and teacher-related problems, and lack of support for teachers (Jackson, Schwab, & Schuler, 1986). An effective work culture was defined by Cunningham and Gresso (1993) as one which supported individuals in an atmosphere of collegiality that grew out of an understanding and caring for one another.

The principal plays key roles in teacher burnout and stress, both as a major source of support and the main source of stress. Teachers often cite stress as a reason for leaving the teaching profession, including stress caused by negative relationships with their building principals (Blase & Kirby, 1992; Calabrese, 1987). These negative relationships may lead to stress-induced illness behavior by teachers, which is alleviated by a supportive principal. Starnaman and Miller (1992) determined that workload and support from their principals influenced teacher burnout, job satisfaction, and occupational commitment. The relationship between a principal's leadership style and teacher stress and satisfaction indicates that teachers' performances were influenced by their perceptions of their principals' behavior (Blase et al., 1986).

There were significant predictive associations between teacher stress and the specific variables related to personality type, demographics, and perceptions of the self (Hughes, 1987). The demographics of gender, teacher experience, grade level instructed, and teacher age had an effect on the perception of stressor category and stressor quantity (Byrne, 1991). Stressful situation experiences by workers may be derived from different sources, including the environment (workplace) and personal and professional factors.

Schneider (1983) indicated that the majority of research studies focused on the environmental stress workers faced on the job and the strategies managers used to reduce stress and increase job performance and prevent burnout. Life changes may also make workers susceptible to job related stress or burnout. Holmes and Rahe (1967) have identified relationships between the numbers and types of changes in a person's life and the onset of illness or disease within a one-year time frame. Maslach (1982) noted the effects of personal life stressors have not been addressed and research findings have shown few significant and consistent personality correlates of burnout, but many significant work settings and organizational correlates of burnout. Stress symptoms thought to originate in a workplace may actually originate elsewhere, including family relationships or health concerns (Nelson & Sutton, 1990).

The Research Study

The purpose of this research study was to examine the effects of personal life stressors that impact teacher performance. The study identified the types of coping behaviors that teachers utilized to minimize the effect of personal life stress on their job performance. The teachers also evaluated selected human relations skills of their principals. The following research questions were utilized for this study:

1. What are the personal life stressors that impact teacher performance?
2. What is the level of stress caused by a teacher's personal life stressors?
3. What are the coping behaviors identified by teachers as a direct result of the personal life stressors?
4. What types of human relations skills do principals utilize to respond to the effects of the personal life stressors on a teacher's job performance?
5. What are the components of an educational program which responded effectively to a teacher's personal life stressors?

Population / Sample

The population for this study was middle school teachers in a southwestern state. According to information from the Data Section of the State Department of Education, there were 4,435 middle school teachers in the public school system for the 1993-94 school year. Of the 4,435 middle school teachers in the state, a stratified random sample of 400 teachers was selected by computer to participate in the study. Borg and Gall (1979) and Gay (1992) indicated that a sample of 10% of the population is sufficient for survey research. The 400 teacher participants were mailed (a) a letter asking them to participate in the study and (b) a copy of the Teacher Personal Life-Stress Inventory. The return rate for this study was 172 respondents of a population of 400 (42%).

Research Design and Methodology

This study was designed to utilize quantitative methods to obtain middle school teachers' perceptions of the effect of personal life stressors on teacher performance. A survey instrument, the Teacher Personal Life-Stress Inventory (TPLSI) was developed which utilized a quantitative methodology to obtain the data for the study. The TPLSI survey instrument was developed as a Likert-type scale to obtain the middle school teachers' perceptions of the effects of personal life stressors. The items used to form the TPLSI derived from the following sources: (a) Social Readjustment Scale (Holmes & Rahe, 1967), (b) Resource Employee Assistance and Counseling Help, REACH (Hawaii Department of Education, 1990), and (c)

The Educational Administrative Effectiveness Profile (American Association of School Administrators, 1988). The instrument was separated into three sections: (A) personal life stressor categories, (B) patterns of teacher job/performance, and (C) patterns of principal effectiveness.

Section A of the TPLSI included the following personal life stressor categories: (a) family, (b) caregiving, (c) health, and (d) money management. The items included in the personal life stressor categories were based on the Holmes and Rahe (1967) Social Readjustment Rating Scale. Additional personal life stressors included in Section A were contributed by a selected group of public school teachers. The frequency count of the personal life stressors was measured using a Likert-type scale with responses from NA (not applicable) to 0 (no stress) to 1 (low stress—think about some of the time) to 5 (high stress—think about all the time).

The teacher participants were asked to evaluate the effects of each personal life stressor included in the four categories: (a) family, (b) caregiving, (c) health, and (d) money management over an extended period of time (within the last 12 months) rather than on a specific day or event. Teacher participants were asked to consider the personal life stressors as they applied to themselves as teachers.

Section B of the TPLSI identified the influence of personal-life stressors that led to coping behaviors that were outside of an employee's normal job performance. The frequency type scale ranged with responses from NA (not applicable) to 0 (no stress) to 1 (almost never) to 5 (very often). The coping behaviors listed in Section B were based on the Resource from Employee Assistance & Counseling Help (REACH) program developed by the Hawaii Department of Education (1990, pp. 1-5).

Section C of the TPLSI enabled the teacher participants to assess the human relations skills of their principals. The items in Section C measured the ability of a principal to communicate and develop personal and professional relationships that foster trust within the school organization with a response range of 0 (never) to 5 (always). The administrative behaviors listed in Section C were based on items listed in Educational Administrator Effectiveness Profile, developed by Human Synergistics (1988).

Development of the TPLSI

The Teacher Personal Life-Stress Inventory research instrument was divided into three sections: (A) Personal Life-Stressor Categories, (B) Patterns of Teacher Job Performance, and (C) Patterns of Principal Effectiveness. Content validity of the survey instrument was established in three steps:

1. The TPLSI was given to three practicing Oklahoma school administrators to evaluate the applicability and appropriateness of the content and the adequacy of the construction of the instrument from an administrator's perspective.
2. A panel of five nationally known experts in the field of school administration evaluated the TPLSI for appropriateness, applicability of content, clarity and the adequacy of the construction from a general educative perspective (Bradburn & Sudman, 1979).
3. A field test was conducted with a pilot group of 10 middle school teachers to obtain further content validity of the research instrument. The teachers were asked to complete the TPLSI and critique the format, directions and content. The teachers were also requested to submit any suggestions or to identify any additional personal life stressors that could be included in the study to improve the scope of the TPLSI. Upon completion of the pilot study, the survey was reviewed personally with each of the teachers. These 10 teachers were not part of the study.

Data analysis consisted of calculating the frequency count of the information in all three sections of the TPLSI. A frequency polygon was utilized to reflect the distribution of the scores in all sections of the TPLSI. Frequencies of scores provide information regarding preference for certain options or group membership (Burns, 1980). The basis for the determination of group membership was the demographic information listed in Section B, Patterns of Job Performance in the TPLSI. The demographic information was divided according to the following categories: (a) age, (b) gender, (c) race, (d) teaching experience, (e) years in current system, (f) years at current site, (g) years with current principal, and (h) sources of support during personal life-stressors: building administrator, personal friends, professional counseling, family, district support programs, fellow teachers, teacher union, church, school counselor, and others.

Results

The data gathered from the TPLSI instrument completed by the teacher respondents can best be summarized through an examination of each of the five research questions in this study.

1. What are the Personal Life-Stressors that Impact Teacher Performance?

The responses to the personal life stressors were determined in three procedures by calculating the total stress, the number of respondents, and the average stress level. The responses to the personal life stressors are a representation of the effect of the total stress of each of the personal life stressors by the number of teachers who responded in categories 1-5. These responses do not portray a consensus of the 172 teachers who returned the survey instrument that focused on four identified categories of personal life stressors: family, caregiving, health, and money management.

The first category, Section A (family) of the TPLSI, included 19 personal life stressors related to family members and relationships with immediate and extended family members. The family personal life stressors that produced the highest number of responses and most total stress included communication with children (263 total stress, 114 responses), marriage (221 total stress, 94 responses), change in the relationship with spouse (194 total stress, 67 responses), and child leaving or returning home (175 total stress, 60 responses).

The second category of Section A (caregiving) of the TPLSI included 17 caregiving personal life stressors representing the obligations and responsibilities of teachers to provide direct and indirect assistance to their children, parents, or other family members. The caregiving personal life stressors that produced the highest number of teacher responses and most total stress were providing family transportation (200 total stress, 86 responses), separation from children, (139 total stress, 57 responses), doing yard work and home maintenance for an elderly family member (132 total stress, 58 responses), and childcare (129 total stress, 58 responses).

The third category in Section A of the TPLSI contained 16 personal life stressors that were related to the physical and mental health of teachers and their immediate and extended families. The health personal life stressors that produced the highest number of teacher responses and most total stress were identified as recent bouts of depression (285 total stress, 116 responses), change in sleeping habits (234 total stress, 101 responses), beginning or continuation of an exercise program (194 total stress, 91 responses), and the health of a family member becomes worse (192 total stress, 70 responses).

The fourth category of Section A (money management) of the TPLSI included 18 money management personal life stressors that were associated with the financial obligations and spending patterns of the teacher respondents. The money management personal life

stressors that indicated the highest number of responses included retirement and financial planning (243 total stress, 109 responses), recent financial adjustment (224 total stress, 73 responses), providing financial assistance to children (216 total stress, 87 responses), and credit card overuse (198 total stress, 77 responses).

The top scores for total stress from all personal life stress categories of family, care-giving, health, and money management revealed the following information: Personal life stressors in money management was number one, health second, with family personal life stressors mentioned third, and caregiving.

2. What are the Levels of Stress Resulting From a Teacher's Personal Life Stressors?

The average stress levels of the personal life stressors is a representation of the effect of the personal life stressor by those teachers who responded in categories 1-5 and does not portray a consensus of the 172 teachers who returned the survey instrument. The family personal life stressors that produced the highest average levels of stress were the family life stressors of divorce (3.81, 27 responses), restructured family (3.43, 30 responses), death of a spouse (3.4, 20 responses), marital separation (3.34, 35 responses), and marital reconciliation (3.34, 35 responses).

The caregiving personal life stressors that produced the highest average levels of stress included responsibilities to children and parents and included an elderly family living in the home (3.63, 11 responses), responsibilities of a disabled spouse (3.41, 12 responses), parent in a nursing home (3.17, 23 responses), and a parent hospitalized (3.05, 39 responses).

The health personal life stressors that produced the highest average levels of stress included a long-term illness, injury to an immediate family member (3.06, 44 responses), major change of behavior of a family member (2.96, 61 responses), recent disability of a spouse (2.86, 15 responses), and the death of a close friend (2.80, 40 responses).

The money management personal life stressors that produced the highest average levels of stress included a spouse changing jobs or out of work (3.35, 45 responses), a child or children in college (3.13, 52 responses), change in income due to an illness disability, and so forth (3.10, 40 responses), and a recent financial readjustment (3.06, 73 responses).

3. What Were the Coping Behaviors Identified by the Teachers as a Direct Result of the Personal Life Stressors?

Section B of the TPLSI included 17 coping behaviors that were outside of a teacher's normal job performance. The responses to the personal life stressors were evaluated in three procedures, by calculating the total scores of the coping: behaviors, number of respondent, and the average level of coping behavior. The total score in the Section B total is a representation of selected coping behaviors by the number of teachers who responded in categories 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 and does not represent a consensus of the 172 teachers who returned the survey instrument. Responses from 172 teacher respondents of the random sample of 400 reveal the coping behaviors that were outside of the teacher's normal job performance.

The coping behaviors that represented the highest number of teacher responses and the highest total scores were identified as decreased planning time (224 total score, 95 responses), using planning time for personal business (196 total score, 108 responses), change in attendance at extracurricular activities (65 total score, 74 responses), increased student referrals (155 total score, 81 responses), and difficulty in meeting deadlines (172 total score, 89 responses).

The coping behaviors that had the lowest total scores included Monday-Friday absences (43 total score, 33 responses), Monday absences (45 total score, 35 responses), repeated absences of 2-4 days (47 total score, 35 responses), Friday absences (80 total score, 54 responses), and leaving work early (80 total score, 57 responses).

4. What Types of Human Relations Skills Did Respondents Perceive that Principals Utilize to Respond to the Effects of the Personal Life Stressors on a Teacher's Job Performance?

Section C of the TPLSI, Patterns of Principal Effectiveness, enabled the teacher respondents to assess the human relations skills of their principals. The items in Section C measured the ability of a principal to communicate and develop personal and professional relationships that fostered trust within the school organization. The responses to the personal life stressors are a representation of the total score of each of the human relation skills determined by the number of teachers who responded. The teacher respondents were requested to determine the response that best described their principals' administrative style, behavior, and response to the personal needs of teachers. The scores of responses indicated how often the principal displayed these human relation skills based on a scale of 0 (never displays these skills) to 5 (always displays these skills). Some teacher respondents did not complete Section C of the TPLSI.

Principals scored the highest on the following human relations skills: behaves in ways that shows he/she values people (616), treats others with dignity and respect (599), keeps his/her word and sticks to agreements (579), provides a caring work environment for teachers (568), actively works on establishing and maintaining trust (563), and listens carefully with understanding and empathy to the needs of the teachers (549).

The principals were scored the lowest on the Patterns of Principal Effectiveness by the teacher respondents in the following areas: using feedback from others to improve communication (497), reacting appropriately to verbal and nonverbal cues concerning a teacher's personal problems (497), giving attention to a teacher's personal needs without neglecting task accomplishments (526), convincing teachers that their efforts make a difference (532), providing encouragement when staff members are down (533), applying rules and policies fairly and uniformly among staff (533), and establishing effective two way communication (533).

5. What are the Components of an Educational Program Which Responds Effectively to a Teacher's Personal Life Stressors?

School district leaders must begin to recognize the need for programs that provide support for teachers. The 400 teachers in the simple random sample for this study represented 102 school districts across the state. These districts encompassed all classifications and sizes of schools, including five of the seven largest school districts.

In the demographic section, the teacher respondents for this study did not identify any school district programs that provided support to them while they were experiencing the effects of personal life stressors. In addition, only three teachers identified their teacher union as a source of support for personal life stressors. An educational program which responds effectively to a teacher's personal life stressors should include an awareness of the personal life stressors that teachers must live with each day. Examples of these types of employee assistance programs have already been developed by personnel in American corporations in conjunction with employee unions. It was suggested by Locke (1990) that an employee assistance program contain eldercare services for employees and include assessment and referral financial assistance, direct care from the employer, personal policies or flex time programs, information and support. Stuart (1992) proposed that an employee assistance program reduced inappropriate healthcare utilization and might prevent reduced productivity, high turnover, employee theft, litigation, and lost business.

This study determined that the personal life stressors of middle school teachers were experiencing were divided among different facets of the teacher respondents' private lives. The findings of this research reflect the social problems that have developed in the United States because of the change in demographics: a dramatic increase of women in the work force, people living longer and caring for aged parents, an increase in the number of one-

parent families, and a growing number of divorces. Werther (1989) identified the problems of the many middle-aged workers who were pressed between the responsibility for raising their children and taking care of aging parents.

According to the demographic findings of this study, over half (56%) of the teacher respondents to the TPLSI were in the age range of 41-55 years old. This is a time of life when individuals possibly face the multiple task of raising their children, providing for children in college, providing for their own needs including the issue of retirement, and caring for their parents. This problem can be exacerbated by a society that continually becomes more and more mobile.

The personal life stressors identified in this study can be categorized in terms of the manner in which they affect the teacher's personal behavior or health, child, parent, marriage or providing a service for others. These different categories are reflected in all of the personal life stressors of family, caregiving, health, and money management. The examples enumerated above reflect how personal life stressors have a ripple effect on all facets of a person's life. Experiencing a personal life stressor may affect all aspects of a person's life. A serious illness, accident, or any of the other personal life stressors may change the priorities of any family. In this study, 66% of the participants were women. The importance of personal life stressors has been heightened by the increased participation of women in the paid work force and has made it difficult for female family members to fulfill traditional caregiving roles, provide support for other family members and meet the demands of the workplace (Dole, 1990; Klein, 1991; Scharlach, Lowe, & Schneider, 1991).

The personal life stressor of money management was identified by the teacher respondents as having the highest total stress and highest average stress in their lives. The fact the southwestern states where the survey was conducted is ranked near the bottom of teacher salaries in the United States contributes to this response. Teachers did not identify caregiving personal life stressors as much as had been anticipated. The problems of caregiving may increase in the near future for the teacher respondents, as many of them approach the 50-year age range.

The coping behaviors identified by the teacher respondents reflected a trend to reduce the amount of time teachers volunteer for activities or serve as a sponsor of extracurricular activities. Coping behaviors include relinquishing positions on site and district committees and a change in attendance at extracurricular activities. In addition, teachers are changing how they spend their time during the normal school day, including the need to use planning time for personal business and difficulty in meeting deadlines.

Teachers indicated a desire to make an effort to be at school even though they were experiencing the effects of the personal life stressors. This could be a potential problem if teachers were less than effective because they were being distracted by personal life stressors. Team building activities implemented at many school sites assumed that all of the team members were physically and psychologically able to participate and function effectively.

In *Patterns of Principal Effectiveness*, the human relations skills areas that principals scored the lowest on when reacting to the personal needs of teachers were in the following areas: providing encouragement when staff members are down, reacting appropriately to verbal and nonverbal cues concerning a teacher's personal problems, and giving attention to a teacher's personal needs without neglecting task accomplishments.

This is another example of the expanded role of the principalship that has evolved since the 1970s. It is difficult for a principal with a large faculty to get to know all of the teachers on a personal basis. Principals who move from school to school or who experience a number of changes in their faculties each year are unable to establish personal relationships with their teachers. Many teachers will not confide in their principal any personal problems, as this may be viewed as a sign of weakness on the part of the teacher. Principals do not normally have the time to track the absences of teachers or to determine if the use of leave time is in accordance with board policy. It is also difficult to monitor teacher attendance to their

duties during the normal school day. The absence of district stress-reduction programs does not allow a principal options when confronting the effects of personal life stressors on teacher performance.

The future of education may be dramatically changed by the impact of personal life stressors on teacher performance. Teachers who do not have any sources of support available to them will become less effective in their classroom instruction and in relationships with students and other teachers. They may seek other positions. Schools could lose valuable resources if teachers leave the profession. The cost of a stress reduction program is low compared to the loss of an experienced employee.

Schools and their administrators must appropriately respond to the needs evidenced by this study. Then and only then, will efforts to improve the educational process truly be successful.

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