Compassion Fatigue, Emotional Labour and Educator Burnout: Research Study

PHASE ONE REPORT: ACADEMIC LITERATURE REVIEW AND SURVEY ONE DATA ANALYSIS

The Alberta Teachers' Association

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Preface

Education is ultimately a relational endeavour. It follows that anything that diminishes the relationships between teachers, students and parents diminishes the quality of learning.

The Alberta Teachers' Association, 2013 Strategic Plan

The relational nature of learning requires significant emotional labour on the part of teachers, school leaders and other educational workers; however, the personal cost of this emotional labour and its impact on the psychological well-being of adults working in the Alberta public education system is not well understood.

Therefore, early in January 2020, the Association partnered with the Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP) to explore phenomena of emotional labour, burnout and compassion fatigue in education workers.

This partnership led to the establishment of a two-year research project designed and guided with the expert assistance of a group of researchers from the University of Calgary. This report is an initial product of this collaboration and provides insight into the first phase of this research project. It includes a literature review that explores the concepts used to frame this study as well as an analysis of the findings of an online survey conducted in June 2020.

The combined efforts of the research advisory committee have grounded this study and provided critical guidance in the development of the research instruments. I wish to thank all members below for their participation and input:

- C Volume-Smith, PhD (Cochair), Strategic Advisor, ASEBP
- Lisa Everitt, EdD (Cochair), Executive Staff Officer, ATA
- Astrid Kendrick, EdD, Principal Researcher, University of Calgary
- Ms. Genevieve Blais, MEd, Executive Staff Officer, ATA
- Heather Collier, BScN, Manager, Clinical and Early Intervention Services, ASEBP
- James Gerun, BEd, Teacher Welfare, ATA
- Phil McRae, PhD, Executive Staff Officer, ATA
- Sylvie Roy, PhD, Associate Dean, Research, University of Calgary
- Wendy Sheehan, Manager, Client Services ASEBP
- Shawn Vanbocquestal, Director, Clinical and Disability Services, ASEBP
- Cindi Vaselenak, EdD, Consultant, ASBA

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Additionally, I wish to acknowledge the research team from the University of Calgary for its efforts to collate and make sense of the voluminous data collected during phase one of the research project. The research team was led by Dr Kendrick and included her research assistants Kate Beamer, Jhonattan Bello, Emilie Maine, Rachel Pagaling and Beejal Parekh.

Dr Kendrick took the information gathered by her team and authored the report before you. The Association Document production team led by Joan Steinbrenner, including Judith Plumb, Kim vanderHelm, Alexandrea Bowes and Joanne Maughn, ensured that its presentation paid appropriate tribute to the impressive collective efforts that went into its creation.

Finally, I wish to recognize the 2,810 education workers who took the time to respond to the online survey in June. We do not tend to share freely how our work affects our inner lives to put our vulnerabilities on public display. Your willingness to share your experiences with respect to emotional labour, burnout and compassion fatigue is brave and helps the Association, ASEBP, other educational partners and, ultimately, your professional colleagues across the province to consider how psychological well-being of education workers can be protected at both an individual and a system level.

Dennis Theobald
Executive Secretary, Alberta Teachers' Association

Introduction and Key Concepts

Educational workers have increasingly felt occupational pressures created by societal disruption due to factors such as the COVID-19 crisis, reduced budget allocations from the government treasury, increased class sizes, and diverse and complex classroom composition. Members of educational advocacy and supporting organizations have observed an increased number of educational workers expressing mental health distress because of these factors.

In January of 2020, the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) and Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP) determined that a research study was needed to gain more insights into education workers' experiences with their occupational health. The decision to fund this study was made before the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic; however, with the quick pivot to emergency remote instruction in March 2020, the investigation into the impact of this crisis event on educational worker mental health became even more urgent. Specifically, these two organizations were concerned about the experience and scope of compassion fatigue and burnout for educational workers in Alberta.

Alberta is one of ten provinces in Canada and is home to over four million people (Government of Alberta 2020), with approximately 140,000 people working in educational services, which account for 6.7 per cent of employing industries (Treasury Board and Finance 2016). Educational workers include teachers, educational assistants, support staff, school administration and school district administration, as well as supporting employers such as the ATA and the ASEBP.

An extensive review of the experiences and causes of mental health distress in Albertan educational workers has not previously been undertaken. Mental health distress can take multiple forms and has complex causes, and more research is needed to determine the occupational factors that might be contributing to this distress. The purpose of this study is to investigate the lived experience of educational workers regarding three phenomena that are inextricably tied to working with people: emotional labour, compassion fatigue and burnout.

Key Terms and Definitions

EMOTIONAL LABOUR

The term *emotional labour* was first coined by Arlie Hochschild in her seminal exploration of the topic in *The Managed Heart*, first published in 1983. She described the phenomenon as the performance of expected emotional expression in a work environment (Hochschild 2012), and she suggested that employees were expected to manage their emotions in a manner that matched the organizational "feeling rules"—the spoken or unspoken expectations of how a "good" employee expressed or repressed their emotions when working with clients. Whether or not the employee genuinely felt these emotions was not of primary concern, leading to a potential disconnect between the organizational feeling rules and the employee's authentic emotional state.

Hochschild (2012) suggested that two main elements composed emotional labour: deep acting and surface acting. With deep acting, the employee's true emotional state aligns with the organizational feeling rules and provides a strong base from which to perform the emotional labour. The person feels a strong connection to their work and can identify with their job role as a part of themself. In the educational field, this person might feel a strong desire to positively influence children and youth or create an optimal school–work environment for staff and colleagues. Their individual passions and drive align with the expectations for their profession.

Superficial acting (Hochschild 2012) is required when a worker's actual emotional state does not align with the organizational feeling rules. If an educational assistant, for example, tries to smile reassuringly to their student, but feels anger or trepidation about the potential actions of that student, they are acting out according to the feeling rules, rather than expressing their true emotion. Ongoing superficial acting has been linked to burnout (Bodenheimer and Shuster 2020; Noor and Zainuddin 2011) and compassion fatigue (Elliot 2017; Peate 2014); hence, understanding the role that providing emotional labour plays in the day-to-day work of educational workers is an important aspect of understanding their unique occupational experiences.

In education, organizational feeling rules are expressly written in professional codes of conduct, including documents such as the Teaching Quality Standard (TQS) (Alberta Education 2018b) and the Leadership Quality Standard (LQS) (Alberta Education 2018a). An example of an organizationally mandated feeling rule is outlined as one of the indicators of teacher effectiveness:

> Fostering Effective Relationships: Achievement of this competency is demonstrated by indicators such as: (b) demonstrating empathy and a genuine caring for others. (Alberta Education 2018b, 4)

Following an organizational feeling rule is not problematic, and doing so promotes a calm, safe and emotionally healthy workplace. Particularly in the educational field, with educational workers working either directly or indirectly with vulnerable or malleable children and youth, the adults need to be good role models for safe work environments. As Kendrick (2018) found in her study of health champions and emotional labour, schools cannot be considered safe environments for children and youth if constantly disrupted by dysregulated adults.

Providing emotional labour is part of the role of an educational worker. Just as a construction worker needs to provide physical labour to build a house, educational workers need to provide emotional labour to build strong pedagogical relationships with their students or to construct effective leadership relationships with their staff and colleagues. Deep acting, the passion that drives educators to contribute their skills and abilities to create a better and more civil society, can, unfortunately, be eroded over time by the emotional exhaustion created by ongoing superficial acting. The consequences of not addressing this emotional erosion, particularly in stressful times, need to be studied further.

COMPASSION SATISFACTION

One of the main protective factors for people employed in caring professions is *compassion satisfaction*, the pleasure that the caregiver experiences from doing their work (Mathieu 2012; Steen 2019). Teachers are typically seen as having higher levels of compassion satisfaction related to their work because of less direct exposure to trauma than other caregivers (Teater and Ludgate 2014). Experiencing the positive outcomes related to helping work, such as positive feelings for colleagues, a sense that one's own caring work benefits the common good for all society, or improving client health and well-being, can contribute to the "helper's high" (Teater and Ludgate 2014, 113). Focusing caregivers on the successes of their clients and colleagues has been found to act as a buffer for carers experiencing compassion stress and to create a pathway to health for those people experiencing compassion fatigue (Mathieu 2012). Rather than being seen as the opposite of compassion stress and compassion fatigue, compassion satisfaction can be understood as a protective factor that exists on a continuum of occupational health (Geoffrion et al 2019).

COMPASSION STRESS AND COMPASSION FATIGUE

Compassion stress and *compassion fatigue* describe a continuum of the emotional toll felt by caregivers (Figley 2002). Compassion stress is used interchangeably with the term *secondary traumatic stress* (STS), and compassion fatigue is also referred to as *secondary traumatic stress disorder* (STSD). In both cases, the caregiver is deeply impacted when dealing with their clients' trauma. Teater and Ludgate (2014) suggested that the risk factors for STS and STSD can be classified into three categories: personal, client and organizational/institutional (see Table 1). They suggested that the risk for experiencing STS or STSD increases due to personal factors including an individual's

own experience with trauma; exposure to frequent, long-lasting and severe client trauma; and organizational/institutional factors including lack of preparation and professional learning related to trauma or an unhealthy workplace.

Table 1

Personal	Client	Organization/Institution
Self-expectations	Suicidal	Nature and quality of supervision and mentorship
World view	Demographic match to therapist	Culture
Personal history including trauma	Personality	External supports
Use of adaptive or maladaptive coping skills	Use of adaptive or maladaptive coping skills	Flexibility of supervisor
Willingness to admit to needing and seeking of support	PTSD diagnosis	Caseload
Level of training	Age	Likelihood of encountering situational triggers

(from Teater and Ludgate 2014, 6)

The main difference is that when a person is experiencing compassion stress, they can still manage their daily workload and can rely on individual or workplace strategies to recover, what Joinson (1992) referred to as being "vertically ill" (p 119). In contrast, she suggested that an individual experiencing compassion fatigue becomes "horizontally ill," requiring intensive interventions such as professional therapy, medication or a leave of absence from work to fully recover. Once an individual experiences compassion fatigue, they are no longer able to provide the emotional labour required to be effective with their clients, and they experience a shift in their occupational world view, losing the altruism and desire to make a positive contribution to society through their caring work (Catherall 1995; Dubois and Mistretta 2018).

Both compassion stress and compassion fatigue are associated with caregivers or helpers who have been exposed to trauma through their work with clients. Bearing witness to the traumatic experiences of others has a tremendous impact on the mental and emotional health of educational workers and is the "cost of caring" (Figley 1995, 7). Trauma occurs when "stress responses fail to re-establish prestress life-enhancing equilibrium" (Valent 1995, 28). A traumatic event is a life-changing and difficult experience that has a significant and disruptive impact on an individual's everyday functioning. Traumatic events include natural disasters, death or significant injury, human-caused disasters, experiencing neglect or abuse, or civil discord (Figley 1995; Valent 1995).

STS and STSD are foreseeable and preventable outcomes of providing emotional labour in educational settings (Dubois and Mistretta 2018). Educational workers, by the nature of their profession, are likely to encounter students or colleagues who are experiencing trauma. They may act both as crisis workers (Beaton and Murphy 1995), by going through a traumatic event with students or colleagues, or trauma workers (Dutton and Rubinstein 1995), from hearing about a traumatic event from a student or colleague. Dubois and Mistretta (2018) suggested that educators experience secondary stress because of changes in student needs, a lack of professional support from school or system administration, and an increased caseload. As a result, providing effective professional development and assistance with developing self-care plans that address individual, professional and organizational interventions (Teater and Ludgate 2014) should be a part of educator education and professional learning programs.

For people engaged in helping professions, the toll of performing empathy and compassion when feeling otherwise can be stressful and lead to emotional exhaustion (Peate 2014). A strong stigma is attached to caregivers admitting to feeling burned out (Steen 2019), which can exacerbate the effects of compassion stress and compassion fatigue. Several reliable and validated tools exist that can help an individual to self-identify their compassion fatigue.

The ProQOL Survey Version 5 (Stamm 2012) is considered the strongest measure to assess an individual's proclivity toward compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue and has been used extensively for research purposes (Geoffrion et al 2019). It is not a diagnostic tool, but it provides some key information about what needs to be done by a therapist or organization to improve the professional well-being of an individual or group of people (Stamm 2010). Organizations that have high numbers of individual employees with compassion fatigue can use theoretical models to identify the common characteristics and interventions that should be used to help employees return to emotional and mental health.

In the nursing field, Peters (2018, 473; see Figure 1) and Coetzee and Laschinger (2018; see Figure 2) used extensive academic literature reviews to propose theoretical models for understanding STS and STSD. Although a comprehensive model does not appear to have been developed for educational workers, these two models are both useful for defining the major antecedents and consequences for professions that have compassion fatigue as a known occupational hazard (Peate 2014; Peters 2018). Further work needs to be done to adapt the nursing models to fit the unique settings and job expectations of educational workers.

To build a comprehensive model for educational workers' compassion stress, compassion fatigue and burnout requires an answer to the question of what constitutes trauma and crisis work in the education field. Understanding the unique nature of educational workers' crisis and trauma work is important, as these concepts have been defined mainly in reference to frontline workers, such as medical professionals (van Mol et al 2015), firefighters (Kim, Hee Ha and Jue 2020), therapists and psychologists (Craig and Sprang 2010), or social workers (Adams, Boscarino and Figley 2006), who

tend to deal directly with individual people experiencing trauma. Educational workers generally work closely with large groups of children and youth and can be exposed to multiple crisis and trauma situations during a school day. Phase two of this study will be focused on developing examples of crisis and trauma work performed by educational workers.

In many school systems, access to highly trained crisis and trauma professionals has been severely reduced due to governmental austerity measures (Statistics Canada 2019). As a result, educational workers have been asked to take more responsibility for their clients' mental and emotional health (Leschied, Flett and Saklofske 2013) and are likely to have direct contact with child and youth crisis and trauma given its prevalence in the population (Government of Canada 2018). Creating a similar model to those used for nurses and other frontline workers would assist educational organizations and academic institutions with understanding and preparing educators for response and recovery when they encounter this phenomenon. Developing this model will be a focus of the second phase of this research study.

BURNOUT

The combination of compassion stress or compassion fatigue with burnout can be devastating for caregivers. *Emotional burnout* is a long-term process that occurs in caregivers as they help other people (Maslach and Jackson 1981). Unlike STS or STSD, which can emerge after one exposure of a caregiver to secondary trauma, burnout is a career-long process that grows in intensity over time (Koenig, Rodger and Specht 2018). Exposure to a traumatic event in an individual who has already been experiencing burnout is a combination that can result in devastating mental health distress.

Tei et al (2014) suggested that "individuals who are most vulnerable to burnout in human service work are those who are highly motivated, dedicated and emotionally involved in their work" (p 6). Three main aspects of burnout in the Maslach and Jackson Burnout Scale (1981) include depersonalization, exhaustion and lack of accomplishment (see Table 2).

Table 2

Depersonalization	Emotional Exhaustion	Lack of Accomplishment
I treat my clients as if they were impersonal objects.	I feel emotionally exhausted from my work.	I do not deal very effectively with the needs of my clients.
I have become more callous towards my clients than I used to be.	I feel used up by the end of the work day.	I do not feel that I am positively influencing the lives of my clients.
I really don't care about what happens to some of my clients.	I feel fatigued when I wake up and again by the end of the work day.	I lack energy.
I feel blamed by some of my clients for their own failures.	I feel frustrated by my job.	I do not feel that I have accomplished worthwhile things on my job.

(Indicators taken from the Maslach and Jackson Burnout Scale [1981])

Dubois and Mistretta (2018) described burnout for educational workers as "death by a thousand cuts" (p 41). Currently, educational workers in Alberta experience a high caseload and an ever-increasing number of students or clients; an ever-decreasing number of supports and resources to assist them with meeting the needs of these clients; diminished administrative support and increased administrative tasks; a negative workplace or school culture; and high levels of daily stress (Alberta Teachers' Association 2020).

A key symptom of burnout is depersonalizing the client, which for most educational workers would result in depersonalizing children and youth, which is damaging to students' intellectual and mental health and academic success. Developing individual, site-based and organizational/institutional interventions to both prevent and assist with educational worker burnout is a necessary part of ensuring the academic success and overall well-being of students (Herman, Hickman-Rosa and Reinke 2018).

Interventions for Compassion Fatigue, Compassion Stress, and Burnout

A key understanding of the treatment for the phenomena of compassion fatigue, compassion stress and burnout is that these conditions are preventable. Through identifying the personal and organizational factors that can lead to these outcomes, both individuals and organizations can effectively prevent or treat people through professional development, self-care plans, effective mentorship and supervision, and the work culture.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Preparing educational workers for the likelihood of experiencing compassion fatigue, compassion stress or burnout requires training them to recognize the risk factors within both themselves and their colleagues (Dubois and Mistretta 2018; Koenig, Rodger and Specht 2018). Ideally, caregivers would not be exposed to traumatized clients at all, and governments would work to mitigate the societal effects of natural disasters, domestic violence and other forms of human victimization, poverty, homelessness, and global conflict (Dutton and Rubinstein 1995) for the common good of society. Providing a strong social service network to assist people in need would prevent students from being traumatized in the first place.

However, until this ideal can be realized, providing caregivers with training and professional development in STS and STSD can assist them with recognizing and seeking help to cope before they become horizontally or vertically ill (Joinson 1992; Mathieu 2012; Teater and Ludgate 2014). As a part of this training, caregivers should learn about the adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies used by people experiencing stress, including rescuing, attaching, assertiveness, adapting, fighting, fleeing, competing and cooperating (Valent 1995). By recognizing their own and their colleagues' stress responses, they can develop and enact their self-care plan before the STS becomes severe or intensifies into STSD.

SELF-CARE PLANNING

Caregivers should develop a strong self-care plan that includes a wide number of coping strategies and resources that an individual can access in times of stress (Dubois and Mistretta 2018; Figley 1995; Hydon et al 2015; Koenig, Rodger and Specht 2018). People in leadership roles in organizations and institutions that rely on employees providing emotional labour as a part of their job description should work to ensure that each employee has a self-care plan that includes individual, organizational

and professional interventions (Teater and Ludgate 2014). Compassion stress, compassion fatigue and burnout are not personal defects in individual caregivers—these conditions result from a wide variety of personal and professional circumstances and can impact any employee. In fact, "those who have an enormous capacity for feeling and expressing empathy tend to be more at risk of compassion stress" (Figley 1995, 1).

Within the education field, a workable self-care plan should be a part of formal education. Koenig, Rodger and Specht (2018) suggested that preservice teachers, for example, should develop a plan as a part of their teaching degree so that when they do encounter crisis or trauma work when they begin their teaching career, they have already determined the most effective steps for a return to their pre-exposure mindset. Stigma regarding mental health problems (OECD 2012) and the superhero teacher trope of a singular individual who can fix all the complex problems faced by students in schools (Brown 2013) can keep educational workers from admitting that they have the symptoms of compassion stress, compassion fatigue or burnout. If these phenomena are discussed as a natural consequence of exposure to caring work that can be treated, educational workers may be more inclined to seek help (Hydon et al 2015).

IMPORTANCE OF MENTORSHIP AND SUPERVISION

Providing caregivers with regular access to and communication with peers and mentors who have worked with traumatized clients is another way that organizational leadership can assist with preventing or treating compassion stress, compassion fatigue and burnout in their employees (Cerney 1995; Yassen 1995). Ineffective mentorship can lead to spreading "emotional contagion" (Hennig-Thurau et al 2006, 59) in which negative impacts of care work are amplified through interactions between disillusioned or burned-out colleagues and clients. Hennig-Thurau et al (2006) suggested that while emotional contagion can be positive if the main emotions that are amplified through interactions are joyous and cheerful, it can also be highly toxic if the spreading emotions are anger, frustration or sadness. Further, they found that when emotional labour is being provided, emotional contagion can pass from employee to client. In school settings, educators could make their own jobs more difficult by enabling their students to dysregulate their emotions.

However, through effective mentorship, colleagues and leaders can assist each other by problem solving for difficult clients (Cerney 1995), discussing the work-related events of challenging days to manage powerful emotions (MacLaren, Stenhouse and Ritchie 2016), or deconstructing a traumatic event to uncover adaptive or maladaptive coping strategies (Mathieu 2012). Mandated supervision in educational settings is focused primarily on the educational workers' influence on students' achievement in teaching and learning (Alberta Education 2018b). Very little attention is paid to the emotional influence of trauma or burnout on educational workers, which can lead to a problematic workplace culture.

WORKPLACE CULTURE

Organizations or institutions that rely on employees providing emotional labour to their clients have a responsibility to assist employees with creating and implementing their self-care plan. Compassion fatigue, stress and burnout are occupational hazards for careers that are dependent on caregiving (Mathieu 2012), so employers and leaders in caregiving settings should develop a workplace that creates physical and intellectual space, adequate time for emotional management and release, and opportunities for connection between employees to develop collegial relationships (Kendrick 2018).

Teater and Ludgate (2014) suggested that developing a healthy workplace culture includes ensuring that employees have access to supports and resources so that they can enact their self-care plan; providing training and professional development regarding compassion fatigue, compassion stress and burnout; and acknowledging that these phenomena are not individual failings or the results of a personal problem: these phenomena are the cost of caring and a consequence of working with traumatized people.

CONCLUSION

The three phenomena of emotional labour, compassion stress and fatigue, and burnout are closely linked. Although they often emerge independently of one another, distressing events, like the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 or major natural disasters such as fires and floods, can include the potential for all three phenomena to collide, creating an overwhelming amount of emotional and mental health problems within caregiving systems.

Understanding the scope and nature of these three phenomena in Alberta, Canada, can provide decision makers and advocates for a strong public education system with the knowledge needed to develop healthy educational workers and a culture of safe and caring schools for adults and children alike.

Survey One Data Analysis and Findings

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Because of the size and scope of this research project, the chosen methodology was mixed methods using a social justice design (Creswell 2015). The project will be using both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis to determine the nature of emotional labour provided in Alberta; the extent of compassion fatigue, compassion stress and compassion satisfaction experienced by educational workers in Alberta; and the prevalence of educator burnout in educational workers in Alberta. Following the completion of this study, the intent is to use the data to improve the working conditions and the emotional and mental health of educational workers.

Data about the three phenomena will be gathered from June 2020 to February 2021 through two online surveys constructed through Survey Gizmo and forty hermeneutic individual interviews with participants from across Alberta and in different educational roles. Ethics approval for this study was received from the University of Calgary in June 2020.

The first survey launched on June 10, 2020, and gathered responses until July 3, 2020. Participants were recruited through an online social media campaign promoted by the research study funders, the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) and the Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP). The target population of this survey was educational workers in Alberta with the focus on the membership of the ASEBP, which includes teachers, educational assistants, school administrators and support staff. Based on the ASEBP member totals, the population that could be reached through the study advertising campaign was approximately 60 339, of which 79 per cent identify as female (e-mail message from C Volume-Smith, September 19, 2020).

This survey was designed to gather quantitative data regarding the extent of the three phenomena across several different educational roles and sectors. Survey questions were designed using the ProQOL Version 5 (Stamm 2012) to measure compassion stress, compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction; the Maslach and Jackson Burnout Inventory (1981) to determine symptoms of burnout; and open-ended questions about appropriate and inappropriate emotional expression to determine organizational feeling rules in educational settings, based on the work of Kendrick (2018).

Initial data analysis of the first survey consisted of generating quantitative graphs representing the overall impact of the three phenomena across the education sector. Open-ended text questions were coded qualitatively using the constant comparison thematic analysis (Creswell 2015), first by the

principal investigator and then by a research assistant, and responses were grouped using the "text bucket" function in Survey Gizmo as themes emerged. The survey had a 73.3 per cent completion rate, with 2,061 complete responses and 749 incomplete responses, for a total of 2,810 participants. Given this response rate, this survey has a confidence level of plus or minus 2.5 per cent, 19 times out of 20 (Creative Research Systems 2012).

The final question of this survey was used to find volunteers for the interview portion of the research study. A participant pool of 258 volunteers was generated from this initial survey. Using convenience sampling by identifiable job role, the volunteers were listed by job role and were contacted by the research assistants. Once consent was obtained, interviews were held between July 3, 2020 and August 31, 2020 by five research assistants to understand the lived experience of educational workers with the three phenomena. Interview questions were generated from the initial survey with a focus on what constitutes crisis and trauma work in educational work settings, the nature and extent of burnout by the interview participants, and the types of professional development and self-care strategies that were required to improve the occupational health of the participants. The data from these interviews will be analyzed between September and December 2020 using constant comparison analysis and presented in the phase two report. Initial themes were identified by the research assistants and provided to the principal investigator, who compared these emergent ideas to codes that had emerged in the survey data and information known about the three phenomena from the literature review.

A second survey will be designed from the findings of the first survey and interview data, and will be released in January 2021 to determine the stability of the findings from these first two data sources. The first survey was released during a particularly difficult time for educational workers as they had to pivot suddenly on online instruction. Therefore, the findings may be limited due to the intensity of uncertainty and trauma created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic is a traumatic event that likely intensifies the experience of STS and STSD as well as burnout. The intent of the second survey is to determine the extent to which the data generated by the first survey produce findings that are consistent across time.

SURVEY ONE DATA ANALYSIS

Respondent Profile

The respondents for the survey represented a cross-section of the education sector workforce in Alberta. As expected, the majority of the respondents identified as cisgender women (see Table 3) living in an urban setting (see Table 4) and acting in a teaching role (see Table 5), which is representative of the educational workforce (Treasury Board and Finance 2016). Representation from a variety of areas of the province of Alberta was present; however, the urban centre Edmonton was overrepresented in the data. The number of years in the educational workforce was split somewhat

evenly among 0–5, 6–10, 11–15, 16–20 and 20+ years of employment (see Table 6). The majority of respondents worked primarily with kindergarten to Grade 12 students (see Table 7).

The survey data are robust and can indicate trends within the educational workforce with a sample size error of ±2 (Creswell 2015). When looking at the trends for specific job roles, the data have a much lower confidence interval, suggesting that more respondents are needed for the second survey to generalize job specific results. Specifically, the data from system-level leadership and school board elected officials are underrepresentative of the influence of the three phenomena on these educational workers. Additionally, while the respondents represent a geographic cross-section of the province of Alberta, data drawn from specific areas or locations cannot be taken as representative of the experience of the phenomena in those locations.

For the follow-up survey in January, more effort should be made to gather data from these underrepresented groups for a better understanding of the scope of compassion fatigue, compassion stress, compassion satisfaction and burnout within these subgroups and locations. Further information about the influence of the three phenomena will also be gathered from the analysis of the interview data.

Caution should be taken not to apply the overall quantitative analysis to individuals, specific job roles or locations within Alberta. Further, the first survey results should be approached as providing overall trends or themes within the education sector for further exploration.

Table 3. Gender Profile

Value		Per Cent	Responses
Male		12.2%	318
Female		86.8%	2,260
Transgender		0.1%	2
Prefer not to answer		0.7%	18
Not Listed		0.2%	6

Total: 2,604

Table 4. Work Role Representation
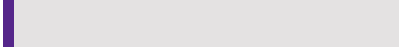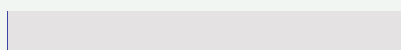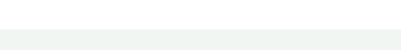
Value		Per Cent	Responses
Nonteaching support staff (such as librarian, administrative assistant) in a school		2.5%	64
Educational assistant		7.3%	189
Teacher		73.6%	1,918
School administration (such as principal, assistant principal, instructional leader)		7.3%	189
K–12 system administration (certificated teacher acting as consultant, specialist, system principal, superintendent)		2.6%	68
Elected school leader (such as a school board trustee, member of parent council)		0.1%	3
Support staff (such as administrative assistant, call centre, financial officer) in a system-level environment (school board, ATA, ASEBP)		1.6%	41
Leadership in a system-level environment (school board, ATA, ASEBP)		0.9%	23
Other—write in		4.2%	110

Total: 2,605

Table 5. Geographic Location

Value		Per Cent	Responses
Rural—geographic area outside of a town or city		27.6%	718
Urban—geographic area within a town or city		72.4%	1,881

Total: 2,599

Value		Per Cent	Responses
Calgary		22.4%	584
Edmonton		38.9%	1,012
Red Deer		8.9%	232
Lethbridge		9.4%	244
Medicine Hat		7.0%	182
Grande Prairie		4.0%	103
Cold Lake		1.7%	44
For McMurray		1.0%	26
High Level		1.6%	41
Jasper		0.6%	16
Lloydminster		1.0%	26
Not listed		3.6%	93

Total: 2,603

Table 6. Years of Service in Education Sector

Value		Per Cent	Responses
0–5 years		22.2%	579
6–10 years		21.2%	551
11–15 years		18.9%	491
16–20 years		15.5%	404
21+ years		22.2%	579

Total: 2,604

Table 7. Primary Client Group
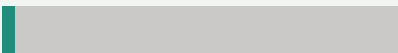
Value		Per Cent	Responses
I work primarily with K–12 students.		82.2%	1,883
I work primarily with adults.		3.1%	72
I spend most of my day in a leadership capacity with adults.		3.8%	86
My day is split between working with K–12 students and colleagues.		11%	251

Total: 2,292

EMOTIONAL LABOUR AND ORGANIZATIONAL WORK RULES

The survey data indicated that educational workers in Alberta, Canada provide emotional labour as a part of their work commitment. The respondents in the survey indicated that strong organizational feeling rules exist within their workplaces and that they feel compelled to provide superficial acting to present as their ideal educational worker.

The text analysis of the open-ended question *How would you describe someone who is "good" at your job?* suggested that educational workers have internalized several key components of their professional obligations as presented in both the Teaching Quality Standard (TQS) (Alberta Education 2018b) and Leadership Quality Standard (LQS) (Alberta Education 2018a), with the competencies of *Demonstrates a professional body of knowledge* (Alberta Education 2018b) and *Fosters effective relationships* (Alberta Education 2018a) emerging as the key aspects of professional identity. Of the thirteen competencies outlined in the TQS and LQS, two appear to be the foundation of excellence in the education sector (see Table 8).

Table 8. Initial Coding "Good at your job"

Value		Per Cent	Responses
Fosters effective relationships		75.5%	1,316
Engages in career-long learning		3.2%	55
Demonstrates a professional body of knowledge		14.3%	249
Establishes inclusive learning environments		6.1%	107
Adheres to legal frameworks and policies		0.2%	4
Understands and responds to larger societal context		0.1%	1
Models commitment to professional learning		0.1%	1
Embodies visionary leadership		0.3%	5
Leads a learning community		0.2%	3
Manages school operations and resources		0.1%	2

Total: 1,743

Responses coded as *Demonstrates a professional body of knowledge* included the following:

Participant ID 18: "Someone who works hard, is organized, flexible and dedicated."

Participant ID 25: "Able to completely focus on their students and have lots of engaging classroom activities. Able to give each student what they need."

Participant ID 183: "Living a balanced life. Lessons are well planned, kids are happy, engaged and learning. Get along well with colleagues and admin. Keeps up with marking assignments."

ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

Participant ID 2655: "Organized, meets deadlines, good relationships with students, able to be flexible to meet student needs."

Participant ID 2739: "Proficient skills to do job, hard worker, good communicator, can collaborate, completes quality work."

Responses coded as *Fosters effective relationships* included the following:

Participant ID 27: "Someone who is compassionate, emotionally stable and confident. Someone who is able to remain calm in stressful situations and take control or maintain control when others are feeling dysregulated. Someone who maintains professional boundaries but provides compassion and listens to families and students."

Participant ID 2514: "Caring, companionate, insightful. Excited to guide students to recognize their worth and their ability to learn. Forge positive relationships with all students in order to 'meet them where they are' and guide development. Enjoy the wonder of children!"

Participant ID 2653: "Engaging, easy to talk to, polite, organized, prepared, ready to roll with the punches—all the time, no matter where the punches land, compliant, loves the kids no matter what the behaviour, works well with everyone else, adaptive, sense of humour."

Participant ID 2809: "Someone who is able to relate to students' needs whatever they may be, someone who is responsive to the ever-changing dynamic of teaching, someone who can adjust to (and adjust) the norms of the classroom/school culture, someone who does not let their challenges get in the way of their students."

From the overwhelming agreement among survey respondents (75.5 per cent), the TQS and LQS competency most valued by educational workers appears to be *Fosters effective relationships*. In the context of determining the scope and extent of compassion stress and fatigue in educational workers, this professional value takes on additional importance, as it indicates that caregiving is a valued part of the Alberta education profession, and if individuals feel that they are failing to build effective relationships with their clients, they may be at higher risk of STS or STSD.

Further, the open text responses suggest that educational workers have internalized the hero educator as a necessity for success in their profession. The "good" educator is described using terms that would suit an educational superhero, capable of building a perfectly calm and ordered classroom while effectively engaging students and colleagues under any circumstance.

Participant ID 57: "Someone who manages to balance the myriad of expectations from admin, other staff and students, who hones their craft, creating a sense of enthusiasm for learning while meeting diverse emotional, physical, mental and social needs of children. One who is curious and a lifelong learner, with a sense of humour because some days are just absurd."

Participant ID 67: "Patient, overall positive attitude, strength-based, student-focused, compassionate, empathetic, flexible, passionate about learning, passionate about inspiring growth, well read and versed in pedagogy."

Participant ID 101: "Someone who is good at my job inspires students to be amazing at whatever it is they want to do. They are a content expert but have the soft skills to guide the majority of students in the right direction."

Participant ID 145: "A 'good teacher' respects students, creates a sense of community and belonging in the classroom, is warm, accessible, enthusiastic and caring, sets high expectations for all students, has their own love of learning, is a skilled leader, can 'shift gears' and is flexible, collaborates with colleagues on an ongoing basis, and maintains professionalism in all areas."

Meanwhile, educators who are having trouble with maintaining their optimism and high levels of organization feel as though they are not adequate or measuring up to the high standards set both by the profession and by themselves.

Participant ID 37: "I feel tired and right now I feel that I am not as good as the other consultants. I know at this time comparing is not the way to go but I feel inadequate."

Participant ID 67: "I think more time needs to be spent on this in teacher training. Student teachers and first-year teachers are not adequately prepared for this, in my experience. We also accept our roles and workload as 'normal' and often tell younger teachers that 'burnout is just how it is' and that 'they'll adjust.' I know I have done this in the past. In the last year or two I have come to realize that maybe the roles and expectations are not as normal as I once thought. I also think some of the mindset around education and what it's for needs to shift. Are we holding students accountable to an outside standard? Are we working on helping them to become healthy, functional humans? Are we trying to walk somewhere in the middle? Teachers are often teaching, parenting, leading, coaching, providing informal counseling, managing behaviour, supporting learning differences, and creating learning tasks that are both subject-based and engaging, all at the same time. In the same breath. I don't know that those outside the field understand the complexity of the job, and since it is a caring profession, it is not well received when a teacher mentions these things. I adore my job. I wouldn't do anything else. BUT I think it could be made better. (Apologies for the rant.)"

Participant ID 2678: "I feel the need to give more than is possible and it always feels like it is never enough."

The feelings of inadequacy intensify the experience of providing emotional labour as the educational worker is acting the superhero but feeling the villain because they cannot give the heart and care that they once could.

Emotional Feeling Rules

Emotional feeling rules are the spoken or unspoken expectations for emotional regulation and expression at a workplace (Hochschild 2012). Survey respondents were asked to name three emotions that they felt comfortable expressing at work (Table 9) and three that they repressed while at work (Table 10). Emotional regulation at work and school is important because educational workers act as role models for appropriate and inappropriate emotional behavior (Kendrick 2018). When they do not feel the expected emotions, educational workers are expected to provide superficial acting in order to maintain a safe and caring environment for students.

Because respondents were asked to name three emotions, the percentage of responses does not equal 100. In the survey, the overwhelming emotional expectation for educational workers was to appear joyful, cheerful or happy, as shown in Table 9. Of the total 1,910 responses to this open-ended question, 1,679 respondents indicated that expressing joy and happiness was an expectation at work. The counts were split more evenly with emotions hidden at work. Of the 842 codeable responses to the question, the respondents were split among anger, sadness and frustration, with hopelessness and fear also generating several mentions. Feeling, but not healthily expressing, hopelessness and fear is related to the development of STS and STSD (Figley 1995).

Table 9. Emotions Comfortable to Express at Work
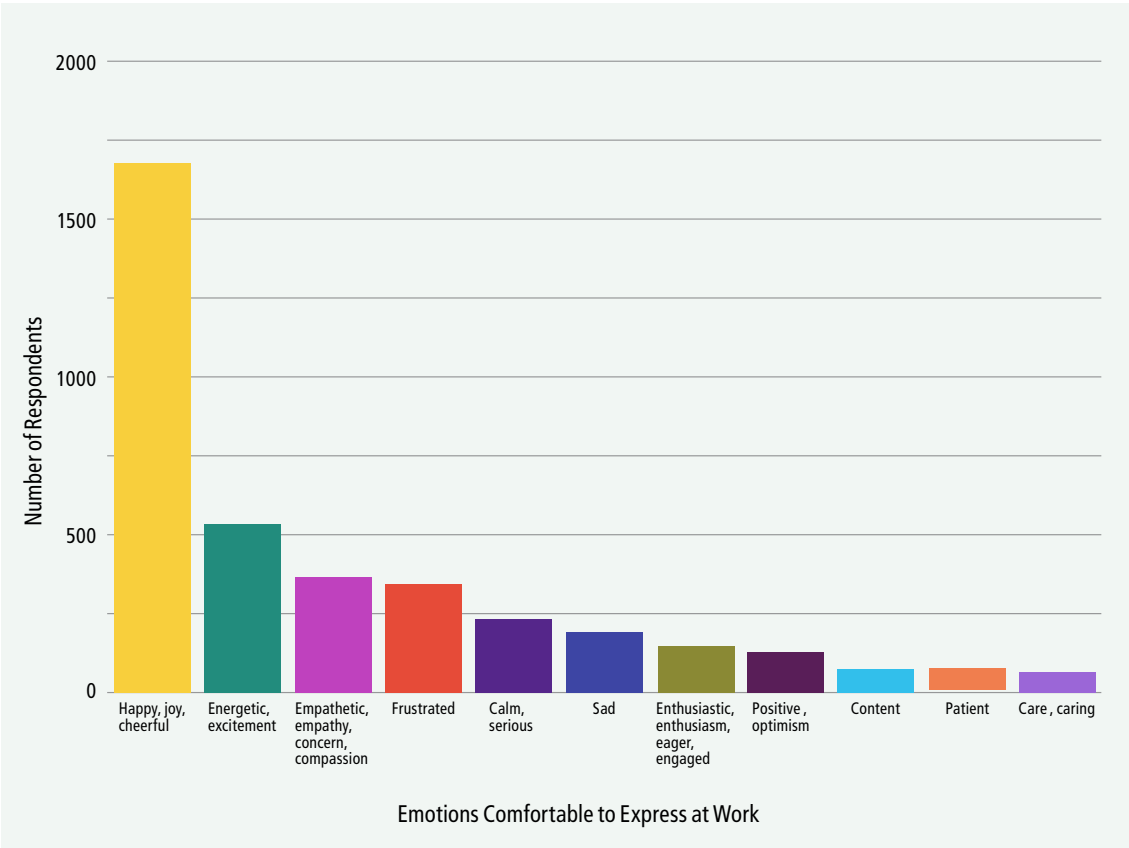
Table 10. Emotions Hidden from Others at Work
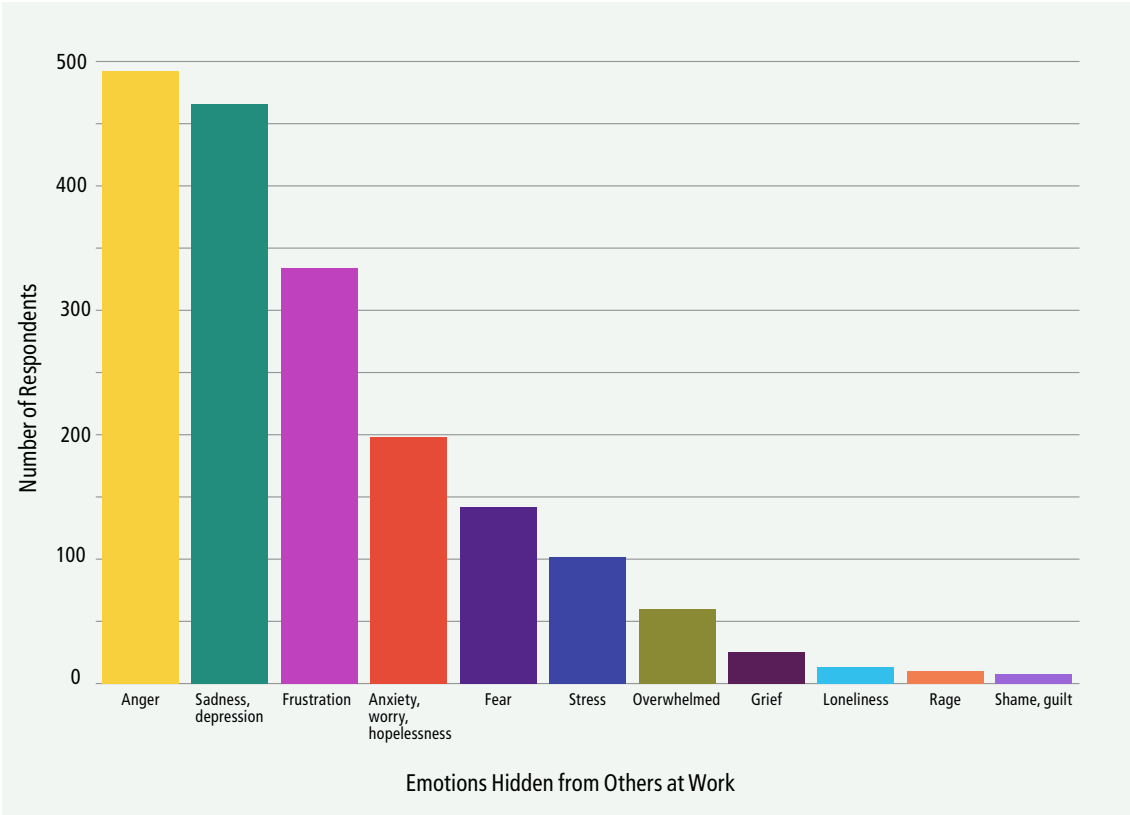
COMPASSION SATISFACTION, COMPASSION STRESS AND COMPASSION FATIGUE

The principal investigator obtained online permission to use the ProQOL Version 5 as a self-assessment tool. This tool was developed specifically to measure professional quality of life in occupational settings (Stamm 2012). For the purposes of keeping the survey short and easy to maneuver, the 27-point assessment scale was separated into two Likert-style questions, with the first set comprising 14 statements related to compassion satisfaction and the second set comprising 13 statements related to compassion fatigue. Survey respondents were then asked to use their results to decide if they felt compassion satisfaction or compassion fatigue (Table 11). Providing respondents with the opportunity to self-assess based on their results may be a limitation of this survey, as self-assessments do not always generate reliable data; however, the ProQOL is a reliable and validated tool (Geoffrion et al 2019), giving the numbered results in Tables 12 and 13 more credibility.

Overall, of the 2,113 respondents who completed both parts of the ProQOL assessment, 50.4 per cent of respondents (1,064) identified their mental state as consistent with compassion satisfaction and 49.6 per cent (1,049) selected compassion fatigue.

Table 11. Based on ProQOL Survey, Respondents' Self-Identification of Mental State

Value		Per Cent	Responses
Compassion Satisfaction		50.4%	1,064
Compassion Fatigue		49.6%	1,049

Total: 2,113

Self-Identification of Mental State

 Upon closer analysis of the numbers generated by the ProQOL, of those who expressed that they felt compassion satisfaction, the majority of respondents scored between 23 and 33 (see Table 12), which is within the moderate score. The lower the score, the higher the level of compassion satisfaction. In this survey, the average score of the respondents was 30.8, which indicates that they were experiencing trouble with aspects of their job (Stamm 2010).

Table 12. Compassion Satisfaction Scored Results (ProQOL Version 5)
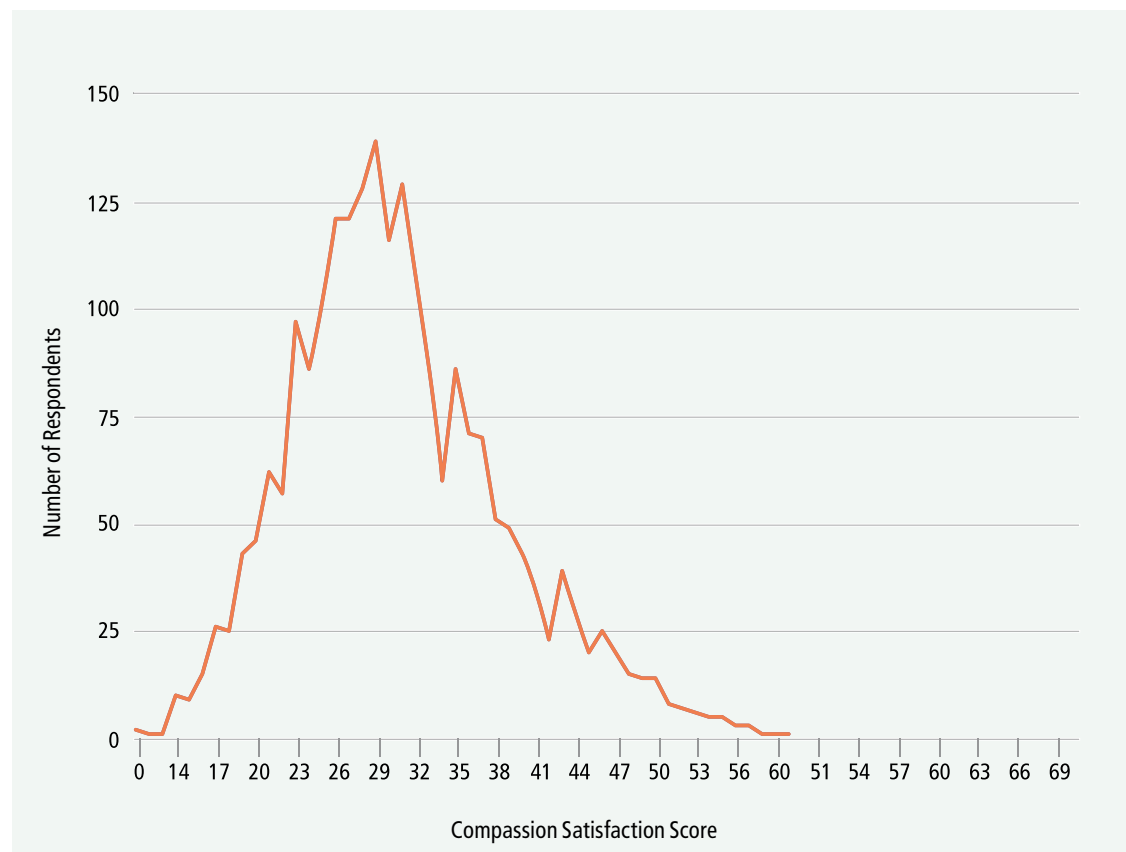
Coded responses (844 total) to the open-ended question *Why do you feel more compassion satisfaction related to your work?* revealed that positive feelings for clients or students (35.2 per cent) and the positive outcomes of doing helping work (35.1 per cent) were by far the most cited reasons for this emotional state. The finding that compassion satisfaction was related to close contact with children and youth aligns with Teater and Ludgate's (2014) suggestion that teachers tend to feel less compassion fatigue than other caring professions because of their proximity to children and youth.

> Participant ID 33 noted that they primarily felt compassion satisfaction because "I love working with kids. Their enthusiasm for learning excites me and gives me satisfaction."

> Participant ID 42: "Students are always happy that I'm the sub that is in their classroom, or tell me they are hoping I will be in their classes when they see me on campuses. Even when I clash with students, they often apologize for not doing their assignment, being quiet/rude, and we chat about how they are feeling and why they might have been acting out. I truly want to see every one of them succeed in life, and it makes me very proud to see them do so. I feel as though the students and I form stronger bonds than I do with other staff members at the schools, which makes sense. As a substitute, I spend most of my time with students and support staff, rather than collaborating with other teachers."

> Participant ID 246: "I think being a teacher is an extremely important job. I enjoy my work, and I love working with kids. I care deeply about them but I've learned that there has to be balance in my life. I don't get hung up on the things I can't change about my job. I do my best but I also save some of my energy for my family and my personal life. I think it's important to focus on the good things about my job (and there is a lot) and I don't sweat the small stuff (or try not to!)."

> Participant ID 2833: "I make a difference and I can see that. I try to focus on the ways in which I can help those around me. Sometimes I get bogged down by paperwork that I feel takes away from helping others, but the majority of my time, I focus on the success of what I do."

Of concern is that, of the actual count of respondents according to the ProQOL measure, the bulk of participants fell within the compassion stress zone (see Table 13). When scoring the responses to the ProQOL survey, scores under 22 indicate a low risk of compassion fatigue, 23–42 indicates a moderate level (compassion stress), and 43 or more indicates a high level (compassion stress) (Stamm 2012). The majority of the 2,140 responses, as shown in Table 13, cluster participants into the range of 19–37, with the average score being 30.6.

Table 13. Compassion Stress and Fatigue from ProQOL Scores
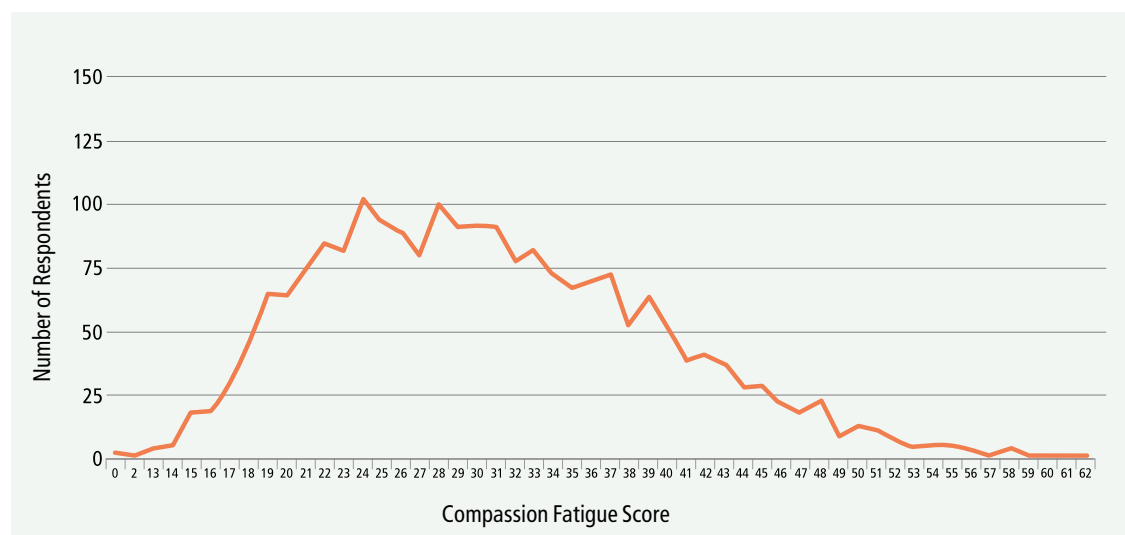
Coding the 917 open-ended text answers to the question *Why do you feel mainly compassion fatigue related to your work role?* revealed that the five primary antecedents impacting the respondents' emotional state were unsupportive or unhealthy workplace culture (35.1 per cent), work intensification (26.4 per cent), indirect exposure to client trauma (26.2 per cent), changed world view regarding own ability to make the world a better place (16.5 per cent) and the current COVID-19 pandemic (16.4 per cent).

Regarding an unhealthy workplace, an interesting trend emerged in that respondents felt their workplace was not only the physical location in which they performed their daily tasks, but also the wider provincial context. Some respondents spoke specifically of school or site-based organizational culture:

> Participant ID 27: "I work with children with complex special needs. Often we deal with difficult family situations, or traumatic situations in the classroom where I am expected to carry on as soon as the incident is resolved. My work involves long hours because I feel like I have many families depending on me to help them and their children achieve a life of independence and safety."

> Participant ID 183: "I had to leave my worksite. I loved that school, but couldn't take the stories of the kids anymore. You find yourself jaded and desensitized and angry. I don't have as many of those experiences at my new school, but you can get bogged down worrying about at-risk students."

Participant ID 194: "Working with refugee families. Not enough support for them. Some of their stories are horrific."

Participant ID 2716: "Because of the lack of empathy and general human emotions displayed by my colleagues and parents."

Others spoke more generally of their role in society:

Participant ID 142: "The top-down philosophy of education. People who haven't been teaching for decades keep pushing more and more 'new regulations, best practices, etc' onto the teaching staff. There is no connection with what we can realistically do in a classroom with the time/curriculum we must teach."

Participant ID 393: "Political climate, lack of professional discretion and autonomy in the eyes of the public, lack of support and funding, not feeling the humanity in the system—"just a number," parents are always critical rather than supportive, too many diverse learning needs in too big a class size—pouring from an empty vessel."

Participant ID 449: "Because the scope of the work continues to increase, the complexity of the students continues to increase, the number of students continues to increase, and the public support, government support, board/division support and subsequent supports in schools continue to decrease. Teaching is like running on a treadmill toward problems that we aren't equipped, trained or expected solve—but those problems deeply impact student learning, and the best teachers will die trying to remove barriers to student learning."

Participant ID 2626: "Because the system doesn't allow me to help people the way they really need due to high work volumes and systemic issues."

Participant ID 2824: "I feel like every year I need to do more with less. I feel very stressed that I cannot reach every student as much as they need. I get overwhelmed with the sheer number of needs to be met and trapped in a system that cannot offer enough support. There are not enough resources to meet everyone's needs and I feel partly to blame because I just don't have the ability to be everything to everyone. I am burned out. With our current political climate, I have a lot of anxiety about how little of the work teachers do is really understood or valued. It is demotivating. I give my heart and soul to each of my kids, but it never seems to be enough."

The problem of work intensification (Apple 2004), which is the gradual increase of workload to unsustainable levels, is not a new concept. It clearly has not been addressed adequately in the educational sector. Participants explained:

Participant ID 111: "There are too many things to keep on top of. The expectations keep coming and when they are not done to the satisfaction of others it becomes more stress. Checking three

e-mail accounts and answering all questions and providing feedback has taken over my day. I went from being a passionate teacher, excited to try new lesson ideas, to now just scraping by. I do not feel supported by admin. The lack of standards across schools and districts makes following policies confusing. Being in a small old portable with black marks all over the ceiling for the last three years has left me with adult onset asthma and a chronic cough for two years. The hiring process to leave a school under poor management is very difficult, leaving me feeling stuck. Having to be a mental health specialist, teacher of all grades and abilities, entertaining, focused, tech savvy, and a pseudo parent for some students has me at my breaking point."

Participant ID 454: "Work load leads to little time to fill my cup and complexity of students continues to increase but there is little time/support for learning to support these students. Also, the process of applying for a new position each year and starting over is exhausting. After five years, I've decided to look for another career."

Participant ID 472: "The system expects a tremendous amount of accountability. I get bogged down in paperwork at times. I feel that the time to do the accountability takes away from planning, supporting and having my own work/life balance."

Participant ID 555: "I have been handed an assignment I knew was too much for me. I taught over 80 students in multiple different grade levels this year. My brain was constantly trying to catch up to what age I was dealing with and what information I was to teach them, let alone dealing with behaviour in various ways. I expressed it affected my mental health and despite that they handed me a similar assignment again for the following school year."

Participant ID 2623: "My workload is *very* high and it gets worse every year. I feel as though I cannot do a good job because I'm overworked."

Participant ID 2735: "Lack of resources, lack of help (EAs), feeling guilty to take days off, working all the time."

As would be expected from caregivers experiencing compassion fatigue, direct or indirect exposure to client trauma also emerged as a theme in coding. The participants described several incidents of both crisis and trauma work:

Participant ID 533: "I work in a low-income school where many students are faced with verbal/physical abuse. I feel traumatized through their experiences and lose sleep over their well-being. I worry about the days they have to spend at home with violent and often drug-addicted family members. I don't know if they are eating or being cared for. The school has limited funding for breakfast club and brown bag lunches, which can be taken advantage of by more well-off students. I feel disconnected to the staff since many cliques exist and my role is so versatile that I do not fit in. I don't feel heard and when I am, I am afraid to ask questions of administration. I am often pushed into roles that I don't have a lot of experience with and feel very stressed out and

overwhelmed when I am at home. I have some dependence issues which get worse close to parent–teacher interviews or report card time. I struggle to care for myself adequately (exercise/healthy foods)."

Participant ID 647: "It seems that, no matter what I do, I just cannot help those students who need it the most: abuse, neglect, hunger, parental refusal for much-needed mental health supports. I carry them home with me every night. I often feel inadequate and ineffectual. I stock my office, weekly, with food that is utilized by numerous students. I often feel like it is my responsibility to teach parents how to parent … I am not qualified to do that, but I do it regularly. I make many calls to Child Protection Services, and have discussed with my husband taking on students in my school as foster children because my heart can't take the thought of these kids going home to the lives they live. His response is no because he knows how hard it would be on me. He's right, but I feel like I should do more, but my hands are tied."

Participant ID 760: "My students' trauma weighs on me and affects my mental health. Memories and imagined scenarios of some past/current aggressive students have caused loss of sleep. I have been diagnosed with and am being treated for depression and anxiety, and find it often challenging to find time and energy to practise self-care after a full day of balancing the needs of others and helping students with emotional regulation. Regardless of what emotional state I am in, I feel it necessary to be positive and energetic for my students."

Participant ID 2636: "No matter what you do in this field, there is always more you could possibly do, but you are limited to services provided. I had a student this year that could not handle being in a classroom and beat up teachers on a regular basis, leaving bruises, and he was still allowed to come back. There is *no* support for students like him."

Participant ID 2676: "During this pandemic, there were two families from my class that were struggling for food. One single mom ended up getting COVID and stayed in the hospital for a month. We fed supper to this family for six weeks. I worried constantly about the children and I believe this may be the first time I have ever experienced compassion fatigue. It was mentally draining. I felt really burnt out."

Participant ID 2711: "I work in an affluent area of the city, yet I still have a couple of students whom I'm worrying about. In the past month I ended up contacting Child Protective Services twice about one particular student. Online learning has increased this to a certain extent as I now have difficulty staying in contact with these vulnerable students."

Participant ID 2819: "I work in a very diverse school with a lower socioeconomic student body. There is a lot of trauma to unpack and deal with for several of the students I am connected with."

Finally, a common concern was the disconnect felt between the caregivers and their clients or students because of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the pandemic was cited by several respondents

as a trigger for their compassion fatigue, many also reflected that the changes intensified their already diminished mental state.

Participant ID 630: "Perhaps because of the uncertainty of our current times and the amount of people I am trying to support. It's definitely impacting every facet of my life and my mental health. There are so many things beyond my control, and although rationally I know I should dismiss them, I'm constantly working out scenarios in my mind. It's exhausting!"

Participant ID 2567: "This period of COVID quarantine has prevented the satisfaction I get from observing and feeling progression in students' learning. This is what I consider the biggest reward emotionally from my job."

Participant ID 2614: "Remote emergency teaching while also parenting my own children has been exhausting. The group of students whom I worked with (low cog) was exhausting because I didn't feel that I was making a difference for them. They didn't retain information from day to day."

Participant ID 2644: "The expectations of next year. Being forced to provide both in-classroom and online learning of equal quality. Being forced to provide programming for home schooling children that I have never met."

EDUCATOR BURNOUT

The initial survey demonstrates that educational workers are experiencing the emotional and cognitive symptoms of burnout; however, few respondents suggested that they were depersonalizing their clients or students. When asked to select all the symptoms of burnout, the respondents expressed symptoms consistent with emotional and physical exhaustion, as well as a lack of accomplishment (Maslach and Jackson 1981; see Table 14). Because the respondents were asked to choose from a list of symptoms, the response count adds up to more than 100 per cent.

Table 14. Symptoms of Burnout

Value		Per Cent	Responses
Lack of energy		89.1%	1,792
Exhaustion		81.0%	1,629
Concentration problems		68.5%	1,378
Reduced initiative to complete work-related tasks		65.7%	1,322
Sleep disorders		54.3%	1,092
Reduced performance of work-related tasks		52.4%	1,053
Reduced imagination or creativity		51.6%	1,037
Memory problems		50.3%	1,012
Inability to make decisions		38.3%	770

Did not answer: 68   **Total: 2,011**

Of concern, of the 2,011 participant responses, 1,792 selected a "lack of energy" (89.1 per cent), 1,629 selected exhaustion (81.0 per cent), 1,378 respondents (68.5 per cent) chose "concentration problems" and 1,322 respondents (65.7 per cent) chose "reduced initiative to complete work-related tasks." Given that the outcomes of burnout include increased absence from work, physical illness and employee attrition (Salvagioni et al 2017), these percentages suggest that a large portion of survey respondents are at risk for negative mental and physical health outcomes as a result of ongoing work stress. The combination of the high level of compassion fatigue with high levels of employee burnout is a highly concerning finding of this survey data that needs to be addressed.

Some participants attributed their overall lack of energy and tiredness to the time of year that the survey was administered, suggesting that high levels of exhaustion are common at the end of the school year. This survey was administered early in the COVID-19 pandemic, providing a snapshot of burnout and compassion fatigue at that time. This response suggests that respondents have normalized the symptoms of burnout, attributing them to the time of year or the COVID-19 crisis rather than as a systemic or workplace problem to be solved.

> Participant ID 658: "Typical June burnout *plus* strain of emergency remote teaching *plus* parenting/teaching my own child (guilt over feeling I'm neglecting him)."

> Participant ID 672: "I think if we weren't in the middle of a global pandemic, doing emergency remote teaching, I would be in compassion satisfaction. This time has been really hard and draining and has taken away the parts of my job that I get the most satisfaction from, and added more of the 'bogged down by the system' that leads to fatigue."

Given this limitation that the findings might be related to the time of year, the second survey will be administered in the middle of the school year, which is January. There was also some suggestion that these symptoms were the result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the sudden switch to online learning. The midyear survey should provide more information about the scope of this problem, and key exploration of the stability and longevity of these findings could as well provide insights into educational worker resilience.
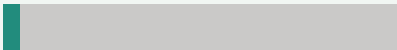
PREVENTION AND TREATMENT STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY RESPONDENTS

Despite compassion stress, compassion fatigue and burnout being classified as occupational hazards in other caring professions, overall this survey's responses indicate that these emotional and mental states are being primarily treated as an individual problem by educational workers.

The self-care prevention strategies are primarily individual interventions. Of 1,837 responses to the question *Which strategies or activities do you use to feel better?* 98.4 per cent listed self-directed strategies or individual interventions. These interventions included such activities as going to a

health club, walking the dog, taking a yoga class or trying to eat healthy foods. The second-highest form of self-care was organizationally directed interventions, which formed 11.7 per cent of responses and included accessing personal benefit plans for massage or other treatment options. Ten per cent of respondents used professional interventions (such as medications, family doctor or registered psychologist), 9.3 per cent cited community-based interventions (such as church) and 7.9 per cent used peer/supervisor-directed strategies (such as in-school mentorship programs) (see Table 15).

Table 15. Supports and Resources Accessed

Value		Per Cent	Responses
Online therapy services		24.1%	494
Phone help line		4.3%	89
Personal support network (friends, family)		86.4%	1,773
Active support network (gym, run club, yoga class)		61.2%	1,257
Employer benefits or assistance program		34.3%	704
Family physician		36.7%	754
Massage, chiropractic services or physiotherapy services		74.2%	1,524
None of these supports or resources		2.0%	41
Other—write in		12.8%	263

Did not answer: 8   **Total: 2,053**

Given the high number of survey respondents expressing STS, STSD and symptoms of burnout, a more concerted effort to connect educational workers with expanded prevention and treatment supports might be a necessary outcome of this research study. Because this is a social justice mixed-methods study (Creswell 2015), ignoring this call to action from the study participants would become a study limitation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The initial survey detailed in this phase one report suggests that the phenomena of emotional labour, compassion stress and compassion fatigue, and burnout are a concern within the educational sector. Phase two of this research project will include gaining a richer and more complete understanding of the occupational experiences of specific groups of educational workers, such as educational assistants, teachers, school administration, system leaders and support staff, through an analysis of the interview data. The interview data should provide a stronger sense of the nature of crisis and trauma work in school and other education field settings.

The next steps should also explore and define optimal and suboptimal work cultures to improve the mental and emotional state of educational caregivers; helpful educator philosophies and world views to assist educational workers with preventing STS and STSD and burnout; and ways to engage educational workers with developing self-care plans that include organizational and community supports in addition to individual interventions. Further, postsecondary education programs and educator support networks in Alberta should begin to incorporate more awareness of emotional and mental occupational hazards present within the educational sector to promote the health and wellness of educational workers.

The findings of the first phase of this study provide a strong foundation for continued research into the scope and lived experience of educational workers with compassion stress, compassion fatigue and burnout in Alberta. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the daily work of caregivers in schools, the subsequent phases of this study should provide not only more knowledge about the three phenomena, but plausible and easily integrated plans for relieving the mental health distress of educational workers in Alberta. As eloquently described by Participant ID 355,

"It's not always about the big events or students with big trauma. It's the day-to-day emptying of my bucket with no one there to fill it, decreasing understanding among administrators about this, as well as decreasing respect for teachers from the general public. When I actually get to teach and help, I love it. The guilt of not being able to do it all is exhausting."

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Figures

Figure 1

(Peters 2018, 473)

Figure 2

The Alberta
Teachers' Association

Compassion Fatigue, Emotional Labour and Educator Burnout: Research Study

PHASE 2 REPORT: ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEW DATA

The Alberta Teachers' Association

The Alberta Teachers' Association

Compassion Fatigue, Emotional Labour and Educator Burnout: Research Study

PHASE 2 REPORT: ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEW DATA

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Report Date: March 28, 2021

Contents

Preface

The emotional labour provided by teachers and others in the education sector is a source of compassion satisfaction but can also lead to compassion stress, compassion fatigue and burnout. In response to the limited research concerning the impact of emotional labour on teachers and others employed in Alberta's education sector, in January 2020 the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) partnered with the Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP) to establish a two-year research study on compassion fatigue, emotional labour and educator burnout, designed and guided with the expert assistance of a group of researchers from the University of Calgary.

This phase 2 report synthesizes lived experiences as described in interviews conducted with 52 education workers, including teachers, school leaders, learning leaders, educational assistants, school district office staff, school counsellors and support staff.

The researchers derived key themes arising from participants' experiences in the school system, particularly in situations of trauma and crisis. The insights gathered from this phase of the research study also point the way to a potential strategy for planning a response to the impact of emotional labour on educators.

The combined efforts of the research advisory committee have helped to anchor this study, as well as to provide critical guidance in the development of the research instruments. I wish to thank all the members for their participation and input:

- Carlyn Volume-Smith, PhD (Cochair), Strategic Advisor, ASEBP

- Lisa Everitt, EdD (Cochair), Executive Staff Officer, ATA

- Astrid Kendrick, EdD, Principal Researcher, University of Calgary

- Genevieve Blais, MEd, Executive Staff Officer, ATA

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Additionally, I wish to acknowledge and thank the members of the research team from the University of Calgary for their work in bringing further understanding as to how emotional labour affects education workers. The research team was led by Astrid Kendrick and included research assistants Kate Beamer, Jhonattan Bello, Emilie Maine, Rachel Pagaling and Beejal Parekh.

As well, special thanks are due to Astrid Kendrick, who analyzed and made sense of the data gathered by her team to author this report. The ATA's Document Production team, led by Joan Steinbrenner and including Kristina Lundberg, Joanne Maughn, Kim vanderHelm and Julie Woo, ensured that the report's presentation paid appropriate tribute to the impressive collective efforts that went into its creation.

Finally, I wish to recognize the 52 education workers who took the time to respond to the online survey in June and also offered their time and expertise through interviews with the University of Calgary researchers. Your willingness to share your personal experiences with respect to emotional labour, burnout and compassion fatigue is brave and will help the ATA, ASEBP, other education partners and, ultimately, your professional colleagues across the province to consider how the psychological well-being of education workers can be protected at both the individual and the system levels.

Dennis Theobald
Executive Secretary

Introduction: The Adults Are Not All Right

In January 2020, the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) partnered with the Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP) to explore compassion fatigue, emotional labour and burnout in education workers. This partnership led to the establishment of a two-year research study designed and guided by a group of researchers from the University of Calgary.

As the study's phase 1 report (ATA 2020) demonstrated, compassion fatigue and burnout among Alberta's education workers have reached alarming levels: 50 per cent of the survey respondents indicated that they were experiencing compassion fatigue, and 80 per cent indicated that they were suffering from one or more symptoms of burnout.

Intervention is required to effectively address these occupational hazards; however, additional information about the nature of compassion fatigue, emotional labour and burnout is needed in order to fully understand how they present in the field of education. To gain deeper insight into the lived human experiences of Alberta's education workers, phase 2 of the study employed a hermeneutic phenomenological research structure (Crotty 1998; Moules et al 2015).

This phase 2 report focuses on data gathered from qualitative interviews with education workers across Alberta. The interviews centred on the lived experiences of a variety of education workers with regard to crisis and trauma work, compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue, and burnout.

From the data analysis, eight main themes emerged, which helped to refine education workers' and researchers' understanding of the three phenomena studied in this project, and a potential solution for addressing these issues was proposed.

Methodology

Hermeneutic phenomenology is a research framework that focuses on understanding and describing lived human experiences as a phenomenon through written and oral language (Crotty 1998; Moules 2002).

Because education workers experience compassion fatigue and burnout through physical, emotional and spiritual symptoms, hermeneutic phenomenology allows data analysis to take an interpretivist stance (van Manen 2014) on these occupational health hazards. Rather than bracketing their experiences as separate from the research study's participants, the principal researcher, the 10-member advisory group (experts from the ATA and ASEBP), and the research assistants performed the data analysis from a subjective stance, recognizing and detailing how their own experiences and expertise influenced their understandings of the three phenomena being studied (Moules et al 2015). The ongoing discussions between this project's various stakeholders created the horizon of understanding (Heidegger 1996, 348) necessary to form a hermeneutic circle between the researcher, the participants and the phenomena themselves.

Further, regular discussions between the principal researcher; the two main advisors (Lisa Everitt, EdD, of the ATA and Carlyn Volume-Smith, PhD, of ASEBP); the advisory group; and the research assistants helped the principal researcher define the assumptions and foremeanings she herself held, allowing her to deeply and retrospectively investigate her own prejudices that may have influenced her reading of the data (Gadamer 1975).

DATA COLLECTION

Between the beginning of July and the end of September 2020, five research assistants held 52 individual interviews, via Zoom, with educational assistants (EAs), learning leaders, teachers, school administrators, school district office staff and leaders, and school counsellors. These interviews lasted 60 minutes and centred on questions related to crisis and trauma work in educational settings; high and low points in interviewees' careers; and interventions and training in compassion fatigue, compassion stress and burnout. (See Appendix A for the interview questions.)

Interview participants were recruited through the phase 1 survey, which ran June 1–30, 2020. At the survey's conclusion, volunteers provided their name, job role and e-mail address on a separate form. The call for participants resulted in 258 volunteers, whom the principal researcher sorted by job role, providing the resulting lists to the research assistants so that they could contact potential participants. Fortunately, these lists comprised more volunteers than necessary for each job role, so the research assistants chose participants randomly from the lists.

Once the sorted volunteer lists had been distributed to the research assistants, all survey respondents' contact information was permanently deleted from the principal researcher's computer and from the phase 1 survey data. The research assistants followed up with the volunteers and held interviews between July 1 and September 30, 2020. The interview participants were as follows:

- 10 learning leaders and guidance counsellors
- 12 school leaders (principals and assistant principals)
- 9 EAs and other support staff
- 4 system or organizational leaders
- 17 teachers

The research assistants transcribed the interviews using Trint software and then anonymized the interviews and assigned pseudonyms to the participants before submitting the transcripts to the principal researcher for final analysis. The principal researcher met with the research assistants individually to discuss their initial impressions and understandings of the interview data, which provided key insights and potential data codes for further analysis. During these discussions, the research assistants also disclosed participants' consistent physical responses during the interviews, since corporeal responses to a phenomenon are an important aspect of hermeneutic phenomenological data analysis (van Manen 2014).

DATA ANALYSIS

The data were analyzed using constant comparison thematic analysis (Creswell 2015) and NVivo 12 qualitative data analysis software to organize codes into nodes and subnodes. The data were coded manually between October 16 and November 26, 2020, without using autocoding or other software tools, since hermeneutic phenomenology requires research teams to carefully interpret all data (Moules et al 2015). NVivo 12 was used solely as a data organization tool, and its autocoding features were not used to create or sort any thematic data.

Because of the varying numbers of participants across various job roles, the analysis focused on general themes that emerged from all participants and did not relate to a specific job role. Future studies and analyses should seek to understand how these themes apply specifically to each job role.

The manual coding process resulted in eight distinct themes and one potential solution for addressing compassion stress, compassion fatigue and burnout in education workers. The themes were as follows:

- Crisis work performed in educational contexts
- Trauma work performed in educational contexts

- The role of emotional labour (deep acting and surface acting) in educational contexts
- The nature of compassion satisfaction among education workers
- The nature and symptoms of compassion fatigue among education workers
- The nature and symptoms of burnout among education workers
- Specific concerns for those education workers who lead others
- Training and professional development

The potential solution for addressing these matters was HEARTcare planning for education workers.

For each theme, several subthemes emerged. These subthemes helped develop a visual model for the phenomena of compassion satisfaction, compassion fatigue and burnout among education workers (see Figure 1). The model depicts an experience of the compassion continuum in relation to emotional labour and educator burnout. It is based on the findings of this study's phase 1 survey and phase 2 interviews. A draft of the model was presented on November 26, 2020, to the advisory group for validation. This presentation served to determine whether the model would ring true (Moules 2002) with experts' experiences in the field of education. Research assistant Jhonattan Bello used the draft visuals provided to him by the principal researcher to create an artistic rendering of the model.

FIGURE 1. Compassion continuum model for education workers

Crisis and Trauma Work in Educational Settings

As the phase 1 findings (ATA 2020) suggested, a stronger understanding of both crisis work and trauma work in educational settings was necessary to fully understand the phenomena of compassion fatigue and burnout.

CRISIS WORK

The interview data provided numerous examples of crisis work undertaken by education workers. Crisis work occurs when caregivers are directly involved in traumatic events with their clients (Beaton and Murphy 1995).

Of the 52 interview participants, 20 identified at least one example of crisis work from their career. In many cases, this crisis work was undertaken as part of education workers' regular job duties and was related to the children and youth under their care.

Participants' descriptions of crisis work varied, including examples such as assisting students who were bleeding as the result of schoolyard accidents, navigating fires and floods with students, and intervening during students' suicide attempts. In most cases, participants described events that seemed to be frozen in their memories and characterized those experiences as extreme low points in their careers.

Note: The interview excerpts throughout this report use pseudonyms (assigned by researchers or chosen by participants) to protect participants' anonymity and have been very lightly edited to reduce verbal tics.

> It was the first day of class, and one of our students had quit breathing, and I do what I'm trained to do. My buddy and I did have to do mouth-to-mouth on her. That's what we did. I was late to class. I didn't even have the sweat wiped off my brow. (North, teacher)

> I remember wanting to leave the field when I was a principal at an alternative school, because I was dealing with this parent who was not well. Let's just put it that way. And she was threatening our staff and threatening me and threatening everyone, and it just wasn't pleasant. I was a new principal, so I didn't necessarily have the experience that I have now. It's not that it wouldn't stress me now. It would still stress me, but I would be able to categorize it differently now. You know, it's not a personal attack so much as an attack on a system from someone who has some health and wellness challenges. We can contextualize it that way. It's easier. But I guess I could say at the time

it was scary because this person had brought a gun to a school a few years earlier. (Chris, school leader)

I was teaching Grade 2. I had a teacher's aide in my class, and I had five students, males that were seeing the psychologist, so it was quite a disruptive class. The class was trained that when one of the boys would throw a fit, the class would pack up their work materials and go sit in the hallway. Either myself or the teacher's aide would stay in the room with a disruptive child and try and calm them down. So that was a low. The young man was struggling so much. (Allen, teacher)

It was about a year and a half ago. I had a teacher come to me and say the student just disclosed that he is wanting to die by suicide, and it is my job to then kind of take that on and make sure that kid is OK. So I asked her to bring him to me, and we talked. It is my job to make sure that when the child goes home, that they will be safe.

So I go through a flow chart that my division has. . . . We go through every part of the chart and then determine whether I need to call the child's parents immediately or by the end of the day, or do I need to call an ambulance? Or, you know, it just depends on where we go within the flow chart [to determine] which people within my organization I need to call. This is the first time that I was responsible for doing the suicide risk protocol. . . . So it was my job to determine whether I felt that student was safe. After a few hours' worth of conversations, I did feel that he was safe and then sent him home. But I've never been trained in that as a teacher. That is not something that should be on my shoulders, but it certainly is. Since then, I have asked for training from my administrators, and they have not given it to me. They've always just said, "Follow the flow chart. Follow the flow chart," which is not OK when it comes to the life of a student.

That evening, I went out with friends, and we went to a movie. And at the end of the movie, there is a suicide, and it completely triggered me, and I had a panic attack. [*Participant starts crying.*] This is the first one I had ever had. It was horrible, and then I had to wait all weekend to know if he was OK and if he was going to come to school on Monday. (Rosaline, learning leader)

Similar to other front line essential workers, education workers find themselves responding to crises as part of their normal workday. Given that crisis work is linked to increased risk of compassion fatigue (Beaton and Murphy 1995) and burnout (Erbacher, Singer and Poland 2014; Maslach and Leiter 2016), better training and resources are needed to support education workers after they complete crisis work.

TRAUMA WORK

In the interviews, 37 participants described examples of trauma work they had provided during their careers. Trauma work involves supporting and listening to a client who has experienced a traumatic event and is processing that event (Goelitz 2013). In the case of education workers, *clients* can be

defined as the students under their care, the colleagues in their schools and offices, or the staff of leaders.

The participants shared many examples of providing trauma work to students, colleagues and employees as part of their usual workday. In some cases, they felt helpless in terms of having a positive impact on the person who was suffering, as the result of their lack of trauma support training or their inability to change the person's traumatic circumstances.

> We did have a teacher in my second year there who was getting close to retirement. I think she'd seen the system change drastically in her time teaching. She had a handful of students with moderate behaviour issues. She had a Grade 1 class, so still [the students were] trying to learn how to share and stay in their own space and do their own work and not get distracted, and still just learning social things, as well as trying to learn academics.

> And she was really, really, really struggling for the whole year because she had a handful of kids that just couldn't do it. There were a few times I found her in the hallway. I mean, her door was open. Her kids weren't unsupervised, but she was holding back tears because she just couldn't manage the classroom. She was an experienced, good teacher who I'd watched be very successful the year before. But this particular year, she just couldn't manage these kids. So I ended up, almost on a daily basis, taking one of them into the gym for 15 minutes to play basketball, just to burn off some steam, because he just could not sit still, or not even stay in the room and not disturb everyone. So I would just take him out to give her a break just for 15 minutes, just so she could talk to the rest of the class. And she actually retired that year. She was done. She couldn't do it anymore. I miss her. I'm sorry that her career ended on such a low note, because she was a wonderful teacher and a wonderful person, and I helped her as much as I could. (Bev, EA)

> Oh, goodness. I had a colleague who was in a terrible head-on collision with her bus, and that was pretty bad. Two people were killed in the other vehicle, and she was in a bus full of students. Pretty hard to see her go through that, you know. That could happen to anybody. (BlueRoan, support staff)

> We lost a Grade 1 student who was killed in a car accident. I was assistant principal, but I was doing some individual or small-group work with kids, and he was one of mine, so that was really hard. We lost one of our secretaries to cancer that same year. . . . And just this June, we lost another staff member. She was one of our support staff who were laid off, and she had a stroke at home and wasn't found until her husband got home. (Becky, school leader)

> I can actually speak about a student a couple of years ago that disclosed to me about some major physical abuse that was happening in his home. It was really bad. So I told him . . . when he disclosed to me that I am obligated legally to report what he told me to my administrators, and family services was called in. And there was a big follow-up. That poor child, what he went through. He had me in tears many times, just listening to what he was living with. (Charlotte, EA)

There's so many things that I could talk about. For this last year, . . . one of my students that I coached [in] volleyball actually died in a car accident, suddenly. That was a year ago, in May again. So just that trauma from my other volleyball girls that I coach—I had to support them in some capacity, and especially with [the] new volleyball season coming up and all that stuff. So that was trauma practically for our whole school, just because the student was so connected with everything. But, again, I don't think I took the time that I needed to just because . . . I felt compelled that I had to be there to support my students, especially those volleyball girls, for example. (Anna, teacher)

The type of trauma work most commonly cited by participants was ongoing and daily trauma work with multiple students, often occurring consecutively or even concurrently. For example, 20 participants cited the difficulties they encountered as they dealt with a single student who disclosed a traumatic event while simultaneously dealing with up to 40 other students who also needed their time and attention. Participants provided examples, including teachers providing intervention to suicidal students and then immediately having to instruct a full class of 30 students, EAs being called on to intervene with multiple students who were demonstrating behaviour concerns at different locations around their workplace, and school leaders having to shift from phone calls with exasperated parents to intervening with students in crisis.

I would definitely say that in my typical classroom of 35 students, 10 to 12 were dealing with varying issues, from parents getting divorced and that kind of struggle to being removed from home and working with social workers and that kind of stuff. So I would say that 10 to 12 in every classroom are dealing with something. (Betty, teacher)

There are three students that I taught when I was working in [a different province] who have been murdered. So that in and of itself is a big deal. You shouldn't have to count those sorts of things. "Oh, I actually know three students that were murdered." Those are not things that you want to have to do as an educator. (Laurie, school leader)

I've also had Syrian refugee students, and some of them turned out to be my absolute favourite students and super grateful to be here. But some of them have come from refugee camps, and they've never been to school before, or I had one student who actually had to fire a gun at someone charging at them with another weapon. So how do you do regular teaching with the group like that? (Johnsmith, teacher)

Kids would come to school with the whole bag, right? And sometimes I could see them being triggered by others. I guess one thing that stood out to me happened a week or two into the new school year, and I had just asked the kids to get a pencil. We were going to do a little bit of writing, and that triggered so many behaviours in the students. So I saw kids dropping pencils and falling out of their desks. I saw kids starting to fight among themselves. One child went under his desk

and started crying, and at the time, I thought, *Wow. There's some really deep issues going on for these kids.* (Nana, consultant)

Because of the population that we have at our school, I mean, trauma's just a given. That's just our daily work. Almost every student in our school has some sort of either their own trauma or intergenerational trauma from their families fleeing countries or residential schools. (Ren, counsellor)

The situation kind of reached a breaking point where, during a concert, the way that their child was choosing to participate was not up to the parents' standards. . . . Or maybe, with all of the kids together, it maybe seemed as if their child stuck out a little bit more compared to the others. And that really, I think, shook the parents up—but it was my fault. So I got put in a situation where I was supervising at the end, and they came to pick up their child, and in front of the remaining children in the classroom [and] other parents, one of the parents came right up into my face, looking down on me—someone extremely tall. And I can't even totally remember what was said. I just remember that my heart was beating in my chest. I was extremely anxious and embarrassed. (Araya, teacher)

I would say that the things that have really created the lowest points would be conflict with either other colleagues or with really difficult parents. I find that much tougher than dealing with difficult students. (Michele, school leader)

Another common source of trauma work for many of the interview participants was unrelated to students; instead, it involved dealing with other adults in education, including colleagues, staff, or the families of colleagues and staff. Twelve participants described providing trauma support to other adults in capacities that were unrelated to their job role, and seven participants described providing trauma work to adults as part of their job role.

One of our colleagues committed suicide, and so the entire staff was just—I felt like it was out of nowhere, just very shocking. And this colleague had children. So we are all sort of taken aback by the event. Simultaneously, there's just so much guilt, like we should have reached out. We should have known. I think that was very difficult. (Cam, teacher)

In terms of employees and staff, the most recent [COVID-19 pandemic] experience mirrored the floods here in [town]. And when the schools shut down this spring, it seemed it was eerily similar to shutting down schools during the flood, and the loss and the grief that people experienced, losing their houses or being displaced. I don't believe there was a loss of life. That doesn't mean it wasn't traumatic. So we had to work through that time, and we continue to work through it. We have employees who are afraid to come back to work at this point, whether it's for health reasons or because they're still in that reliving-trauma place. (Chris, school leader)

Well, I think we all have trauma in our lives, right? I can't really say that I've had trauma in my work role. I had a staff member whose husband died a few years ago, but he took his own life, and that was pretty traumatic for everybody in the board office. (Janis, system leader)

When I had just started as a secretary, my cosecretary's husband had a stroke, and she had to leave work very suddenly. I was quite connected with her, . . . and they didn't think that he was going to make it. So I was kind of her confidant with that one and helped her get through it, but it was very hard. (Jenny, support staff)

I mean, yes, but there's a caveat there, because my mom also died. So, I mean, when that happens, that's a part of our lives. But I would say the three months following that, I wasn't myself, so I wasn't able to respond or bounce back as quickly as I would. I was very depressed and, yeah, that's that for me. It was just like memory, kind of more being more agitated, you know, just not feeling supported, and feeling very isolated and alone, and like nobody cared. (Jo, counsellor)

I had someone who had been laid off, with budget cuts, come into my office and was just sharing some ideas. She really didn't say what it was she needed, but I think she just needed a friend for a while. . . . So we hung out for an hour. That's what she needed. She was going back to a situation which wasn't her first choice and wasn't quite ready to talk about it. (Amber, system leader)

When you're a principal, you walk into a building, and you inherit the group that's there, and you work with them and do the best you can. For me, the reason I do what I do and the reason I continue getting out of bed, even though I'm exhausted, is because I love the people in this building. I love them. So, for me, when they're suffering, it affects me profoundly, like I'm suffering. If someone comes to me and says, "This or that happened," and they're upset, I'll try to hold it together. But then the minute they leave, or the minute I get home, I'm the one who's falling in a mess. (Lindsay, school leader)

Understanding the nature of the crisis and trauma work that education workers provide offers a deeper understanding of the risk factors that can lead to stress or mental health problems. The phase 2 interview data clearly indicated that participants had engaged in both crisis work and trauma work, providing evidence that the preconditions for compassion stress and compassion fatigue exist in the field of education.

The Compassion Satisfaction–Compassion Fatigue Continuum

An interesting feature of education workers' lived experiences with compassion satisfaction, compassion stress and compassion fatigue is that workers can experience all three mental states in one school day. From class to class, colleague to colleague and student to student, they can experience both the pleasure of compassion satisfaction and the pain of compassion fatigue or burnout while providing their daily emotional labour and care work.

Participants described feeling a sense of compassion satisfaction at times—for example, when a lesson went well, when a high-needs student demonstrated learning progress or when the local community expressed gratitude for their hard work. However, within minutes of experiencing this satisfaction, a triggering event—such as a difficult student, a micromanaging supervisor or a disparaging comment from a government official—could result in symptoms of burnout, compassion stress or compassion fatigue.

Recognizing education workers' daily roller-coaster ride of emotional experiences is a key factor in assisting them with preventing, treating and recovering from compassion fatigue and burnout.

COMPASSION SATISFACTION: THE ENERGIZER

Working with children and youth is a double-edged sword, with both advantages and disadvantages for education workers, resulting in either increased work enjoyment or increased work-related stress.

In the interviews, it became evident that having clear connections to students and their achievements and progress was associated with the pleasure that participants gained from providing education care work. Other common factors that contributed to compassion satisfaction were gaining career experience, feeling a sense of the inherent benefit of their work and maintaining work–life boundaries.

Connections to Students

For 27 participants, their connections to students served as a protective factor against compassion stress and burnout, as well as an important motivator to remain in the education field. They identified guiding students' progress and achievements as their reason for returning to schools and educational centres every day.

I had a student when I was teaching in hospitals. She was there for a really, really long time. She was there for the entire school year, which is pretty rare. And, at the end, she actually passed three high school courses, which is a really big deal for her. And she wrote me . . . the most amazing card. We had such a good connection, and she was with me all day, every day, for the whole year. . . . She hadn't passed a course in years—from, like, junior high. So for her to actually get high school credit, she was really, really proud of herself. So that was pretty cool. (Betty, teacher)

The feedback from the kids is definitely a highlight. I had a couple of kids come to my house and bring me a Christmas card out of school once holidays were on last year, and that was pretty sweet, too. So the highlights are definitely responses from the kids. It's encouraging. It keeps you going. (Bev, EA)

Highlight? I don't know, just any time the little kids get on the bus, and they're so excited to be going to school. . . . And then seeing the older ones graduate. . . . I've had the daughter of a [former] student that I drove at the beginning of my career. Her daughter's riding [the bus] now. It's kind of cool. (BlueRoan, support staff)

The kids are what keeps me going. The connection with kids rejuvenates me and reminds me about why I do this. (Becky, school leader)

Career Experience

The second most common factor contributing to compassion satisfaction that participants identified was experience in the education field. Twenty-one participants described how they had gained the knowledge and confidence necessary to access effective supports and resources for their students as they had become more experienced in their role. They described feeling more competent in providing crisis and trauma work over time in their careers and wished that preservice teacher education had better prepared them for the work. For some participants, having to provide crisis and trauma work had motivated them to learn more so that they could react better to similar situations in the future.

One of the things that I need to do with my students . . . is sit and breathe and feel it, right? Because in a lot of spaces, in society and in our world, you're just not given the space to feel what's there. And I was being present with those students while they were just in pain or anger or whatever was coming up for them. . . . Right, and just hold the space—I had no idea of what that looked like 14 and 15 years ago. (Anne, learning leader)

I've gotten better at knowing what services to access for [kids in crisis] or those kinds of things. I have a better understanding of trauma itself and how that impacts kids, and . . . it's not that they're choosing to be bad, necessarily. . . . And the fact that they could do the [schoolwork] for you on Tuesday, and they can't today, doesn't mean they're choosing not to do it today. It means on Tuesday, all the stars lined up, and they had a breakfast, and Mom didn't yell at the door. So they

were able to hold it together for you on Tuesday. . . . At the beginning, I was trying to swim along on instinct. (Becky, school leader)

I wish I'd known as much in my first few years as I do now about ways to help kids, ways to keep them from losing it. (Carol, school leader)

And I'm kind of getting better. I'm just going to let go if I can't help with [a student's problems]. I think it's a thing that young teachers have to watch out for, not to become everybody's hero. (Coach, teacher)

If you had asked me this question five or ten years ago, I would have a completely different answer. But you learned that you can't do it all, and you can't carry it all. (Lauretta, learning leader)

It is important to note that although experience is a protective factor against compassion stress and compassion fatigue, it can also be a risk factor for depersonalization.

Inherent Good of the Work

The pleasure of doing educational work is an intrinsic reward, and 19 participants cited this pleasure as an element of their professional identity. They were attracted to the education field because of their positive world view and their sense that the work they provided was important either to students' successful completion of their education requirements or, on a wider scale, to the functioning of a civil and ordered society. This deep passion for the job can be described as heartwork (Kendrick 2018).

The work we did through the spring with this whole pandemic response thing—none of us are trained in this. Nobody in our system—no one across Canada—has lived through a pandemic, as far as I know, and the adjustment of in-class education to online education within a week . . . and the decisions, what we had to make thereafter to keep the system working, it was absolutely exhausting. Well, it was, but it's a highlight because I think we did it successfully. You know, from the beginning, our focus was on communication, internal and external, so that our staff knew what was going on, and our community knew what was going on with the information we had, . . . but rewarding in the sense that we made it through, and we got to June. (Chris, school leader)

So, basically, they had no money, and they had a short period of time to get their financial house in order, and we were given five years to do that. We accomplished it within two years, without huge sacrifices. But I feel like that's definitely a big highlight. Just implementing strong business and financial controls—that allows the school division to thrive and allows it to meet its mission, which is all about educating kids, and doing what is right for kids, and doing what is right for our staff, too. (Janis, system leader)

I just had to think about, you know, *I think the best way to support this person is to just help them feel understood*. I had time where I could sit with a student for a half an hour; I could sit with

them for lunch [and figure out], *How do I help this person feel supported, feel connected and feel confident enough to try [their schoolwork]?* As a counsellor, that's the perfect part of [the job]. Every school also has a different amount of control that they want to exert over the counsellor area. (Jo, counsellor)

[The schoolwide fundraising event] was a healing opportunity. It was the school's help to the community; it was helping the school's healing. For everybody involved, it felt like we were doing some good in the world. (Kim1, teacher/counsellor)

Being empathetic is . . . not necessarily part of my job role, but it's just part of being a good human being. (Lindsay, support staff)

Similar to the survey participants in phase 1, the interview participants in phase 2 discussed their roles in society as being essential, and they demonstrated pride in being part of the education system.

[Working in education] has some real pluses. I mean, I loved being the assistant principal and learning coach last year. I love mentoring other teachers. But, you know, I spent a year in kindergarten, and that was amazing. I just love being in the school setting. I'm excited to go to work pretty much every day. (Michele, school leader)

Work–Life Boundaries

Finally, the contributing factor to compassion satisfaction that participants most commonly cited was the development of firm physical and psychological boundaries between school and home. Given that a high proportion of the education workforce is female (Statistics Canada 2021) and that women bear a disproportionate amount of caring responsibilities at home (Brenan 2020; Donner 2020), participants noted that leaving crisis and trauma work at the school building or educational workplace was an incredibly important aspect of maintaining compassion satisfaction. Thirteen participants discussed strategies they used to keep their home and work lives separate.

That was the other thing that's been challenging the last six months. . . . I go to work, and I do work at work. And, then, when I come home, home is home. I don't overlap the two. Even if I have any marking to do, I go to the school to mark. If I have any prep to do, I go to the school to prep. I don't like doing it at home. In the last six months, I've ended up doing quite a bit from home. And I think that separation is really important in order to stay mentally healthy. (Beth, teacher)

When I first started in hospitals, I think I was pretty green. I think I was trying to save the world, and, you know, make sure that every kid was getting the best of me all the time. That's not feasible. I've definitely shifted now to [seeing that] I'm part of the web—I'm one person in the student's life, and I can help them when I'm there, but I am my own person, and I need to be healthy, and I need to be here for my children and my mom. My husband's mom is ill, so we need to be taking care of her. So there's a lot of other things, and my job is no longer my—I don't want to say "main

focus"—but it's no longer my driving force, because I have the rest of my life. Not to say that I don't care about my students and that I'm not there when I'm there, but I'm really trying to strike that work–life balance, and I think I'm doing better. (Betty, teacher)

I let my work phone die over the summer, and I didn't look at it at all. So that was good. It was a good way to set a boundary. (Melanie, school leader)

If you had a bad day at work, and you just go home, it just carries on from there if you don't go for a drive or something. My kids are all older now, but I noticed that if my kids did something that was similar to a student at school, that was really upsetting to me. . . . It wasn't fair to my kids, because they're nothing like that student. But it's like you had that day, and you're just like, "OK, I can't deal with this right now. Dealt with it all day long. I'm not going to do this at home." So it's not fair to the people that are at home. (Jenny, support staff)

Clear trends in the interview responses indicated that participants who felt more compassion satisfaction had learned from experience, felt capable when providing crisis and trauma work, considered their daily work worthwhile, and had created clear boundaries between their home and school lives. Creating more opportunities for education workers to reflect on the pleasure they gain from their daily work—their heartwork—appears to be an important aspect of preventing and treating compassion stress and compassion fatigue.

COMPASSION STRESS AND COMPASSION FATIGUE: THE DEFLATORS

Similar to compassion satisfaction, clear themes related to compassion stress and compassion fatigue emerged from the phase 2 interview data. Four main components specifically related to compassion stress and fatigue:

- The separation of personal and professional identity, or "putting the self in a box" (coded in 19 interviews)

- Taking on the trauma of other people (coded in 19 interviews) and difficulties with students who had experienced trauma (coded in 17 interviews)

- A sense of helplessness (coded in 17 interviews)

- A perceived lack of acknowledgement of the work's inherent good (coded in 15 interviews)

To a lesser extent, maladaptive boundary setting, emotional dysregulation, personal experience with trauma and avoidance trends (each coded in 8 interviews) also related to participants' experiences of compassion stress and compassion fatigue.

Putting the Self in a Box

A key adaptive response to crisis and trauma work reflected in the interviews was the psychological separation of the education workers' professional and personal identities. Several participants described compartmentalizing their work personas separately from their personal selves as a way to protect and guard their hearts against harm at work. This notion of putting oneself in a box is consistent with the idea of superficial acting when providing emotional labour; while this emotional labour is expected by educational organizations in order to maintain a safe and predictable environment for students, ongoing superficial acting has been associated with compassion fatigue (Koenig, Rodger and Specht 2018) and burnout (Bodenheimer and Shuster 2020).

> At work, I'm really good at compartmentalizing, I would say almost to a fault. It's not necessarily that healthy, because then I take more on at work because I'm like, "Oh, I'm fine at work," when, really, I'm not. (Betty, teacher)

> [I've become] a little more protective of me and a little less giving. (Bev, EA)

> I don't want to seem to be caring too much. They [school staff] don't want you to care anymore, to just do your job and get it over with. . . . I'm not sure what I'm saying. "Don't put any emotion or any of yourself into it. Just do [your job] like a robot and be done." (BlueRoan, support staff)

> We use the term "you need to white coat it," right? So if you go to the emergency room, and you've cut your hand, and you need stitches, and you go in, and the doctor starts running around saying, "Oh, that's the worst cut I've ever seen!," it doesn't give you any confidence. So we talk about how we need to just "white coat it" in those incidences [traumatic events]. We have to remain calm. We have to be the ones who have it together so that the kids feel safe, families feel safe, everybody else feels safe. And then afterwards, you can lose your shit. (Annabelle, school leader)

> I've definitely gotten better at compartmentalizing [memories of traumatic events] and saying, you know, that it was a long time ago, and I feel for their families, and . . . if I'm connected through social media, . . . I'll send a message just to say, "Hey, I'm thinking about you in your situation." I don't know if someone can give me the magic bean, so to speak, to not carry the stuff. (Laurie, school leader)

> It's like I'm physically distancing from work, you know? I choose to wear cloth aprons at work, partially because my job is quite messy, and it also gives me something that I can psychologically distance with. Like, at the end of the workday, the apron comes off, and it goes in my locker. So I don't know how much that helps, but I try to think about that when I'm taking it off. I just think, *It's done.* But, of course, none of that was really possible [during] COVID. (Cyndey, EA)

Further, this mental separation of the self into the professional educator and the authentic self appears to be a normalized aspect of being an education worker, and administrators reinforce this separation for early-career teachers as a necessary coping strategy. Participants discussed how

difficult their first years of teaching had been and how they had longed for additional supports, resources or mentorship.

> I got written up [after a traumatic event]. I was really upset about it. It just wasn't the right call. Like, they wouldn't even hear me out [about] what actually happened. I cried. I was so upset. And then, you know, the next day, I was out on supervision out front of the school, and I had to greet . . . the kid that spat in my face and called me [an offensive name]. (LaurenG, EA)

> The first contract that I had in a remote rural school district was very, very hard. It was probably the hardest time of my life, because I was just on my own. I had moved to this small town to take this job, and I didn't have a whole lot of support. I mean, people were kind, and they tried to do the best they could, but when you're a first-year teacher, the anxiety is real. And I remember thinking at the end of it, *I can't. I can't do this for the rest of my life.* So that was really tough because I guess I just felt ill-equipped. And I was trying to teach all these different subjects, you know. And even though the classes were small, the resources were limited, and the Wi-Fi wasn't good, and the photocopier was always shut down, and it just added to this feeling that the odds were stacked against you. And there were all these issues, like the students had some issues, the community had a few issues in terms of students who felt bullied, or they didn't feel like they fit in to that community, and there was really not a whole lot of alternatives for that. You can do the best you can, but there's so much that you can't control. And it's just kind of heartbreaking to watch when kids are being bullied or they really feel like they're not comfortable with who they are, and they don't really have anywhere to go. We really didn't have a dedicated school counsellor at that place. So . . . that was extra hard. There was an administrator also kind of doubling as a counsellor, and . . . everybody was doing the best they could. (Jane, teacher)

Taking on Other People's Trauma

Consistent with the academic literature, a key component of compassion fatigue among interview participants was taking on other people's trauma. As this study's phase 1 report discussed, for a person to experience secondary trauma, they have to have witnessed someone else's pain or suffering (ATA 2020). Further, and problematically, many participants discussed providing crisis or trauma work to children or youth. Given that a client's age is a high risk factor for traumatic secondary stress, it is unsurprising that education workers are deeply affected by their students' suffering.

Additionally, participants noted that students who had experienced trauma often had difficult behaviours, so participants had to work even harder in order to calm and manage the student with trauma while also teaching the rest of the class.

> I had one student a few years back who . . . was very, very angry, very disruptive, really had a poor regard for women. And I know that he had some issues. I also taught his older sister, so I knew that there were issues of substance abuse, domestic violence. . . . There was nothing we could do to get him diagnosed because, you know, the family was quite closed off. (Michele, school leader)

The way some of my students had to live, it was heartbreaking, and you could look around, and you knew that there were kids that were being abused in one way or another, and they'd never tell you. [One] girl disclosed only because I pushed. I knew something was wrong. And she's living with an aunt and uncle; she was from a different country. I knew something was up. Something was terribly wrong. . . . So I was setting her up with [the school counsellor], and they were talking, and he came running into the staff room, and he said, "I need you right now. She wants to talk, but it needs to be to you." So I went running in, and that's when she told me. And she's never gone back to that home.

I'd had to go over my statement with the police again, and I had to prepare myself to go into court. . . . Honestly, now when I look at it, in a lot of ways, I was retraumatized. Luckily, it was the principal that I currently have. And I said, "Well, you know, I have a stop for the afternoon, but I guess I should come back [to school] because I am not testifying now." She said, "No, just go home." And I'm actually kind of glad that she did that, because I went and I had a coffee and sat in a nice coffee shop downtown, which I never got to do, and then I went home early. And, yeah, it was probably just as well because [testifying about abuse] took a lot. It takes a lot. (Carol, school leader)

Having ongoing hostile student interactions in a classroom caused me an immense amount of stress. I didn't feel at ease in the classroom, and I didn't feel that we could create a sense of community where there was mutual trust and ability to learn. I felt constantly at odds with students trying to undermine my classroom management, get away with taunting their peers, testing me to see how I would react. I felt that any mistake I made would be taken advantage of to create disruptions, derail the class and create drama. So I spent huge amounts of time making sure every detail and scenario was thought through and accounted for so that the class would run smoothly. (Jane, teacher)

I had one student who was breaking up with his girlfriend, and I was in [the school], and he was trying to get her to go out [with him], and he ripped his skin off his arm to try to get her to go back with him. And then he since passed. . . . I've had a lot of students die of suicide or murder . . . , so those are very stressful. (Joanne, consultant)

There's one little guy who sticks out in particular. He was Grade 1. He had autism and was nonspeaking, like, didn't have very many words and had an extremely traumatic background. He was in the foster care system and had been exposed prenatally to substances. So there was a lot going on with him. He also had a twin brother with a similar diagnosis but [who] was verbal. And he was, the little guy, just extremely aggressive, because he himself had been so traumatized. So he was very physically aggressive towards his staff. And we spent a lot of time trying to help staff understand where his aggression was coming from and also mitigate the trauma that they were experiencing because he was so physical with them. (Ken, system leader)

A Sense of Helplessness

Interview participants also described a sense of helplessness, as the result of feeling untrained or unable to make a positive difference for students, as an additional symptom of compassion fatigue. They felt powerless to change their students' situations and improve their lives, or to connect students with required supports and resources. Several participants expressed concern about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their students, as well as their frustration with their inability to either teach or assist their students with educational progress in 2020.

Further, participants expressed their sense of helplessness with regard to changing larger social issues that affected their students, including the lack of adequate government funding for public education, the lack of access to mental health treatment and prevention programs for struggling and vulnerable students, the lack of parental support, and peer-on-peer bullying (both online and in the classroom).

> I think the most challenging piece [during the COVID-19 shutdown] was that providing supports did not feel genuine because of the distancing and because of all the barriers put in place, and we know that those families or those students and those teachers were struggling enormously. At times, it felt like you were just putting band-aids on things. (Amber, system leader)

> Working at the education centre and seeing the politics and seeing decision making and the lack of communication, and then how schools are just expected to pick up the pieces and make it work [in the face of budget cuts] was very, very enlightening to me. I've always been that person that makes everything work, which is why I think they asked me to do this job. Yet I don't feel as though, given the challenges that we had last year, there is any support from a district level. (Lindsay, school leader)

> The most frustrating part is when you know it's not you, but you have no power to move this situation forward, despite all of these avenues that you have to support you. Then you just have to make the decision that's best for you. (Charlene, school leader)

> In previous years, when student behaviours weren't addressed, and we kept wondering, "What can we do to address these behaviours?," we wouldn't come up with any solutions for six, eight, ten weeks, and you just realize—I look at these students and realize there is nothing to be done for this young man or woman right now. (Coach, teacher)

> Our savings are dwindling, and . . . I've always been able to find money, and I kind of have a reputation for that. "Janis will find the money." And I'm out of money. I can't find money anymore [*tears up*]. I'm going to cry. (Janis, system leader)

> But the kids of the parents aren't willing to take any support. And you know that this child could have a better chance and get the help he needs. But they don't want them to see the counsellor because they don't believe in that. You take that home because you think that that student is not getting the proper services he deserves to regulate in life in general. (Jenny, support staff)

Basically, our school budget is working on half of its operating budget from the year before, and the government has kind of hid in the news. . . . So, I mean, when we hear this news, and we're the front line people who are dealing with the kids who have the biggest problem, and we know everything is getting cut in half, and we won't have all the resources like we used to have, like money for grocery cards—we would have certain agencies [that] would give us gift cards for food. So we have kids who are homeless or sleeping on someone else's couch. We could give them 50 dollars because we knew they were going to starve. We don't have that anymore. So that's just one example of [how the cuts will make our jobs] stressful for us, because we don't feel like we can help as much. And then, when you can't feel like you can help, it's not satisfying. It's just stressful. (Lisa, counsellor)

I'm very much a "let's fix this, let's do it" kind of person. If there's a problem, I want to solve it. And a lot of times, trauma is not a thing that I can solve. So, often, I have a lot of helplessness around "I see you're in pain. I see you're suffering. I see there's this situation, and it's going horribly for you. I can't fix it." And that often can be quite frustrating and disheartening for me, because I want to be able to fix it. I want to be able to help. (Sara, school leader)

A Perceived Lack of Acknowledgement of the Work's Inherent Good

Many interview participants reflected on world view changes they had experienced while providing educational care work to students. They felt that they had begun their educational careers very hopefully and had expected to have a positive, long-term impact on their students. However, as other caregiving professionals commonly experience, the impact of dealing with students' trauma led to a sense among participants that neither the wider society nor their students valued their work, or that they were not able to influence the common good as they had expected.

I remember as a new teacher, when [then premier] Ralph Klein came in, when I first started as a special ed teacher in my little country school, I had seven ed assistants in the building, and there were two special ed teachers. It was amazing. The work we were doing to support every kid in the school was incredible. And then it was "We're rolling back your wages, and we're taking away all the money." And I was so dejected that I actually quit public education at that time and went and worked in private schools. . . . And, again, it just feels like education as a whole is not—public education is not seen as valuable, is not seen as worth investing in. (Anabelle, school leader)

We had such a difficult year in education as teachers, because we felt like we were constantly under fire from the government. So if it wasn't "We're going after your pension," it was "Oh, you better be careful, 'cause we're going to rip up that curriculum." Right? People were feeling battered down right from the start of the school year. So, yeah, I would say that COVID just put the icing on a really yucky cake. (Becky, school leader)

There doesn't seem to be an appreciation for teachers and principals, in my opinion. I feel it's getting worse in this province. I feel like, with this particular government, teachers are

being vilified, and they're not valued. And, you know, the cuts to education. But yet there is an expectation that we'll still do all of these things in the classroom. (Lindsay, school leader)

I shouldn't read the comments, but, you know, you read. The public just thinks that teachers, and those of us that work in the public sector, are just lazy and just want the public's money. And, you know, it's all this "taxpayer money" and "You should [feel] lucky you have a job," without really understanding the impact of what a teacher does or what somebody in my role does. (Janis, system leader)

I also have anxiety about the government cutbacks, and the lack of resources, and the fact that the students who needed the most are going to suffer the most because they're not going to have what they need. . . . Kids need to further their mental health. [Proper funding] is how they're getting food. It's how their struggles are being identified by the teachers and the EAs, and parents are struggling to support. Well, my God, if the parents can't do it, how the hell am I supposed to be able to do it? . . . I work with 50 [kids] every day because my partner teacher and I have a combined classroom. So 50 people are impacted by what I do every day. (Joy, teacher)

I don't think very many PD [opportunities] focus on enjoyment. . . . I think they're more worried that anything like that in our industry—especially because I think we all feel, as educators lately, with this government line of anti-educator sentiment, [that] the [negative] optics of anything that remotely looked like a wellness day, a spa day, would hit the news. They [leadership] would be so concerned that that would be an issue. (Lisa, counsellor)

I've given my heart, my soul, my blood, sweat and tears, and I'm only a number. Please, take what I give you [in this interview] so that nobody else goes through this shit. Get on them early. Teach them how to take care of themselves early. Because I guarantee you, . . . if you pass away, your job is going to be in the newspaper before your obituary will be. And if we don't learn to take care of ourselves first, there is no way—no way—we can take care of kids. (North, teacher)

I've lost faith in the system to be responsive, though. And that's the greatest challenge that I experience on a daily basis because, for me, my pedagogy revolves around creativity, and humour, and delving into the wonders that kids naturally have, and exploring those things. And every day, the government makes it harder and harder to do that with a good conscience or in good conscience. So I end up in this position not even necessarily of compassion fatigue but, like, a side interest of mine, and it's moral distress. (Oswald, teacher)

Participants suggested that, over time, they had become resigned to the belief that they could not help all the students in their care, so rather than trying to help everyone, they would help only students whom they thought they could influence. This change in perspective may be a form of depersonalization, which is a problematic outcome of both compassion stress and compassion fatigue, as well as burnout.

I definitely feel, at the end of it, I was so tempted to just kind of phone it in because . . . everything felt useless. Everything felt absolutely like it wasn't worth a damn. (Johnsmith, teacher)

But sometimes, if you've been hit with a lot of big things that are really taxing and complex, and then you don't get a break, and you get some smaller things coming in, I get desensitized. I can tell that I'm less patient, or I'm kind of wanting to defer [the student] until I can recentre myself. So I've noticed myself do that. But I wouldn't say that it's, in my case, gotten worse and worse over the 10 years. I would say there's been moments over the last 10 years where it's been too much all at once, and I've needed to try and—what's the word—control the pace? And you can't, right? You can't control the pace of what comes in a counselling door. (Lisa, counsellor)

The Collision of Compassion Fatigue and Burnout

Burnout is a long-term consequence of providing care work, and evidence of burnout was apparent in the interview data. The overwhelming reason for participants' burnout was work intensification (Apple 2004), which aligns with other studies on education workers and burnout (Iancu et al 2018; McCarthy et al 2016).

Work intensification results from a reduction in the number of supports and resources available for a job, requiring more labour from an employee. Eighteen participants referenced an increasing workload as a concern and as a reason for their physical, emotional and mental exhaustion. Several burnout symptoms were coded in the data, including physical exhaustion, feeling unappreciated, constant and high stress levels, and a lack of focus. Very few participants expressed that they had depersonalized the children and youth under their educational care; rather, participants were more likely to have worked themselves to exhaustion than to have depersonalized students.

WORK INTENSIFICATION

Research on the problem of increased workload for education workers has found substantial evidence of the negative consequences for both students (Class Size Matters 2016) and the adults who work with them (McCarthy et al 2016). Burnout has been strongly linked to work intensification (DuBois and Mistretta 2019).

In educational contexts, work intensification is characterized by increased numbers of students in a single classroom (Class Size Matters 2016), increased complexity of student needs as the result of underfunding inclusion (Hoglund, Klingle and Hosan 2015), and reduced numbers of support staff and other workers, leaving teachers and school leaders to take on additional administrative duties (Kendrick 2020). Participants referenced all of these situations.

> I was working and learning support. I had 150 students on my caseload. There were three of us that were learning support teachers in the high school that I worked in. So, out of a population of 900 students at that school, I had about a third of the cases. (Anne, teacher)

> You know, I'd be in the library for 45 minutes, and then I'd be required somewhere else, and then I'd get back. So it's hard to maintain focus when you're being pulled all over all day—you know, covering a coffee break, back in the library, covering the lunch break, back in the library, covering something, helping with lunchroom supervision, back in the library, covering another coffee

break, back in the library. So I have a lot of jumping between 20-minute chunks. They [school administrators] always have somewhere else I need to be at once. I ended up adding the nutrition position to that. It got exponentially worse, because no matter what room in the building I was in, somebody needed me to be somewhere else. So that's been tough. (Bev, EA)

I feel sometimes that we have been asked to do so many things—you know, to be a jack of all trades—that it becomes watered down. . . . The [local PD group] has evening sessions. So I'm required to stay at work late so that parents from all different schools and stuff can come and listen to some nurses from Alberta Health talk about your child and drugs and your relationship. And they're holding these things in our schools. And I get that. I work with children. But now I'm being asked to stay late when my own family doesn't get to see me. (Gabby, school leader)

Well, I forgot to mention, too, that our admin assistants were pulled. I have two admin assistants in the office. Because of the budget being clawed back in the spring, I lost that. I lost my support. So I didn't have anyone to do my paperwork. (Amber, school leader)

One of the things that I think that a lot of admin and district offices don't really recognize as being a valuable part of self-care for teachers is, on our PD days, to have at least half a day to work on what we need to work on. . . . I've definitely noticed, since I started teaching 20 years ago, that the workload is going up exponentially. What's expected of us is going up all the time. And a lot of times, it feels like the supports that are provided to us are decreasing at the same time. So we're always having to do more with less, which is stressful in itself. (Kathryn, teacher)

OTHER BURNOUT SYMPTOMS

In addition to work intensification, various other symptoms of burnout were evident in the interview data to varying extents. Notably, fourteen participants discussed feeling physical exhaustion as a result of their work in educational settings, and seven participants discussed feeling unappreciated and unacknowledged—two key symptoms of burnout (Maslach and Leiter 2016).

I don't know. It just feels like the tank is always so low right now that there's just not a lot to give to something else. I just don't have [energy] for the next other thing. (Aaron, school leader)

If I had to describe it as something physical, over time, it just felt like someone was just piling weights on my shoulder. And then, eventually, I just couldn't hold them up. Eventually, I was done, and I just could not take on anyone else's stuff. (Laurie, school leader)

I noticed that I was having really big headaches, and my jaws hurt because I started clenching my teeth during the day. At night, I was having a hard time falling asleep, or I would wake up in the middle of the night and be unable to fall back asleep. I stress ate, so I gained 30 pounds. Memory, for sure—I had to write everything down and check it off when it was done because, sometimes,

I couldn't even remember if I finished a task. The constant interruptions from my little people would make getting my work done very difficult and very stressful. (Rosaline, school leader)

When I'm in burnout, I'm exhausted. It becomes very difficult to get up in the morning. If it's a workday, it's about an hour process of convincing myself, "No, we're going to work today." . . . It becomes a struggle to manage my personal life when I'm in burnout, because I just really feel like I lack the energy to do the things that would take care of myself, to eat healthy and to get to the gym, which hasn't been an option. (Anne, teacher)

I always say that schools have to give you the Christmas break and the summer break and everything off, or else they'd have nobody that worked in a school, because it is so stressful— and the burnout is insane—that if you don't have that time to recharge, I don't think you'd have anybody doing this job, for sure. But, I mean, going into it this year—I'm not going back until next Monday, and I'm already tired. I don't even know how to explain that. But I'm already tired, anticipating what's to come. (Jenny, support staff)

Seven participants felt a lack of appreciation from either their school or the wider community. As the phase 1 report found, education workers view themselves as employees of society, not just of the local school board (ATA 2020). Thus, they can feel unacknowledged or unappreciated not only at the local level but also at the provincial and global levels.

But, every once in a while, you know what? You get disheartened. My sister is in the government, and she talks about her cost-of-living increase. And I think, *Whoa, wouldn't that be nice?* (Gabby, school leader)

When that work is not validated, or seen as important, or kids are not put first in decisions . . . especially around budget or whatever, that stuff just infuriates me. (Anabelle, school leader)

It's really hard for me to find the words, because I don't expect a pat on the back. But I do like being a teacher. I think we're really underappreciated, and I know the general public says, "You've got it so easy. What are you complaining about?" I can't see myself doing anything else. I love my job. I love teaching. I love being with kids, but I feel like I've taken on so much. What is my legacy going to be? I don't know. (Joy, teacher)

I don't do what I do for the pat on the back or [anything like] that. But, somewhere along the line, when you do mouth-to-mouth [resuscitation] to a kid, you'd think somewhere along the line, they'd send a positive note somewhere that says, "Hey, thank you." You know, "Thank you for doing this." (North, teacher)

I don't know the right word for it, because I just felt like I didn't matter and my work didn't matter. (LaurenG, EA)

Participants' interview responses demonstrate that education workers' lived experiences of burnout and compassion fatigue collide and that direct action is necessary to prevent the foreseeable consequences. Complicating factors within the profession—such as varying levels of professional training, the workplace culture and occupational heartbreak (Kendrick 2018)—can either intensify or ease education workers' mental health distress. Untreated mental health distress can lead to many problems, such as longer absences from work, in turn leading to higher system costs (De Lorenzo 2013); difficulties attracting new professionals to the field and keeping them in the field (Buchanan et al 2013); and a negative impact on the crucial student–teacher relationship (Spilt, Koomen and Thijs 2011).

Complicating Factors in the Field of Education

In addition to the symptoms of compassion stress, compassion fatigue and burnout, several factors unique to the education field must be addressed to understand how these phenomena affect education workers' occupational health. Complicating factors in the field include varying levels of training (preprofessional and professional), workplace culture norms and occupational heartbreak.

VARYING LEVELS OF TRAINING

Interview participants reported varying levels of training (preprofessional and professional) on compassion fatigue and burnout. Some had completed master's degrees in teacher well-being and mental health, and others had no training at all. Given that training in trauma and crisis work is a key aspect of preventing compassion fatigue (Figley 2002), education worker certification programs should provide consistent, targeted professional training on crisis and trauma work.

Alarmingly, several participants also noted that they had learned about these mental health conditions through self-study or single-day workshops, rather than through evidence-based instruction. To ensure that the best-understood information and practices are taught, reinforced and learned, health literacy requires training programs that are based on research evidence and that are taught repeatedly in both preservice and inservice professional development (PD) programs (Paakkari and Paakkari 2012).

> I'd never even heard of compassion fatigue until very, very recently, like, probably April of 2020. I didn't even know what it was. So I guess I was put into my position without really having that emotional training or awareness or something. (Bev, EA)

> [I've been] looking into things like yoga and meditation [on my own]. I don't know if that counts, but, yeah, stuff like that. . . . It would be nice if [the system] would have stuff like that available. (BlueRoan, support staff)

> I will admit that [sessions on compassion fatigue or wellness] are offered. It's just, the way the professional development is set up, you get to choose the sessions, sort of like teachers' convention. . . . I typically don't choose those sessions. I will usually lean towards the math ones or the ones that are very specific to content and pedagogy. (Cam, teacher)

> You know, we did a lot of work this year with the staff. Book studies, . . . one of them was Brené Brown. [Reading Brown's work] on vulnerability was a way to help people reduce some of the stress. (Amber, school leader)

Lots of PDs, lots of reading. The inclusive learning piece of my job really helps because we talk a lot about [wellness], and we have access to resources and things. The work of Dr Jody Carrington, . . . we had her at our school. (Becky, school leader)

I worked in and around disability support for seven years before working for the school system, and I did take quite a bit of training in [self-care and wellness]. They talked about compassion fatigue extensively. (Chance, EA)

We have been given mental health phone numbers. We have coverage for counsellors. They will e-mail that out if something happens within the division, like if you lose a student or a staff member has been lost or not. But for PD days, it's mostly on how we need to care for the trauma of the students, and it's all about, usually, caring for the students. I know that has been requested, to have compassion fatigue or mental health seminars on for us. And [current PD] doesn't touch base on that. (Jenny, support staff)

TOXIC WORKPLACE CULTURE

Workplace culture can be defined as the policies and procedures, both formal and informal, that define a human organization (Schermerhorn et al 2005). In educational settings, the school culture's influence is mainly defined with reference to creating safe and welcoming spaces for students (Alberta Health Services 2017), with less emphasis on the school culture's impact on teacher well-being.

During the phase 2 interviews, participants expressed how the school culture (whether positive or toxic) influenced teacher well-being as a confounding factor on individual teachers' ability to cope with and seek treatment for burnout or compassion fatigue. They identified a positive school culture as one that involved compassionate or responsive leadership, access to resources and supports to ensure students' learning progress, and collegial relationships between education workers and other adults.

I've had two very different experiences. I've had a very supportive world, and then I've had a very punitive [experience]—you feel like a child sometimes. That part for compassion fatigue, for burnout—if you don't feel like you're supported, it really, really leads more quickly to burnout than almost anything, because of that feeling of always having to explain yourself or not being believed or feeling like you're a criminal in some way if you don't do something right. Whereas, you know, if you have a leadership team that really understands that we all come to work and we all come to school with our baggage, including teachers and students, and that we're so much more than our productivity, and that you get the most out of people by forming those relationships, you know? By taking the time to really know people and care about them, you know? (Jo, counsellor)

I've made some personal choices in terms of what I've wanted to teach in the classroom, and how I wanted to engage with kids, and how much time I wanted to spend. And I've always had a really good relationship with my admin, who respected what I was asking for. We always have those annual fireside chats, and I'm fortunate enough that I was able to have my job, kind of like what my assignment was at schools, shift into things that really fitted where it was. (Beth, teacher)

That first acting principalship, it was only six months. But I was having a hard time because I wasn't sure that I wanted to go back to work [after my maternity leave], and my dad had passed away in the summer prior. So there was a lot of emotional stuff, but that school was a gift. You know, like some places you go and you just fit in? And, like, it's a puzzle piece, and you fit right in. . . . It was a wonderful place, people were great, and I felt like I belong. If it had not been, I don't know that I would have survived emotionally through the return-to-work process. (Melanie, school leader)

I teach leadership. So, to be honest, that's absolutely a part of my career that fires me up. I'll put on big school events where students really get a chance to shine. . . . So those are usually my highlights, when students that I don't directly teach but have been able to be invited into the leadership class get an opportunity to shine. (Anna, teacher)

Conversely, a toxic or negative work culture can compound or intensify mental health distress. The participants described unsupportive leadership, tense relationships with students or coworkers, a normalization of high workloads, and an overall sense of helplessness as characteristics of a toxic workplace. While a positive work culture acted as a protective factor against compassion fatigue and burnout for some participants, a toxic work culture made compassion fatigue and burnout feel more severe for other participants.

I think when you are—I don't want to use the word *stuck*—but you're stuck with one student, and he had a disability and wouldn't stay in the classroom. So we were in the sensory room for basically six weeks solid. And I was by myself and didn't seem like I had a lot of support, because the teacher had a responsibility for the other 20 students. I felt that I was babysitting [and] basically didn't feel like I had a lot of support through the admin. The odd time, the teacher would come up in her break, so she could give me a break. She never really got a break. So that was tough. Yeah, that was really tough until they put a program in place for this person. (Sue, EA)

I even talked to my principal. I said, "Listen. Can I have our youth liaison worker come hang out with us once a week and just talk through some of the stuff and get through it [student trauma]?" He's like, "He can see them outside of time, definitely put him—put those kids on his list. But you need to be teaching these kids. We can't take time away from the learning to make this [support for the traumatized student] happen," which I found really hard to swallow. (Aaron, school leader)

I would say that [during] my first four years with one particular principal—it's hard to be compassionate when there is no compassion. There you go. There was no compassion for staff.

There was no compassion for certain students, right? . . . Being new to the role, and being new to the school and even the division, it was really hard when I was putting in 12- and 13-hour days, and I'm driving home in the middle of the night, and I'm crying because I'm exhausted. (Gabby, school leader)

I feel very taken advantage of. I feel that there is a lot of guilt. We need to do this for the kids, so for us to put in a full day at work—I mean, when I was in that high school, if I had a full teaching block, I had 160 students, on average. And if I was teaching all science courses, timely returning feedback on assessment, coming home at 6:00, and then marking and planning till 11:00 PM was very normal. That was typical. . . . Our inability to balance is just perpetuated by the administration. (Sara, school leader)

It was three years in that kind of environment, where anything that I did was always under scrutiny. You know, I wasn't supported. I did some really big projects that were recognized at the board level by my higher-up bosses [and] my superintendents, and none of my administration team under that principal showed up. So after three years of working in that scenario, I quit teaching. I put it up for personal leave for half of the school year and ended up leaving, and I just didn't go back. My plan was that I was never going to teach again, because I really came to a place after that kind of harassment and that kind of neglect by my admin—it was one or the other on that continuum—that I thought I was a terrible teacher. . . . And that was when I found the board that I currently work for that restored my faith. (Anne, teacher)

I did have one administrator who did not understand [the importance of relationship building]. Her entire focus was "How do we get our numbers out? How do we get our results up? That's what I'm here to do." . . . So that precipitated a move for me, and it also traumatized me. It took a long time to get out of. She bullied me horribly. That's not the norm, but it does happen. So those are some tough times. (Carol, school leader)

I have noticed also that there has been a shift from support staff being general support in the school to being more relegated to dealing with disabled students almost exclusively. There have been fewer and fewer opportunities to assist in [work with the] general student body. . . . There's a lot of . . . compassion fatigue, or just the general stress of the job, I think, also stems with support staff being treated as kind of second-class workers in the school system, a lot of arrogance and condescension from teaching staff towards the support staff, even though some of us are highly specialized and trained. (Chance, support staff)

I am in a large school. So we have close to 400 students, K–6, and close to 50 staff. But, I guess, at the end of this last school year, there was a lot of discontent among our staff [amid the pandemic]. They felt like we weren't communicating as well to them as we should be. . . . The principal and I didn't know definite answers. There was a lot of conjecture because we didn't even know what scenario we were going to come back in. . . . So we felt like we were protecting our people by only

giving them things that we knew were for sure and things that we could give them that weren't just a guess that might change. . . . There was a lot of discontent and unrest. And that was very difficult. I ended the school year feeling very down and judged. (Becky, school leader)

OCCUPATIONAL HEARTBREAK

Finally, the concept of occupational heartbreak—which occurs when a strongly passionate person experiences a loss as the result of a change at work (Kendrick 2018)—also emerged as a confounding experience in the interview data.

Education workers, like other caregiving professionals, tend to enter their professions with honest intentions and a desire to make a difference in students' lives at the school or educational workplace. When presented with crisis work or trauma work, or when their efforts did not bring about the acknowledgement or success they had hoped for, interview participants felt a deep loss. Conversely, when their heartwork was rewarded with student success, participants were able to persevere through crisis or trauma work.

> I love my job. It's hard that I don't go to sleep sometimes, but I can't see myself doing anything else. (Johnsmith, teacher)

> I have always wanted to be a teacher. My grandma was a teacher. . . . So it was something that I've always wanted to do. (Beth, teacher)

> I think it's a lot about connecting who you become, because professional identity is wrapped around those experiences and how you dealt with them. So, in the end, I tended to view myself as fairly courageous. . . . But I think there's some level of success that comes with realizing that [even with] the tough cases and the situations you get placed in, you are able to cope with [them] and be helpful or supportive. (Amber, school leader)

> This isn't a job. It's a calling. I really feel like I cannot imagine myself doing anything else. When I was a kid, I used to have a little desk, and I would set up my stuffed animals, and I would erase my homework book and make my brother do it. . . . And I went down a different path at first, but ultimately, I was brought back to teaching, and I can't imagine doing anything else. But it's the hardest job I've ever done. (Joy, teacher)

> Well, it wasn't until the last year did I ever realize how much money I made. I never looked at a paycheque. It wasn't until I realized, *Oh, I'm turning 55 years. It's time I looked at my retirement.* I went, *I'm done. I'm done.* I've never done it for a paycheque. . . . You know, the boss asks you to work a little bit more. I've never once said, "Well, that's not within my contract"—shit, no—if it's in the best interest of students to just get it done. Right? (North, teacher)

I'm finally on a continuous contract, you know. Blood, sweat and tears poured into this thing. My greatest goal is to make the broadest and deepest positive impact in the most kids' lives that I can while I'm here, and as long as I do that, I feel like I've been successful. I'm not in it for the pension. I mean, I think that the pension ought to be there, but that's not why I do what I do. (Oswald, teacher)

Passion and heart play an important role in protecting education workers from compassion stress, compassion fatigue and burnout. Recognizing this, prevention and treatment should involve HEARTcare.

HEARTcare Planning: Occupational Heartbreak Prevention and Treatment

Given that the role of compassion stress and compassion fatigue in the education sector has emerged as a relatively new area of study, many resources developed in the literature have focused on other caregiving professions. Therefore, a key finding of this study is the necessity of developing a preventative care planning tool specifically designed for education caregivers.

As the phase 1 report discussed, several interventions are known to assist in preventing and treating compassion stress, compassion fatigue and burnout at the systemic, organizational, professional and individual levels (ATA 2020). Most interventions identified in both the initial survey and the interview data occurred at the individual level, with participants viewing their mental health as primarily a personal responsibility. However, in caregiving professions, collective well-being (Roy et al 2018) is equally important. The term *collective well-being* suggests that individuals are part of a group or organization that influences individuals' wellness, and vice versa. As Roy et al suggest, collective well-being is "dependent on individual well-being, but this association is bidirectional and the properties of the group also influence the individual" (p 1801).

Rather than discussing self-care alone, or individual interventions to promote wellness, the principal researcher of this study has proposed introducing educational caregivers to HEARTcare, a multidimensional framework for well-being that accounts for the unique needs of education workers (see Figure 2 and Appendix B).

HEARTcare is a framework for preventing and treating burnout, compassion stress and compassion fatigue among education workers. It involves the following levels:

- Sc<u>h</u>ool
- Syst<u>e</u>m
- Individu<u>a</u>l
- P<u>r</u>ofessional
- Educa<u>t</u>ion worker

The acronym HEART derives from the underlined letters.

FIGURE 2. HEARTcare planning visual

SCHOOL

Working in and around schools is a double-edged sword for education workers. On the one hand, a positive school culture acts as a protective factor against compassion fatigue and burnout, providing education workers with the necessary resources and supports to flourish and to develop the resilience required to be effective with students in schools. Schools have strong links to the local community, the province and Canada, and they are an essential part of the education system. They are the workplace centre for educators and students alike, and they play a crucial role in child and youth development.

The two most important components of a positive school culture that interview participants described were a supportive staff team (described by seventeen participants) and effective mentorship and supervision from administrators (described by eight participants).

A supportive school team involved friendly, collegial relationships between staff members. Participants described trusting relationships with colleagues in which they could discuss difficult daily troubles, vent their concerns and support each other with self-care strategies.

> I had very strong coworkers, and we learned to support each other and lean on each other professionally and personally. So when our personal lives went to shit, we were there for each other. At the end of a crappy day in school, we'd come together and support each other, and talk it out, and whatever. (Carol, school leader)

I usually just vent to somebody that I trust. That helps quite a bit. Also, you know, having collegial colleagues that you can talk to—it makes a big difference because they really get it. And, yeah, that helps to put things into perspective. I would say it helps almost all the time. So I guess I'm starting to realize now that, in those situations, I didn't have as tight of a group of people that I felt like I could just really talk to. Like, within the school, that's where you can really feel . . . so isolated. (Jane, teacher)

My two admin, my principal and vice-principal, are very strong advocates for mental health. So, over the last two years, we've brought in people from the ATA to talk about mental health and teaching, and we've done our own wellness days for the staff and [for] staff and students. So there is a whole atmosphere in the building that I'm in now for the last two years to make sure that you are taking care of yourself, right? Whereas, in other schools that I've worked at, a lot of times, it was lip service. . . . You'd have your admin or your district office talk about it, but you knew that support was maybe questionable. (Kathryn, teacher)

Participants also emphasized mentorship and supervision as strong indications of a positive school culture. They discussed the important role that mentors, usually school administrators, played in providing the time, space and other resources necessary to ensure that participants felt supported after providing crisis or trauma work.

I really like when my mentor—who I so admire, that I worked for as an assistant principal—when she said to me, "You have to stop solving people's problems. They just sometimes need someone to listen." I took that to heart, and I started looking at opportunities for me to develop skills in better coaching people to come to their own realizations of what the next steps and answers are for them personally. (Lindsay, school leader)

My time at [the school board district office] was, I would say, pretty special. I had an excellent principal. I think we made a good team. He had his strengths that were my weaknesses, and vice versa. So I think we made it. We made a good team. . . . It was his first principalship, and it was my first [assistant principalship]. . . . We got along really well, and the staff there were great. (Melanie, school leader)

I felt that I was very lucky because I had a very strong mentor [in my first year of teaching]. And she was able to give me perspective on some of these things that make you want to quit and that you don't want to come back to in September. [My mentor would say,] "But I will tell you that even if it's a different school, even if it's different grades, it's just not going to be as hard as this year. I promise you your second year is not going to be as hard as your first." So I felt like that made a big difference, and that's what I usually tell first-year teachers: "You need to find somebody who's going to be there, who is on your side and is going to remind you that there are some things that you cannot change, and you need to let that go." (Jane, teacher)

Managers at schools must understand the importance of a positive school culture and develop plans to ensure that their staff can find the support, resources and mentorship required to recover from mental health distress.

SYSTEM

Because education workers see themselves as working for the good of the wider society, they must feel appreciated and essential to their students and the community. Moreover, they benefit from understanding that public education is an important aspect of social justice and that they play a recognized role in reducing poverty and creating good future citizens.

Several interview participants discussed concerns about the lack of appreciation from their local and provincial governments, which added to their distress. These participants also worried that the stories of crisis and trauma they shared with the interviewers would not be taken seriously and that this research would be ignored.

> I'm actually really excited that you guys are doing this research. I think it's about time that it's been done. I love that. . . . You're really sharing it with the ATA, and I forget who else, but I read all of that, and I just think it's so important. There's lots wrong with our education system, right? Well, there's lots of good things, and there's so many ways that we could make it even better. So I just think that this research is so poignant and imperative. I love that it's being done and you guys are in the process of doing it. (Anne, teacher)

> Whether [this research] will actually make an impact and change—and I hope it does—because you hear that stat—and I guess I'm over the hump of it now—but, you know, [that stat about] within the first five years how many [teachers] are going to, sadly, leave for different reasons. And if there's a way through these different studies, or just even having conversations about it to make meaningful change, and to figure out ways to make it more manageable for everybody, then I'm definitely open to figuring out how I can help in that way. So I don't know if it's necessarily a suggestion but more just an appreciation for you doing this type of study and work and, you know, caring, really. (Araya, teacher)

> I think COVID is such an interesting time, and we really had to stop and slow down. I know the particular school division that I work with, a part of our day was dedicated to self-care and just slowing down. So I kind of hope that some of that gets carried over and that we, in education in general, can slow down a little bit and just be there for each other during those tricky times. I'll never forget the beginning of my bachelor of education program. I went to [university], and they sat [us] down in the auditorium and said, "Within five years, only 50 per cent of you will be here," . . . and just how stressful the job of teaching is. And I'd like to hope that many of these incredible teachers that I work with, and that I've seen over the years—I hope they can feel like they did a

great job and that people have a lot of respect and [are] grateful [for] the work that teachers do, especially in COVID, when it was kind of tricky. (Lauretta, school leader)

Students, teachers, EAs, school administrators and system leaders must all work to ensure that education workers are appreciated and respected at the system level. System-level interventions are a shared commitment, between the members of the education workforce and the community, to a brighter and better future.

INDIVIDUAL

Of all the interventions necessary to prevent and treat compassion stress, compassion fatigue and burnout, interview participants most commonly (35 participants) referenced individual self-care.

These education workers understood the importance of self-care and had tried to implement a variety of strategies, including daily exercise, mindfulness training, nutrition, sleep, and socializing with friends and family. The largest barrier to effectively implementing these strategies was a lack of time during the school day for education workers to take care of their own well-being. Participants described rushed lunches, packed schedules, and having too many students to take time to breathe and ensure that they could focus on their tasks, colleagues and students.

> I deal with a lot of my stress physically. So I play volleyball. I go running and stuff like that. So that's actually really helpful in terms of just decompressing. But I do feel that when I don't get a chance to decompress, it kind of builds up, and I come off [as] sarcastic to students or family members. (Anna, teacher)

> After work, if I had a long or emotionally costly day, even if I was having a great day and I felt good, . . . I usually head straight to the gym or do some kind of workout, something that gets my heart rate up so I can get some endorphins. . . . So something like that is usually one of my big go-tos, like moving my body with some level of intensity and then making sure I eat really nourishing food. Often, I plan my meals, especially during the school year. I've done all my cooking on Sunday, and so I'm just grabbing stuff. I may just grab one of those healthy meals, or I will choose something that is still healthy and nourishing but has a lot of taste so that I can enjoy those sensations. And that's where those mindfulness pieces come in, of just finding joy. I'm a big believer in baths [*laughs*]. (Anne1, school leader)

> In terms of coping strategies, I'm very much an introvert. So sitting by myself and reading a book or going for a run, those are the things that helped me to kind of de-stress. And I reflect and think about what was going on to process after the fact. (Betty, teacher)

> You know, it made me feel good when I'd have a little bit of a break. I dropped somebody off at a practice, and I would have an hour to go to the mall and just walk around by myself. (Carol, school leader)

Education workers appear to understand the need for and crave opportunities for self-care; however, they lack the time and space necessary for the activities they need in order to recharge. Identifying ways to encourage self-care throughout the school year is a necessary outcome of this study.

PROFESSIONAL

Professional interventions in HEARTcare include education workers meeting with a therapist, a family doctor or another trained professional caregiver to work through stress or distress.

Interview participants suggested that they experienced stigma around admitting that they needed help, and they also expressed a concern that their work benefits and other supports did not cover all the assistance they needed in order to feel healthy. Access to professional support, and a willingness to use this support, should be destigmatized so that education workers feel confident in seeking help. Accessing professional assistance is a private matter, and it should be treated with confidentiality, but seeking such help should be an option for education workers—especially if they have been diagnosed with compassion fatigue or severe burnout.

Eleven participants admitted to having sought professional support, and they also reflected on how such help was crucial to their ability to return to providing effective educational caregiving.

> You know, I think I found the right doctor to talk to. And she was wonderful, because I was kind of at the end of my rope there. (Janis, system leader)

> I have, in my recent past, because of everything at work, gone to therapy to help deal with what's happening. And I try and be more understanding of my students, and I try to listen more than speak, and I try to validate their experiences. And, even though I haven't had that experience or I don't see it that way, doesn't mean that they can't see it that way. So I'm just trying to make sure that I'm understanding, and I'm listening, and that they feel like they are heard. (RosalineD, school leader)

Interview participants' acts of seeking help for themselves often resulted in a sense of being a better and more empathetic education worker. Participants appeared to realize that by taking better care of themselves, they could take better care of the children and youth in their classrooms.

EDUCATION WORKER

The emotional labour provided by educators in schools differs distinctly from that provided in other caregiving professions. Education workers focus on building strong professional relationships with children and youth, thereby increasing their own risk of experiencing compassion stress or compassion fatigue when providing crisis or trauma work. These workers interact with many

children and youth throughout the day, increasing their own likelihood of providing crisis or trauma interventions, which results in a higher chance of secondary emotional trauma.

Education workers enter the education profession with a deep passion for positively influencing students, and many of these workers are eager to share their intellectual curiosity about a subject they have spent many years exploring. Providing the professional training that they require to ensure that they can recognize, prevent and treat compassion fatigue and burnout is a necessary aspect of ensuring that they can remain in the education workforce and avoid experiencing occupational heartbreak.

Kendrick (2018) defines *occupational heartbreak* as the experience of caring so deeply about one's profession that unexpected changes result in deep despair—essentially, the experience of one's job breaking one's heart. Developing a strong HEARTcare plan can provide education workers with the knowledge, supports and resources necessary before they provide crisis or trauma work in educational settings to ensure that they know what they must do to cultivate a sense of positive well-being.

Conclusion and Next Steps

This research study has demonstrated that education workers in Alberta experience compassion stress, compassion fatigue and burnout as a result of their work at or for schools. Because of the unique nature of education work, the final phase of this study will focus on developing a HEARTcare planning tool that can be easily accessed and implemented.

Appendix A: Interview Script

Adapted from Creswell (2015, 225).

Project: Compassion Fatigue, Emotional Labour and Educator Burnout Interviews

Subject: The experience of compassion fatigue, compassion satisfaction and emotional labour of people working in the field of education

Date of interview	_____	Time of interview	_____
Interviewer	_____	Interviewee	_____
Position of interviewee	_____	Pseudonym	_____

Pre-interview Script

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the lived experience of people working in the education sector with compassion fatigue, compassion satisfaction and emotional labour to understand the mental state of educational workers in Alberta, Canada. The final report will be a collective description of a plausible experience with these phenomena, not a detailed account of your own experiences.

You will be assigned (or may choose) a pseudonym to be associated with the data that you provide to me to protect your privacy. This interview should take about sixty (60) minutes. I have e-mailed a consent form to you, which you have signed. This form will be sent to Dr Astrid Kendrick, who will keep a copy of all the consent forms in an encrypted file on a password-protected thumb drive. This thumb drive will be kept for five years and then fully erased. To maintain your privacy, she will not look at the consent forms and your chosen pseudonym. The name assigned to you on the transcripts from this interview will be your pseudonym. The only identifying aspect will be your job role.

If you wish to drop out of the interview at any time, you are welcome to do so, and if you no longer wish to participate, you are free to drop out of the study at any time. When answering the questions, please keep the responses general—do not name specific people, places or organizations.

Should we get started?

Interview Questions (Teachers)

1. In the survey, did you have a higher level of compassion fatigue or compassion satisfaction related to your work role?

2. Tell me about your career as a teacher.

3. Can you describe a work experience that stands out as a highlight of your teaching career?

4. Can you describe a work experience that stands out to you as a low or difficult time when teaching?

5. *Trauma* is described as a person's ongoing and unmanaged stress response to a challenging or difficult life event. Describe a teaching experience you had with a student or colleague experiencing trauma.

6. Over your teaching career, do you feel that you have been teaching more or fewer students or colleagues impacted by trauma?

7. Do you feel, or have you ever felt, that the trauma of your students or colleagues has impacted your own mental state? Describe that experience.

8. Have you noticed any change in the way that you deal with students or colleagues who have experienced trauma over your teaching career?

9. When responding to the questions about burnout in the survey, did any of the symptoms stand out to you as becoming more intense for you over the past six months?

10. When you have an upsetting or difficult day at work, how do you manage your emotional response?

11. Self-care has been identified as a key element of the prevention of compassion fatigue, compassion stress and burnout. Have you had any professional development about any of these phenomena?

12. If PD were to be offered, how and when would you like to receive it?

13. Since completing the survey, have you had any insights that you would like to share with the research team?

Post-interview Script

Thank you so much for speaking to me today. I appreciated your openness to speak with me about your experiences in/at school. I would like to assure you that your responses will remain confidential and that I will provide an opportunity for follow-up discussion. Also, if you wish to read the transcript of this interview to provide additional information and ensure accuracy of your experiences, I can provide a copy to you before I send the transcript to the PI, Dr Astrid Kendrick. As noted earlier, the final report of this study will mirror and reflect your experiences, but it will not be a description of only your responses. The final write-up that will be shared with the ATA and ASEBP will reflect a collaborative view of the lived experiences of all the study participants and analysis of the survey data.

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If you are experiencing a change to your mental state, or if upon reflection of this interview today, you are concerned about your own mental or emotional well-being, here is a list of resources and supports that you can access through either the ATA or ASEBP.

The research team appreciates your time very much.

Appendix B: HEARTcare Model

HEART

H	E	A	R	T
School	**System**	**Individual**	**Professional**	**Educational Worker**
Workplace and relationship	Pedagogy, responsibility, and policy	Personal learning, self-care, and identity	Expert help	Community and unique work
Colleagues	ATA	Advocacy	ASEBP	Crisis work
Comprehensive school health	Equity	Family	Doctor	Government
Innovation	Innovation	Friends	Finance advisor	Parents
Leadership	Leadership	Implementation	Fitness coach	Recognition
Students	Policy	Mindfulness	Health service provider	Service
Trauma-informed	Priorities	Preparation	Massage	Social justice
Workplace culture	Reconciliation	Self-care	Medication	Trauma work
	Resources	Spirit/Religion	Nutritionist	
	School board		Therapist	
	Support			
	TPGP/TQS/LQS			

HEARTcare PLANNING

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The Alberta
Teachers' Association

Compassion Fatigue, Emotional Labour and Educator Burnout

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Preface

The professional standards set out for classroom teachers, school leaders and system leaders require that the certificated teachers occupying these roles be able to foster effective relationships. Consequently, there is clear expectation that these teachers will build caring relationships with the students they serve, the parents of the school community and their colleagues at work. Indeed, understanding the highly relational nature of teachers' work with students, colleagues and others and reflecting this in professional practice are essential for teachers' success and satisfaction in their role. This does, however, come at a price.

This two-year study, led by researchers from the University of Calgary, examined the relatively unexplored phenomenon of emotional labour and its impact on Alberta educators. The study, which was planned in early 2020 before the COVID-19 pandemic, was the the result of the partnership between the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) and the Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP). Two previously released reports on this study covered a literature review and an explanation of the findings from the first two phases of the research project.

This third and final report pulls together the findings from individual interviews and three online surveys. The educators who participated in this study included teachers, school leaders, learning leaders and educational assistants, as well as school district staff and system leaders. The broad range of participants provides us with rich insights into the various ways that emotional labour is provided by educators and allows us to identify factors that create occupational hazards for mental health. The data also provided evidence for the creation of the HEARTcare plan, a holistic and multipronged approach to the collective and individual psychological well-being of all who work in the education system.

The combined efforts of the research advisory committee have helped to anchor this study and to provide critical guidance in the development of the research instruments. I wish to thank all members below for their participation and input:

- Carlyn Volume-Smith, PhD (cochair), strategic advisor, ASEBP
- Lisa Everitt, EdD (cochair), Executive Staff Officer, ATA
- Astrid Kendrick, EdD, principal researcher, University of Calgary
- Genevieve Blais, MEd, Executive Staff Officer, ATA
- Heather Collier, BScN, Manager, Clinical and Early Intervention Services, ASEBP
- James Gerun, BEd, Executive Staff Officer, ATA

Finally, I wish to recognize the 5,428 educators who participated in the online surveys, including those who volunteered to be interviewed for this important study. I appreciate that in many cases the questions you were asked to address touched upon sensitive matters and called upon you, as participants, to demonstrate personal courage and integrity. Your candid insights about the relational nature of education work contribute to a better understanding of the cost of caring for the adults who work in the education system. The Association, ASEBP, other education partners and your colleagues across the province benefit and, consequently, our colleagues across the province will now be better equipped to plan for psychological well-being at both individual and system levels.

Dennis Theobald
Executive Secretary, Alberta Teachers' Association

Introduction

The *Compassion Fatigue, Emotional Labour and Educator Burnout* research study was a two-year exploration of the lived experience of education workers in Alberta regarding the causes and extent of emotional and mental distress associated with working in the education field; it also attempted to identify the signs and symptoms of emotional and mental distress as well as potential interventions to promote positive occupational health. Specifically, this study aimed to understand and investigate the causes and impact of burnout and compassion fatigue experienced by education workers. The sponsoring organizations were the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) and the Alberta School Employee Benefit Plan (ASEBP). The research study was designed and completed by a research team from the Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary.

This research study had three defined purposes:

1. To explore the scope of the relatively unknown phenomena of compassion fatigue and burnout in Alberta's education workers and to understand the role that providing emotional labour might play in building or diminishing their occupational health

2. To uncover and explain the lived experience of education workers who are experiencing compassion fatigue and burnout

3. To determine possible ways to prevent these forms of occupational health distress or treat education workers who experience them

The main questions for research were as follows:

1. What is the scope of compassion fatigue and burnout in education workers?

2. What is the lived experience of education workers with compassion fatigue and burnout, and how does the provision of emotional labour influence this experience?

3. What can be done to assist education workers with a return to positive occupational health?

Study and Methodology Summary

The research team followed a mixed methods methodology to provide the best insights into the phenomena of educator compassion fatigue and burnout. Quantitative research methods, namely survey, were used to measure the scope of the phenomena in education workers, and qualitative interviews and open-ended survey questions were employed to understand the lived experience of education workers with the phenomena.

Quantitative data were gathered through the administration of three online surveys. These surveys were created using validated tools to ensure that the results were reliable. The ProQOL (Version 5) assessment tool was embedded into the survey to measure compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue at the population level of a group of people (Stamm 2010, 2012). The Maslach and Jackson assessment survey (1981) was modified to determine the main signs and symptoms of burnout in the respondent pool. In order to understand the emotional feeling rules (Hochschild 2012) of the education profession, a question regarding the acceptable and unacceptable expression of emotions was included as well.

The three surveys were administered separately using the Survey Alchemer platform to collect and store the anonymized data. The first survey was available online for three weeks in June 2020 and participants were recruited via the ATA and ASEBP social media platforms (Twitter and Facebook) and the home pages of the funding organizations' websites. The first survey was fully completed by 2,061 participants and partially completed by 749 participants.

In January 2021, an identical survey was released for data collection, but with two notable changes to the survey distribution and questions. The first adjustment was to the method used to recruit survey participants. As was done to recruit participants for the June 2020 survey, one link to the survey was made available online to anyone accessing the websites of the ATA or the ASEBP. This survey was fully completed by 1,105 participants and partially completed by 458 participants. A second survey link was sent to a random stratified sample of teachers and school administrators from the Alberta Teachers' Association database of volunteer participants. This survey was fully completed by 798 participants and partially completed by 257 participants. In sum, 5,428 participants either fully or partially completed the survey, with an average survey completion rate of 73 per cent across all three surveys (see Table 1). This robust response indicates that the survey findings were reliable and stable across different times in the school year and with responses from a large participant pool.

Table 1: Survey Demographic Information

	Aggregate Data	Complete	Partial	Total
Survey Completion Rate	73%	3,964	1,464	5,428*
*Totals of each section for demographics may not add up to 5,428 as both complete and partial responses are included and no demographic categories required a mandatory answer to proceed.				

Years of Service	Percentage of Respondents	Total Count
0–5	21.0	1,057
6–10	21.5	1,082
11–15	19.4	973
16–20	15.4	776
21+	22.6	1,137
Geographic Area		
Rural	25.1	1,258
Urban	74.9	3,757
Nearest Urban Centre		
Calgary	26.2	1,319
Edmonton	39.2	1,969
Red Deer	8.9	449
Lethbridge	7.5	378
Medicine Hat	5.2	261
Grande Prairie	4.8	242
Cold Lake	1.9	95
Fort McMurray	1.3	65
High Level	1.1	53
Jasper	0.5	25
Lloydminster	0.9	44
None listed	2.5	125
Gender Identity		
Male	13.7	686
Female	85.4	4,290
Transgender	0.1	4
Prefer Not to Answer	0.7	36
Not Listed	0.2	9

The second adjustment to the January 2021 surveys was the inclusion of three additional indicators of burnout in education workers that emerged from the analysis of the qualitative data. Specifically, the three indicators were related to the Maslach and Jackson indicator of depersonalization, which was not well understood when the June 2020 survey was created. The three additional indicators of burnout were as follows: a reduced desire to help students, a reduced desire to help colleagues or other staff, and apathy or lack of commitment to work. The reported data on these three indicators reflect only the second surveys (January 2021), or 2,618 respondents. No other changes were made to the survey questions to keep the results consistent, valid and reliable (Creswell 2015).

The intent of the survey data was to understand the scope of compassion fatigue and burnout in education workers, to validate the organizational feeling rules (Hochschild 2012) associated with emotional labour in educational settings (Kendrick 2018) and to gain knowledge about the interventions used by education workers to prevent or treat their mental and emotional health distress. The findings from the January 2021 surveys mirrored very closely the findings from the June 2020 survey, providing a trustworthy validation (Creswell 2015) of the findings from the *Phase One Report* (Alberta Teachers' Association [ATA] and Kendrick 2020).

Qualitative data were collected through 53 individual interviews held between June and September 2020. The interview participants were selected from a pool of 232 volunteers whose information was provided upon completion of the June 2020 survey. The volunteers were sorted by job role, and these lists were provided by the principal researcher to five research assistants. The research assistants each selected ten volunteers to contact for individual interviews. Upon the completion of the interviews, the research assistants used online software, Trint, to transcribe the interviews. Interview transcripts were anonymized, removing all references that might identify the participant, including details such as names and geographic location. Data were analyzed by the principal researcher using constant comparison thematic analysis (Creswell 2015; Miles, Huberman and Saldaña 2014) and the emergent codes and themes were validated through discussions with the research assistants and the research study advisory council.

The intent of the interviews was as follows: to discover the nature of crisis and trauma work provided by education workers; to understand the signs and symptoms of compassion stress, compassion fatigue and burnout in education workers; and to investigate ways to prevent or treat these forms of occupational health distress. The *Phase Two Report* (ATA and Kendrick 2021) details all the findings from the qualitative data.

Key Findings

The five key findings from this foundational two-year study emerged from the analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative data.

Education workers provide emotional labour as a normal part of their work description, as they work to provide a safe and caring school and classroom environment for children and youth. Providing emotional labour forms the basis for building valued professional and pedagogical relationships with students, leaders and colleagues.

1. Education workers regularly do crisis work and trauma work when working with students, colleagues and staff, but they are given very limited training and are unprepared to deal with the emotional aftermath of providing assistance to students suffering through traumatic events.

2. The data revealed significant and concerning evidence of mental and emotional distress across all educational work roles, with the highest levels of stress and distress felt by education workers who work primarily with children and youth.

3. Analysis of the data formed the basis for the Conceptual Model for the Compassion Continuum in Educational Settings, a theoretical description of the experience of compassion in the education field.

4. A comprehensive intervention is required to help prevent mental and emotional distress among education workers who provide crisis and trauma work, and to treat them when it occurs. The data were used to develop a conceptual framework for HEARTcare planning, a comprehensive, holistic model for identifying the sources of occupational mental and emotional distress in education workers and the possible actions that can be taken to restore a state of occupational health.

Because the data from the June 2020 survey and the individual interviews have been fully explicated in the *Phase One Report* (ATA and Kendrick 2020) and *Phase Two Report* (ATA and Kendrick 2021), the illustrative qualitative responses in this report came from the January 2021 survey data.

KEY FINDING #1: IMPACT OF PROVIDING EMOTIONAL LABOUR

Education workers provide emotional labour as a regular part of their daily work to develop and maintain a calm and safe classroom and school environment for students. *Emotional labour* is the act of constraining and expressing one's emotions to maintain a sense of care and calm while also adhering to the expected organizational feeling rules of the work environment (Hartley 2018; Hochschild 2012). It is demonstrating care when a person may not feel caring, or staying calm and neutral while inwardly fuming or feeling anguish or unappreciated (Ward and McMurray 2016).

The survey data demonstrated consistent organizational feeling rules for education workers. They felt that the emotions of joy, energy/excitement and empathy were expected at work and that sadness, anger and frustration should be repressed.

Figure 1. Aggregate Survey Data: Emotions to Express at Work*

Value		Per Cent	Responses
Happy, joy, cheerful		86.1	3,250
Energetic, excitement		27.8	1,050
Empathetic, empathy, concern, compassion		19.3	730
Frustrated		18.7	706
Calm, serious		13.0	492
Sad		8.8	332
Enthusiastic, enthusiasm, eager, engaged		8.7	327
Positive, optimistic		8.3	314
Content		4.6	174
Patient		4.1	155
Care, caring		3.5	134

Total: 3,375

*Respondents were asked to identify three emotions they felt confident expressing at work.

Figure 2. Aggregate Survey Data: Emotions to Repress at Work**

Value		Per Cent	Responses
Sadness, depression		53.8	1,452
Anger		52.3	1,411
Frustration		39.7	1,072
Anxiety, worry, hopelessness		28.0	757
Fear		16.2	438
Stress		13.8	372
Overwhelmed		10.2	276
Shame, guilt		2.6	69
Grief		2.4	64
Loneliness		1.9	51
Rage		1.1	29

Total: 2,699
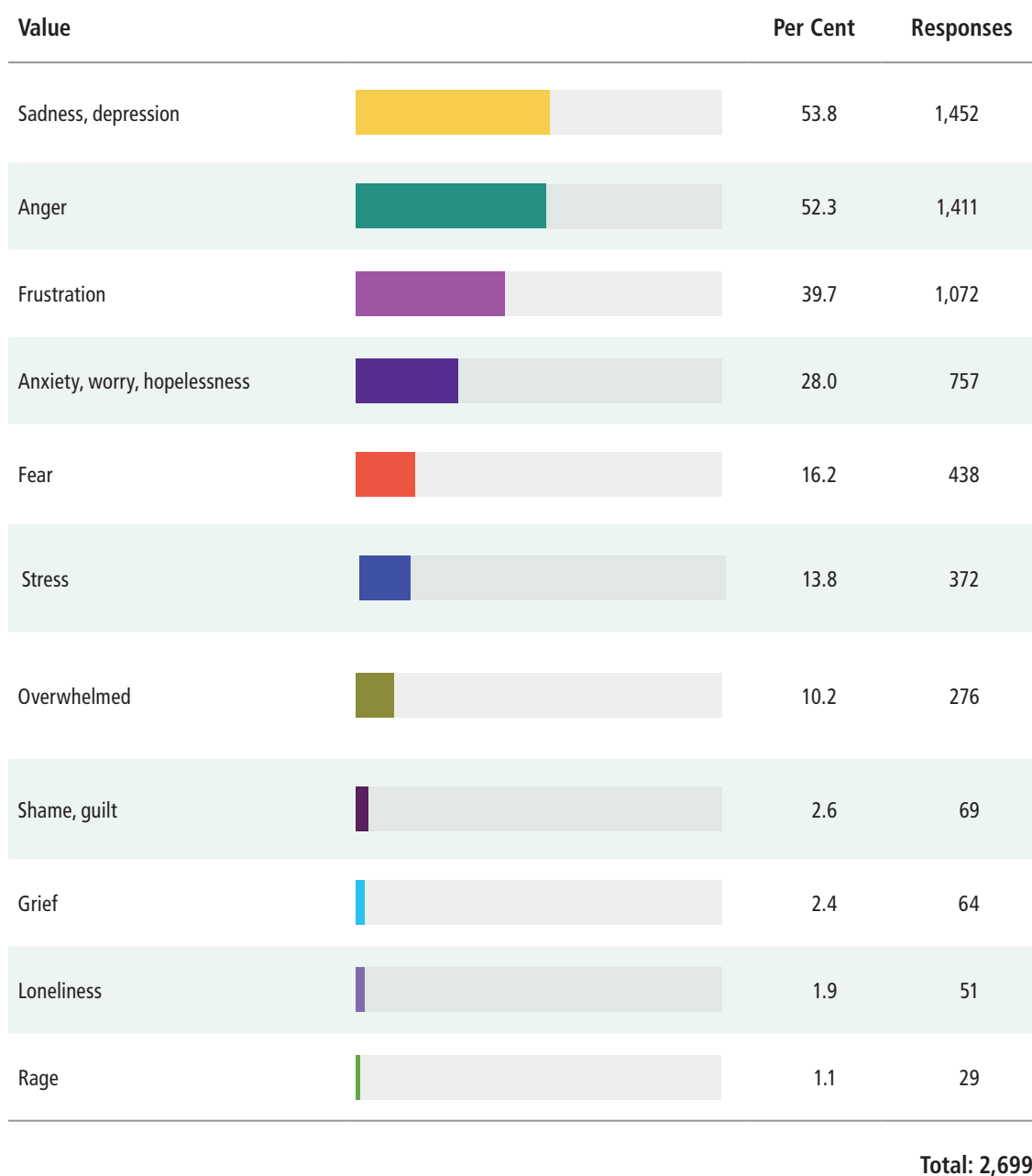
**Respondents were asked to identify three emotions they hid from other people at work.

The qualitative responses provided further insight into the nature of the expression and repression of certain emotions at work. In many cases, the organizational feeling rules (Hochschild 2012) were linked to the respondents' description of the ideal education worker, described by a survey respondent as follows:

> Someone who comes to work to do their job and goes above and beyond to do that. Supports others, genuinely cares for all students, not just their assigned students. Helps collaborate and shares resources with colleagues. Supports students' needs in all areas, not just academic. (Survey response)

While providing emotional labour is foundational to working in the education field, only 53.3 per cent of the survey respondents had heard of the concept. Understanding both the positive and negative aspects of emotional labour can help individuals first to identify the emotional feeling rules at their workplace and then to express these emotions appropriately. Given that repressed emotions can find a way to leak or erupt out of a worker (Ward and McMurray 2016) or can harm relationships (Hartley 2018), education workers would benefit from learning about the phenomenon and how it impacts their daily work.

> I feel that the emotional labour I do for my students interferes with my emotional availability for my family/personal life. (Survey response)

KEY FINDING #2: CRISIS AND TRAUMA WORK IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

Education workers provide both crisis and trauma work, with many examples listed in the *Phase Two Report* (ATA and Kendrick 2021). *Crisis work* refers to working through a traumatic event with students or colleagues as a part of one's work, and *trauma work* refers to counselling or listening to a student or colleague who recounts a traumatic event (Figley 1995; Valent 1995).

Education workers, apart from school counsellors or support staff with specific training, are rarely trained during their formal education about crisis or trauma work or how to recover emotionally and mentally after providing those types of work. The survey and interview data suggested that the majority of respondents and participants did not have preprofessional training or professional development to assist them with doing crisis and trauma work, yet all of the interview participants could identify times in their career when they performed either or both types of labour (ATA and Kendrick 2021). The survey respondents also reflected on the crisis and trauma work they provided.

> I often feel overwhelmed by the various emotional, behavioural and academic needs of my students, and I feel pressure to address them all, even with limited support. When I can't effectively address my students' needs, I feel guilt and shame that I've failed, and I feel angry at the system for expecting teachers to manage so much and do so much with

so little support. I feel conflicted when working with students who I know have or are experiencing trauma, as my instinct is to prioritize their mental health and well-being, but I also feel pressure from admin and the system to push academics when it feels like the focus should be on supporting the child's mental health. (Survey response)

Regrettably, most school settings have experienced a lack of supports and resources to assist students with achieving positive mental health (Mental Health Commission of Canada 2013). In the absence of other professionals, such as mental health assistants or school psychologists, education workers have reluctantly taken on the role of nurse, social worker, therapist or psychiatrist without having the adequate education to do this work properly. They provide key interventions for children and youth without adequate training and have very little access to the necessary supports or resources that they need to emotionally recover after doing this work. Several participants identified this lack of training and emotional recovery support as one reason for the high levels of compassion stress, burnout and compassion fatigue.

I feel as though I am supposed to be a beacon of light to these kids. The way we are spoken about is as if we are on a pedestal and I need to live up to that role. Most years I love helping kids through tough times, but this year I feel that I don't have the capacity to do much more than just teach. We all know teaching is a career where you're expected to wear many hats. This year I fear that I can only wear a few at a time in order to survive. I am burnt out and can't really deal with anything outside of the norm these days. (Survey response)

KEY FINDING #3: SIGNIFICANT EVIDENCE OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH DISTRESS

The aggregate data from the survey showed that 54.3 per cent of the respondents (Figure 3) fell into the compassion stress and compassion fatigue range, and that 90 per cent had experienced at least one symptom of burnout (Figure 4). These forms of mental health distress can have enormous and negative repercussions for the children, youth and other adults in the education system.

Figure 3. Aggregate Survey Results for Compassion Fatigue

45.7% Compassion Satisfaction

54.3% Compassion Fatigue
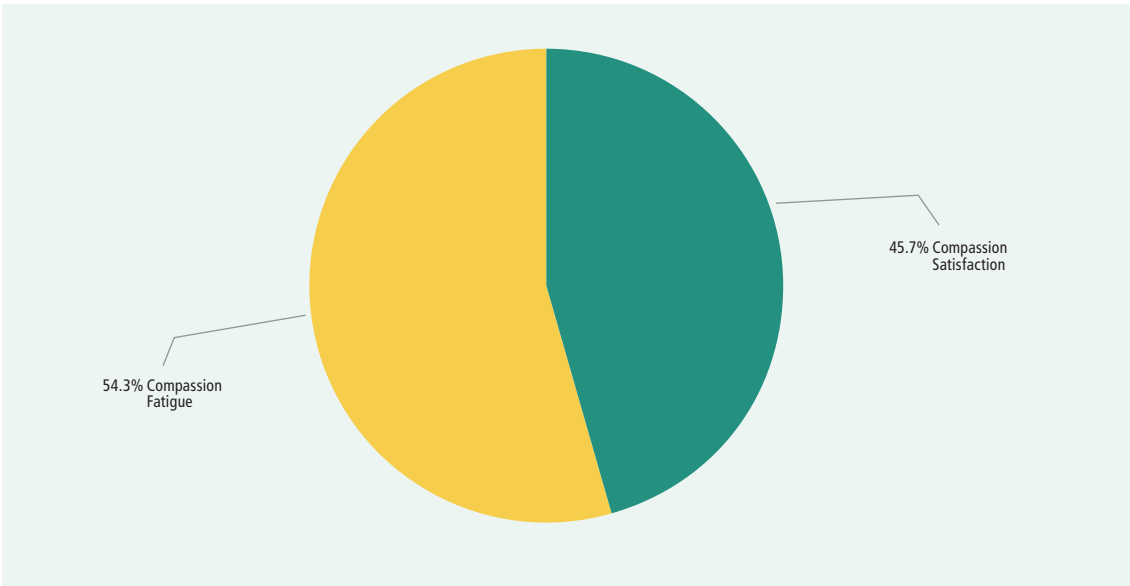
Value		Per Cent	Responses
Compassion Satisfaction		45.7	1,851
Compassion Fatigue		54.3	2,198

Total: 4,049

Figure 4. Aggregate Survey Results for Burnout

Emotions Comfortable to Express at Work
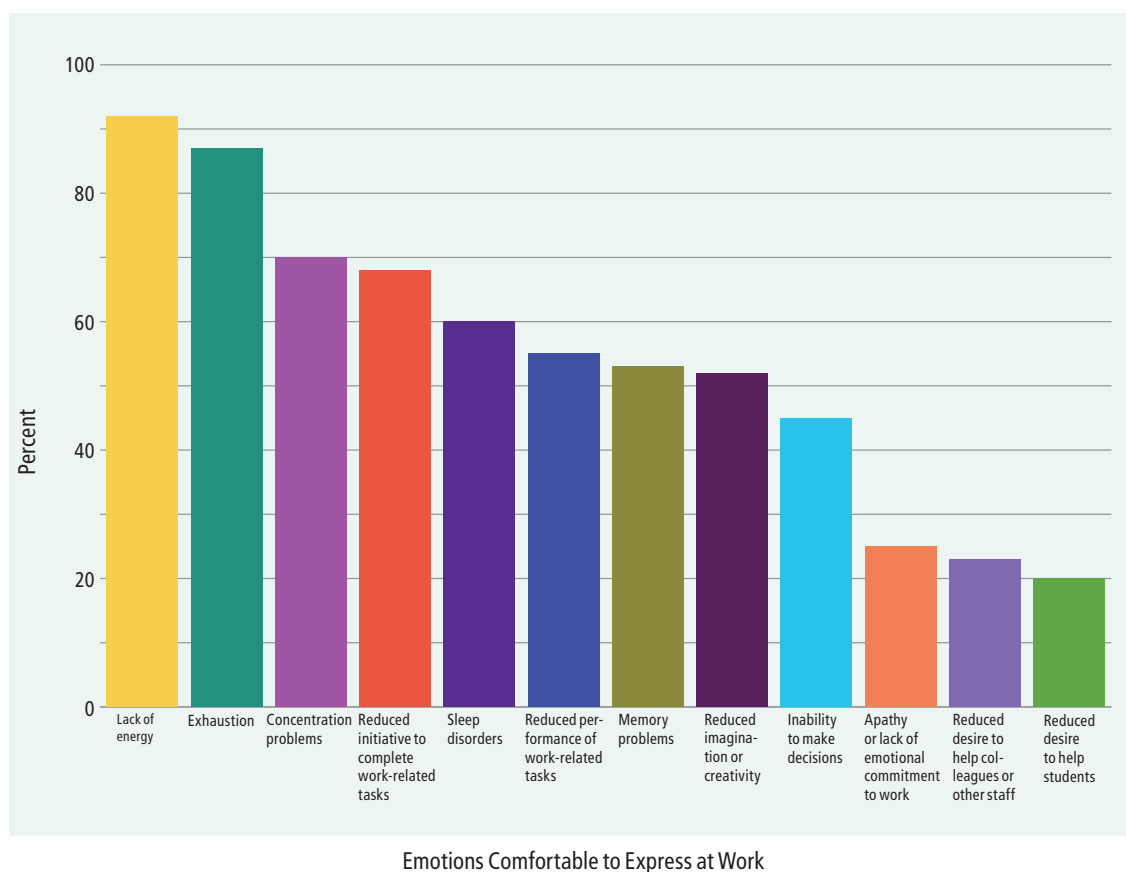
The aggregate survey and phase two interview (ATA and Kendrick 2021) participants identified the following symptoms as linked to their compassion fatigue: physical and mental fatigue, brain fog and other cognitive changes, an increasingly negative world view, and reduced interest in helping or caring for colleagues and students. Further, given the *Phase Two Report* finding that participants provided crisis and trauma work as a part of their regular job (ATA and Kendrick 2021), they had the defining risk factor for secondary traumatic stress or secondary traumatic stress disorder (Figley 1995), which is caring for individuals who have suffered from trauma. The COVID-19 pandemic was also identified by 23 per cent of survey respondents as a traumatic event and as intensifying the experience of compassion fatigue, suggesting that the levels of compassion stress and compassion fatigue may climb to higher levels during the postpandemic period, which will require further and ongoing research and monitoring.

> I have students in my class that I do not have the skills or training to deal with, but
> I am expected to help them with no other adults in my classroom and in addition
> teach the rest of the class who are also high needs. There is no time in the school
> day to plan or assess, or even go to the bathroom. (Survey response)

The main burnout symptoms identified by the research participants included physical and mental exhaustion; lack of acknowledgement that they were essential workers and valued by society; cognitive changes such as memory problems and reduced initiative to complete tasks; and a reduced desire to help colleagues and, to a somewhat lesser degree, students.

Figure 5. Symptoms of Burnout

Value		Per Cent	Responses
Lack of energy		91.2	3,552
Exhaustion		85.6	3,332
Concentration problems		68.7	2,674
Reduced initiative to complete work-related tasks		66.4	2,584
Sleep disorders		58.3	2,270
Reduced performance of work-related tasks		54.9	2,136
Memory problems		53.9	2,100
Reduced imagination or creativity		53.6	2,088
Inability to make decisions		41.6	1,619

Skipped: 101   **Total: 3,893**

> Trying to teach in a global pandemic is *hard*. I know students and families are suffering. Yet there is still a ton of work to make learning work for them, even if it isn't a priority. I worry about their mental health. My colleagues are working harder than they ever have. Yet the system keeps asking for more: more e-mails, more paperwork, more plans, more supports. Plus marking. Plus planning and backup planning in case you go into quarantine. The masks and sanitizers are becoming things we as teachers need to nag kids about. (Survey response)

Three additional indicators of burnout related to depersonalization (Maslach and Jackson 1981) were added to the January 2021 surveys. The interview data suggested that depersonalization manifested in education workers through a reduced interest in helping students, a reduced desire to help colleagues or other staff, and apathy or a lack of commitment to work. The aggregate data reflect percentages from respondents in the January 2021 surveys, representing only the 1,098 responses received from the random stratified and open online surveys. Even with the smaller sample, 25 per cent of respondents selecting feeling an apathy or lack of emotional commitment to work, 24 per cent feeling a reduced desire to help colleagues and 20 per cent feeling a reduced desire to help students (see Figure 6, page 20). More research is needed to determine the extent of depersonalization in education workers, as this symptom could have the most direct and negative effect on students, staff and the overall work culture.

In the qualitative responses, survey respondents explained the toll that overwork was taking on their mental and emotional health:

> I am so tired of fellow teachers taking advantage of me. I help students all day long and then my peers can't seem to do anything for themselves, so they complain and are rewarded with extra prep times, aid support and other supports. The better I do my job, the more I have to pick up the slack of others. I help people all day and then feel worn out and grumpy by 3:30. It's as if my day ends when work ends and I'm not able to do anything I enjoy in the evenings. (Survey response)

Ignoring the mental health problems of burnout and compassion fatigue in education workers could have longer-term consequences. In other caregiving professions, these occupational hazards have resulted in a decreased workforce (Farmer 2020; New Jersey State Nurses Association 2020), increasingly difficult recruitment as younger workers abandon the profession (HCPro 2021; Tepper and Palladino 2007) and, potentially, a negative impact on students' academic success (Arens and Morin 2016).

> I am currently an online teacher, and I feel even more so this year that it is difficult to maintain enthusiasm for my job and students. It is really hard to show up every day and talk to a blank screen. I feel like I am losing students, and no one seems concerned but me. Not my home school, or [school district] or even their parents. I lose sleep because I am overwhelmed with my job, and I worry about kids who don't show up. I feel to blame as well. I also feel isolated as most of my colleagues work with students face to face. I worry about how I will manage to finish the year. (Survey response)

Figure 6. Additional Burnout Symptoms (January 2021 only)

Random Stratified Sample

Value		Per Cent	Responses
Lack of energy		92.7	727
Exhaustion		88.9	697
Concentration problems		65.9	517
Reduced initiative to complete work-related tasks		64.2	503
Sleep disorders		60.8	477
Memory problems		54.0	423
Reduced performance of work-related tasks		53.4	419
Reduced imagination or creativity		52.8	414
Apathy or lack of emotional commitment to work		47.4	372
Inability to make decisions		40.3	316
Reduced desire to help colleagues or other staff		40.3	316
Reduced desire to help students		33.4	262

Open Online Survey

Value		Per Cent	Responses
Lack of energy		94.1	1,033
Exhaustion		91.6	1,066
Concentration problems		70.9	779
Reduced initiative to complete work-related tasks		69.1	759
Sleep disorders		63.8	701
Memory problems		60.6	665
Reduced performance of work-related tasks		60.5	664
Reduced imagination or creativity		58.0	637
Apathy or lack of emotional commitment to work		55.3	607
Reduced desire to help colleagues or other staff		49.9	548
Inability to make decisions		48.5	533
Reduced desire to help students		38.4	422

Skipped: 12   **Total: 1,098**

KEY FINDING #4: COMPASSION CONTINUUM: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING EDUCATION WORKERS' OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

The data collected from the quantitative and qualitative sources provided a conceptual model of the interrelationship between the three phenomena under study. A complete analysis is provided in the *Phase Two Report* (ATA and Kendrick 2021). Figure 7 is a visual representation of this model.

Figure 7. The Compassion Continuum

This model suggests that compassion satisfaction, or the pleasure an education caregiver feels from completing caring work, and compassion fatigue, the loss of empathy and willingness to provide educational care, exist on a continuum for education workers. Caregiving professionals can move between both ends of the compassion continuum, sometimes very quickly within a single school day. Teachers, for example, can feel a deep satisfaction while working with one group of students to immediately feeling distress when dealing with a different group of students minutes later. Understanding the flow of the continuum is an important part of rebuilding educators' occupational well-being, as they can experience moments throughout the day or school year that bring them joy and sustain them through the more difficult times (Schaefer 2021).

Without the occupational hazards related to crisis and trauma work or the buildup of burnout symptoms over time, education workers can experience a very high level of compassion satisfaction in their professional life.

> I enjoy my job and look forward to going to work. I feel like my students are happy to come to school and that they feel safe, cared for and respected in my class. I have created this atmosphere for them, and I am proud of what I do. (Survey response)

Making a difference in the lives of children and youth was often cited as a reason that education workers felt compassion satisfaction, and respondents were proud of their positive impact on civil society. Their comments focused on the strong and positive role they played in society, and respondents felt enormous reward from this good work.

> I find great satisfaction in working with at-risk youth. My days are very busy and very unpredictable. I love that. Every day, I meet new people, get to know "old" students more deeply, build caring and trusting relationships, help colleagues resolve conflicts with admin/students/ parents and connect families with community resources. I truly love my job. (Survey response)

Burnout can occur independently of compassion stress or compassion fatigue. It is the accumulated consequence of an increased workload and fewer financial supports and resources for effective school and classroom instruction. Education workers also felt the stress of caring for an increased number of students each year.

> I can't keep up no matter how hard I try. Mental health wishers advise me to take more breaks from work but then I'm even further behind. I'm so exhausted I am making mistakes, which causes student/parent/admin pressure and mistrust. (Survey response)

Three intensifiers of occupational health distress were identified in this study: toxic workplace, lack of training and occupational heartbreak (Kendrick 2018). Respondents defined a toxic educational workplace as one that lacked in responsive leadership, had collegial relationships that were strained or hostile, and lacked the necessary supports and resources to adequately educate students and staff. Participants suggested that leaving a toxic person or workplace diminished their symptoms of burnout or compassion fatigue.

> Three years ago, if I had answered this survey, my answers would be different. Have been severely compassion fatigued … Didn't know I was … thought I was crazy … Left that job, built a new one ... Found my purpose again. (Survey response)

The study participants suggested that they felt untrained to deal effectively with the traumatic events their students or colleagues experienced and felt unprepared to deal with their own emotional reactions. Very few participants had formal training in crisis or trauma work during their educational programs, and some were even doing this work with no training at all.

> It seems like most students have experienced a traumatic event and often times, I can feel unequipped to help them navigate the challenges that come with that. It also feels like most students suffer from anxiety or depression and having lost two students to suicide last year, it is hard to determine the "worst case" or the ones closest to suicide. (Survey response)

Finally, occupational heartbreak—or when a person's job breaks their heart—occurs when professional and career-impacting decisions are made without attention being paid to the needs, skills or competencies of the individual worker (Kendrick 2018). The participants expressed feelings of ineffectiveness when expected to teach or assist students in nondesired subject areas, felt helpless when faced by unappreciative students or community members, and felt frustrated or hopeless when they were sidelined from important decisions by elected officials.

> Because no matter how much of myself I pour into my work, it is never enough. The system is broken at every turn, and it seems that the only way to make any noticeable difference for the truly vulnerable children is to literally do it yourself. Feed them, clothe them, show them love. Those of us in the schools must do it because there doesn't seem to be a way to get any action through higher/official channels. (Survey response)

KEY FINDING #5: POSSIBLE GLOBAL INTERVENTION FOR EDUCATION WORKERS IS HEARTCARE PLANNING

Education workers use limited interventions to relieve their mental and emotional distress aside from self-directed or individual interventions. The survey data revealed that 98 per cent of the interventions used by the participants were self-directed or individual, such as walking their dog or talking to a family member. Further, they perceived a stigma around requesting professional or expert intervention to ease their workplace distress.

Rather than being expected to discover and navigate the supports and resources that they can access during a period of mental or emotional distress, education workers might benefit from investigating the potential interventions to recover before they perform crisis or trauma work.

HEARTcare planning is a holistic and comprehensive framework to help education workers plan for the prevention or treatment of mental and emotional distress at the workplace, namely compassion stress, compassion fatigue or burnout. As a part of HEARTcare planning (www.heartcareeducators .ca), education workers investigate the many resources available to them and decide which ones are the most suited to building their occupational health. In addition to figuring out their individual health needs, they also find out more about the school, system, professional and educational work interventions available to them after providing crisis and trauma work (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Conceptualization of HEARTcare Planning

School	**System**	**Individual**	**Professional**	**Educational Worker**
Workplace and relationship	Pedagogy, responsibility, and policy	Personal learning, self-care, and identity	Expert help	Community and unique work
Colleagues	ATA	Advocacy	ASEBP	Crisis work
Comprehensive school health	Equity	Family	Doctor	Government
Innovation	Innovation	Friends	Finance advisor	Parents
Leadership	Leadership	Implementation	Fitness coach	Recognition
Students	Policy	Mindfulness	Health service provider	Service
Trauma-informed	Priorities	Preparation	Massage	Social justice
Workplace culture	Reconciliation	Self-care	Medication	Trauma work
	Resources	Spirit/Religion	Nutritionist	
	School board		Therapist	
	Support			
	TPGP/TQS/LQS			

HEARTcare PLANNING

Optimally, HEARTcare planning occurs before an individual begins their professional work, so it would be a useful addition to preservice teacher and other education workers' education programs. By investigating the wide variety of resources and supports available to them, individuals can identify what they need to return to a state of positive mental health after a traumatic event. Further, HEARTcare planning takes an ecological approach to system change (Bronfenbrenner 1975), understanding that improving personal well-being needs to include addressing complex and systemic problems that impact the individual's work and social environment, such as increased class sizes and childhood poverty, that can lead to the traumatic experiences that create the conditions for burnout and compassion fatigue in education caregivers.

> The workload is truly unreasonable. Teachers are continually expected to do more with less. We do a ridiculous amount of unpaid work and endure a lot of disrespect. In order to reduce compassion fatigue, increase compassion satisfaction and improve teacher wellness, the systemic issues need to be addressed. "Self-care" is not enough. (Survey response)

All education workers, from bus drivers to superintendents, have a role to play to protect the collective heartwork of educators through conscious effort to develop a positive workplace for staff and students alike. Although individuals in different job roles—in particular, teachers and other student-facing workers—experience higher rates of compassion fatigue (see Appendix A), the education field needs to take an "all hands on deck" approach to building a stronger workplace for everyone.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Education, as an essential service in a civil society, is not the responsibility of individuals—it is the lifeblood of a community. As such, all citizens benefit when it is prioritized and education workers can create and maintain safe and caring schools for all students and adults in their care. The main takeaway from this two-year study is that education workers in Alberta are at a pivotal place in their professional wellness, and the work to create a healthier workforce through prioritizing collective well-being needs to begin immediately. The grim statistics outlined in the three phases of this study should be seen as a call to action to prioritize the well-being of the adults in educational workplaces as a foundation for building the health and wellness of the children and youth who learn and live with them every day.

In order to achieve these lofty goals and to honour the calls to action from the research participants, I make the following recommendations:

1. Preprofessional education and training for all types of education workers should include classwork or courses that teach education workers how to prevent these occupational well-being hazards.

2. Professional development in HEARTcare planning should be provided to current education workers.

3. The findings from this study should be communicated to the general public in a relatable and straightforward manner so that the community understands the essential role of a well-funded and respected education system.

4. Messaging to education workers and the general community should stress that the mental and emotional health of education workers has a noticeable impact on student academic success.

5. Further research should be completed on the compassion continuum model, the impact of implementing HEARTcare planning and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the occupational health of education workers.

The final survey question was as follows: Is there anything else you would like the research team to know? The survey and interview participants stressed the importance of this research and its findings being publicized to create a more emotionally and mentally healthy education workforce. The participants in this study expressed a deep concern for the well-being of their students, staff and colleagues, but they felt they were stifled by ever-increasing work expectations, overloaded with unmanageable numbers of students, and helpless to build the positive and sustaining relationships that their students and colleagues needed to find academic success.

The participants shared troubling stories of trauma from the education trenches, but what they desired was a positive workplace, a more reasonable workload, and respect from their elected officials and community. They worried about how burnout and compassion fatigue were impacting their effectiveness in educating children and youth, even more than how these occupational hazards were impacting their own well-being.

> Our jobs as educators are extremely complex at the best of times, and I feel that many of us have the type of personality that we strive to support our students and their families, often worrying about them. Teaching isn't just what we do, it is who we are.

> However, over the past 20 years of teaching, the changes to classroom composition, expectations for administrative duties, and rising mental health issues in families have really made our jobs much more challenging. With the challenges have also come smaller budgets for schools, with buildings that are run down and over capacity with large populations of students. This affects what supports and resources we get, which adds to the challenge, as there aren't many supports available.

> Honestly, going to therapy and meeting with friends and exercising is not going to change this. Teaching is just really, really hard right now, and until there are changes put in place to provide more support for teachers, we are going to lose teachers to burnout. (Survey response)

Compassion fatigue and burnout in education caregivers are a foreseeable response to providing emotional labour in working with vulnerable children and youth. Providing education workers with training, support, resources and acknowledgement is essential for maintaining a world-class education system in Alberta. Protecting the heartwork of the professionals in this system will ensure that burnout and compassion fatigue are not inevitable and that school system excellence will continue.

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Appendix A

TABLE SUMMARY: KEY FINDINGS BY JOB ROLE

Demographics

Job Role	Count	Percent of Total Participants (Aggregate Responses: 5,028)
Support Staff	395	7.9
Teacher	3,927	78.1
School Leader	398	7.9
System Leader	145	2.9
Other (Role Not Listed/Write-In)	163	3.2
Responses to Key Findings		
Support Staff	Total: 395 Nonteaching: 85 Educational Assistant: 255 Support Staff: 57	 21.5 64.2 14.4
Geographic Location		
	Rural: 109 Urban: 286	27.6 72.4
Gender		
Male	9	2.3
Female	384	96.7
Transgender	1	0.3
Prefer Not to Answer	3	0.8
Knowledge of Emotional Labour		
Yes	165	47.1
No	148	42.3
Not Sure	37	10.6
Clients		
Work Primarily with K–12 Students	236	68.2
Primarily with Adults	48	13.9
Leadership Capacity	11	3.2
Split Between Students and Adults	51	14.7

Emotional Feeling Rules		
Top Three Emotions Expressed	Happy, joy, cheerful	89.7
	Energetic, excitement	21.0
	Empathy, concern, compassion	19.0
Top Three Repressed	Anger	54.6
	Sadness, depression	54.1
	Frustration	42.3
"Good at your job"	Fosters effective relationships	74.8
Compassion Continuum		
Compassion Score	Compassion satisfaction	60.7
	Compassion fatigue	39.3
Reasons for Compassion Satisfaction	Positive feelings for students/clients	42.9
	Positive outcomes for doing helping work	35.3
	Positive feelings for colleagues	14.3
Reasons for Compassion Fatigue	Workplace culture not supportive/ unhealthy	54.1
	Work intensification	23.5
	COVID-19/response to change	17.3
	Direct exposure to trauma with clients/ students	16.3
Burnout		
Symptoms of Burnout	Lack of energy	87.5
	Exhaustion	76.1
	Concentration problems	60.3
Interventions		
Actions to Feel Better	Personal support network	81.8
	Massage, chiropractic, other similar services	76.2
Interventions	Self-directed strategies	98.2
Other Experiences/Comments with Phenomena		
	Plea for help/lack of support impacting efficacy	29.3
	Assistance for education professionals/ more resources	27.1
	Improve work/classroom conditions	25.0

Teaching Staff		
	Complete Survey: 3,112	79.2
	Partial Completion: 815	20.8
Geographic Location		
	Rural: 953	24.3
	Urban: 2,964	75.7
Gender		
Male	517	13.2
Female	3,370	85.9
Transgender	3	0.1
Prefer Not to Answer	27	0.2
Knowledge of Emotional Labour		
Yes	1,820	53.0
No	1,424	41.4
Not Sure	193	5.6
Clients		
Work Primarily with K–12 Students	3,301	96.0
Primarily with Adults	8	0.2
Leadership Capacity	4	0.1
Split Between Students and Adults	126	3.7
Emotional Feeling Rules		
Top Three Emotions Expressed	Happy, joy, cheerful	87.2
	Energetic, excitement	30.0
	Frustration*	18.6
Top Three Repressed	Sadness, depression	54.4
	Anger	52.1
	Frustration	40.1
"Good at your job"	Fosters effective relationships	62.6
	Demonstrates a professional body of knowledge	12.8
Compassion Continuum		
Compassion Score	Compassion satisfaction 1,341	42.2
	Compassion fatigue 1,836	57.8
Reasons for Compassion Satisfaction	Positive outcomes of doing helping work	35.5
	Positive feelings for clients/students	29.7
	Feeling of success with work; good at my job	17.9

Reasons for Compassion Fatigue	Workplace culture not supportive/ unhealthy	53.9
	Work intensification	43.5
	COVID-19/response to change	23.5
	Direct exposure to trauma with clients/ students	21.8
Burnout		
Symptoms of Burnout	Lack of energy	92.3
	Exhaustion	87.4
	Concentration problems	69.8
	Reduced initiative to complete work-related tasks	69.5
Interventions		
Actions to Feel Better	Personal support network	86.4
	Massage, chiropractic, other similar services	73.8
	Active support network	62.0
Interventions	Self-directed strategies	98.2
Other Experiences/Comments with Phenomena		
	Improve work/classroom conditions	36.5
	Plea for help/lack of support impacting efficacy	35.9
	Social judgment impacting efficacy and ability to be effective	26.0

School Leader		
	Complete: 314	78.9
	Partial: 84	21.1
Geographic Location		
	Rural: 107	27.0
	Urban: 289	73.0
Gender		
Male	110	27.6
Female	285	71.6
Transgender		0.0
Prefer Not to Answer	3	0.8
Knowledge of Emotional Labour		
Yes	192	56.5
No	136	40.0
Not Sure	12	3.5

Clients		
Work Primarily with K–12 Students	99	29.1
Primarily with Adults	9	2.6
Leadership Capacity	45	13.2
Split Between Students and Adults	187	55.0
Emotional Feeling Rules		
Top Three Emotions Expressed	Happy, joy, cheerful	80.3
	Empathy, concern, compassion	27.2
	Frustration*	19.7
Top Three Repressed	Anger	51.5
	Sadness, depression	45.1
	Frustration	37.7
"Good at your job"	Fosters effective relationships	63.4
	Demonstrates a professional body of knowledge	10.9
Compassion Continuum		
Compassion Score	Compassion satisfaction	57.8
	Compassion fatigue	42.2
Reasons for Compassion Satisfaction	Positive outcomes for doing helping work	40.7
	Positive feelings for students/clients	18.0
Reasons for Compassion Fatigue	Workplace culture not supportive/unhealthy	52.8
	Work intensification	31.7
	Direct exposure to trauma with clients/students	28.5
Burnout		
Symptoms of Burnout	Lack of energy	89.9
	Exhaustion	82.2
	Concentration problems	67.4
	Reduced initiative to complete work-related tasks	60.5
Interventions		
Actions to Feel Better	Personal support network	83.7
	Massage, chiropractic, other similar services	75.1
Interventions	Self-directed strategies	98.6

Other Experiences/Comments with Phenomena		
	Societal judgment impacting efficacy and ability to be effective	30.4
	Improve work/classroom conditions	28.6
	Plea for help/lack of support impacting efficacy	25.0

System Leader		
	Complete: 110	75.9
	Partial: 35	24.1
	K–12 System Administration: 109	75.2
	Elected School Leader: 3	2.1
	Leader in System-Level Environment: 33	22.8
Geographic Location		
	Rural: 44	30.3
	Urban: 101	69.7
Gender		
Male	26	17.9
Female	115	79.3
Not Listed	1	0.7
Prefer Not to Answer	3	2.1
Knowledge of Emotional Labour		
Yes	71	59.2
No	45	37.5
Not Sure	4	3.3
Clients		
Work Primarily with K–12 Students	10	8.3
Primarily with Adults	13	10.8
Leadership Capacity	56	46.7
Split Between Students and Adults	41	34.3
Emotional Feeling Rules		
Top Three Emotions Expressed	Happy, joy, cheerful	70.6
	Empathy, concern, compassion	26.6
	Frustration*	23.9
Top Three Repressed	Anger	48.6
	Sadness, depression	48.8
	Frustration	37.1

"Good at your job"	Fosters effective relationships	57.1
	Demonstrates a professional body of knowledge	28.6
Compassion Continuum		
Compassion Score	Compassion satisfaction	68.4
	Compassion fatigue	31.6
Reasons for Compassion Satisfaction	Positive outcomes for doing helping work	31.4
	Feelings of success with work/good at my job	21.4
	Positive feelings for colleagues	20.0
Reasons for Compassion Fatigue	Workplace culture not supportive/unhealthy	51.9
	Work intensification	40.7
	Direct exposure to trauma with clients/students	25.9
Burnout		
Symptoms of Burnout	Exhaustion	76.6
	Lack of energy	74.8
	Concentration problems	69.2
	Reduced initiative to complete work-related tasks	61.7
Interventions		
Actions to Feel Better	Personal support network	90.0
	Massage, chiropractic, other similar services	73.6
	Active support network	67.3
Interventions	Self-directed strategies	100.0
Other Experiences/Comments with Phenomena		
	Societal judgment impacting efficacy and ability to be effective	35.0
	Improve work/classroom conditions	26.7
	Plea for help/lack of support impacting efficacy	21.7

*Note: participants identified frustration as an emotion that was both expressed and repressed; some participants qualified their response by suggesting that it's acceptable to show frustration with subjects or topics and exams or policies, but not to direct frustration at students or colleagues.

The Alberta
Teachers' Association