

Understanding Special Education Teacher Burnout

UK's Autism Research Services Group

Presenter: Abigail Love

Project team: Lisa Ruble, Michelle Salyers, Melanie Watkins, Yue Yu, Medina Adams, Jordan Findley, Jorgina Arballo, & John McGrew



Today's Objectives

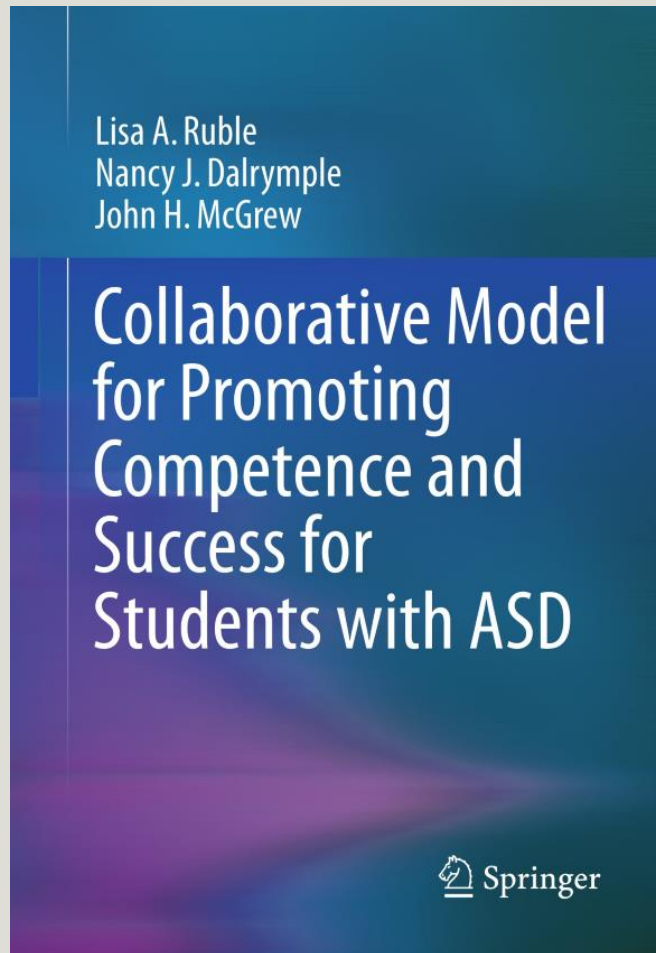
- Provide a **background** on our involvement with special education burnout
- Review the **urgent reasons** why it is important to study burnout in special education teachers
- Discuss our **qualitative study** examining stakeholders perspectives on burnout
- Share **future directions** and **plans** for a burnout intervention

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COMPASS: Collaborative Model for Promoting Competence and Success for Student's with ASD

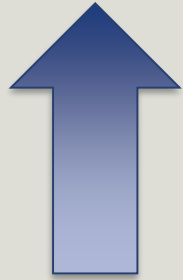


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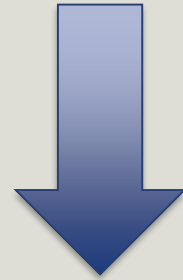
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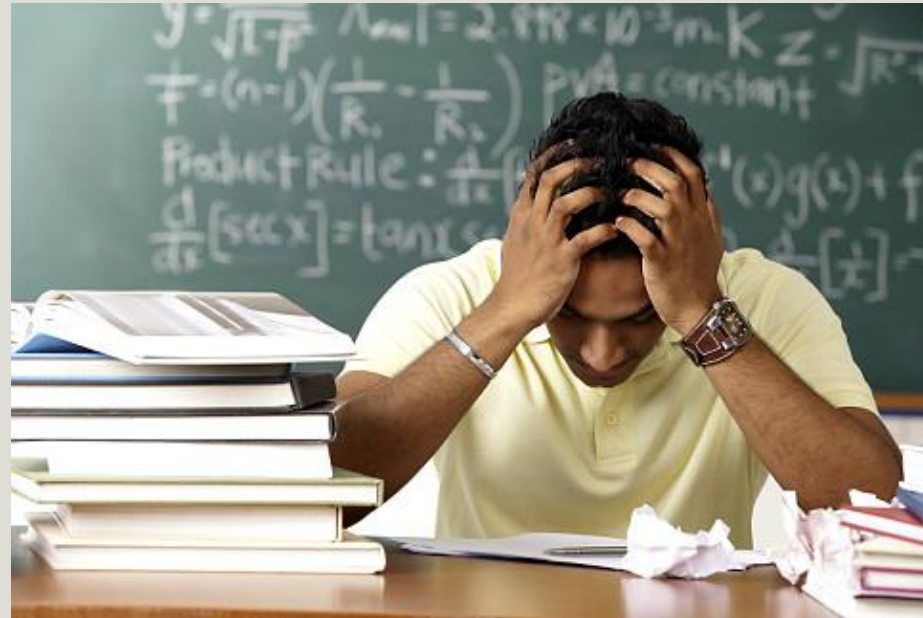


Higher Burnout



Lower Teaching Quality

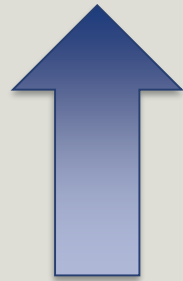
Less progress on IEP outcomes



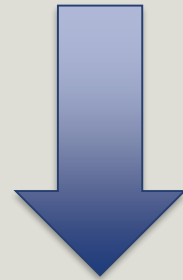
(Ruble & McGrew, 2013)

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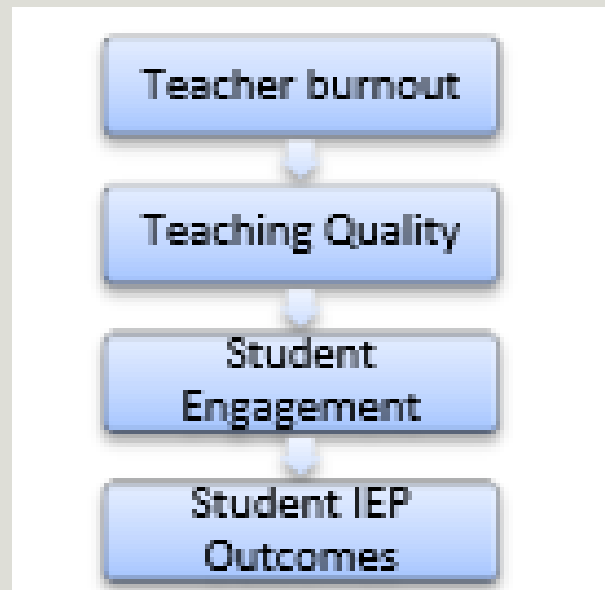
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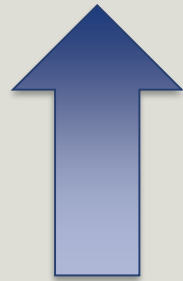
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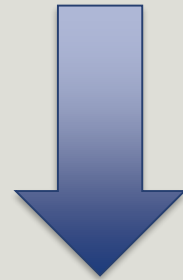
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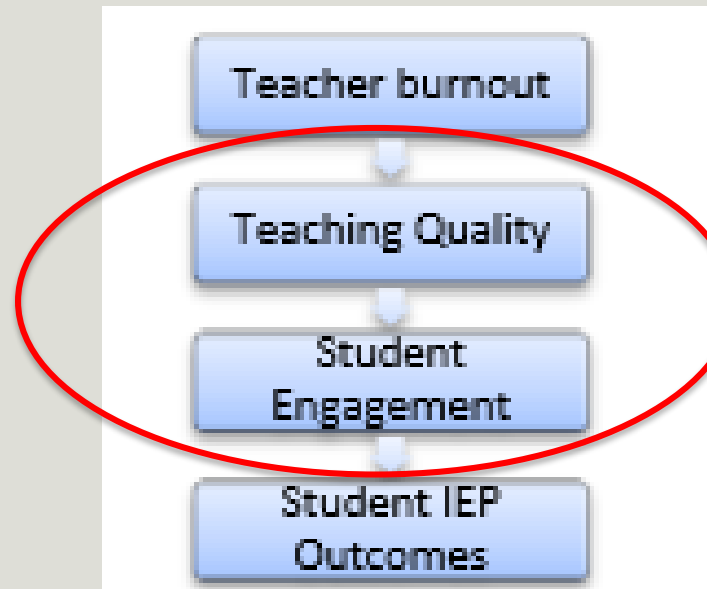
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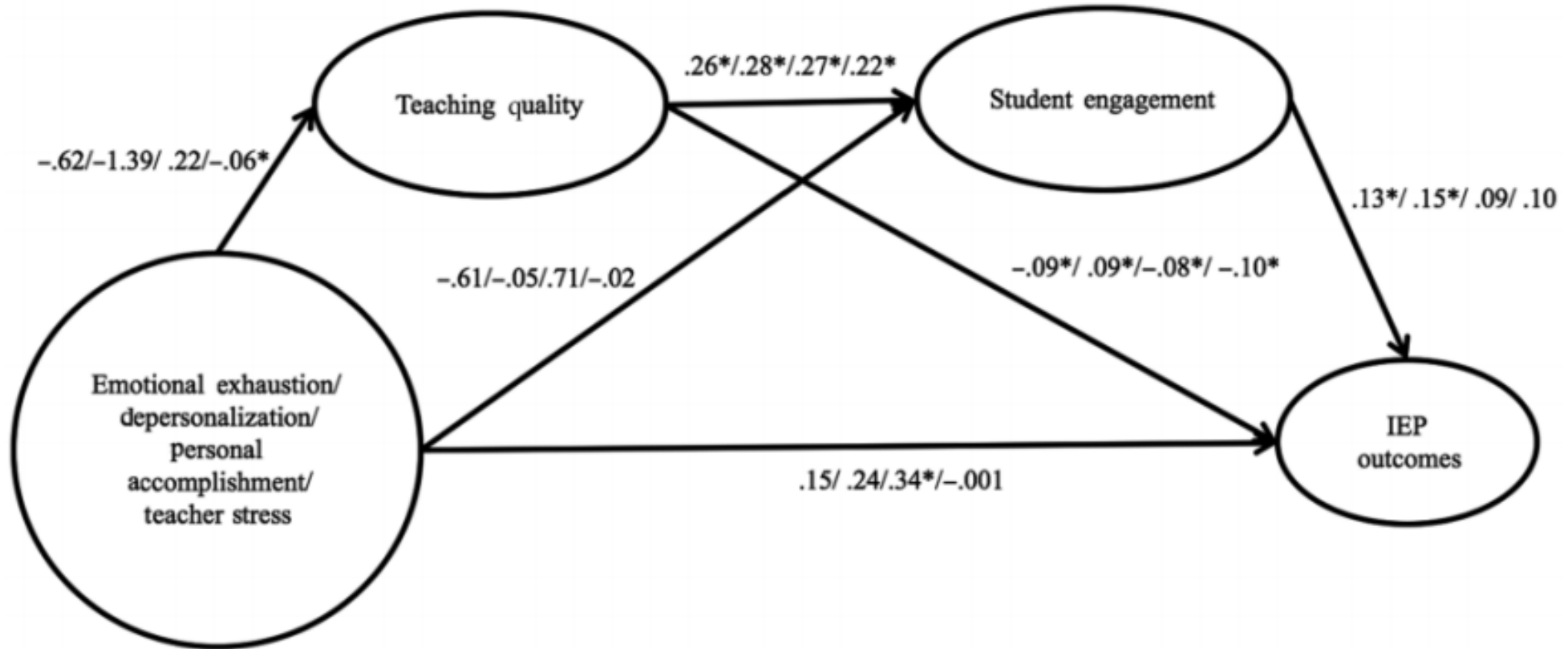
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(Wong, Ruble, Yu, & McGrew, 2016)

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Special Education Burnout

Annual attrition rate for special educators is **twice** that of general educators



(Cook & Boe, 2007; McLeskey & Billingsley, 2008; Nichols et al., 2008)

Special Education Burnout

Approximately **20%** of special educators each year **transfer** to general education or to another position



(Boe et al., 2008; Boe, 2014)

Special Education

Burnout

Pairing our most challenging learners with our least prepared educators is clearly undesirable!



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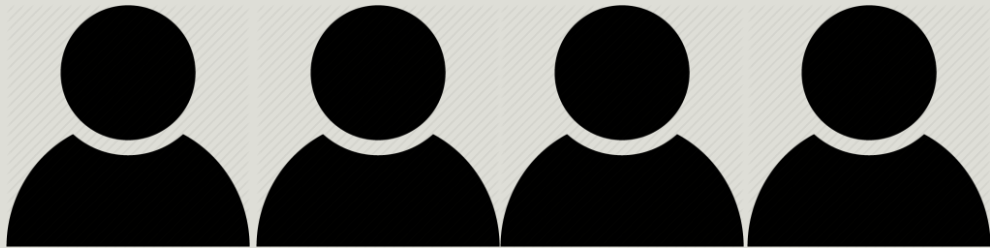
Method

Part of a larger project to adapt an evidence-based burnout intervention for special education teachers.

- Conducted four 90-minute focus groups to learn about issues related to burnout.
 - 2 focus groups with administrators, 2 focus groups with special ed. teachers
 - Groups consisted of individuals with similar roles to ensure comfort in speaking openly.
- A semi-structured interview guide was used to obtain input on burnout including individuals' experiences with burnout, factors contributing to burnout, and the impact of teacher burnout on education.

Participants

Administrators (special education directors, special education program directors, school principals) and special education teachers (preschool through high school) from two southeastern states.



$N = 30$ (across 4 focus groups)

- Teachers = 15 (3 males, 12 females)
- Administrators = 15 (2 males, 13 females)

Coding Process

- Focus groups were recorded, transcribed, and entered into qualitative data analysis software (MAXQDA) for coding and analysis.
- Initial codebook developed based on main areas of discussion from focus groups then revised to include possible areas of pursuit extracted from transcripts using qualitative thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2013).
- Preliminary inductive themes were identified (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013) and discussed to refine and finalize the codebook.
 - Six main codes were identified

Results

- 1) **Define**: What teacher burnout looks and feels like.
- 2) **Cause**: Factors that contribute to or increase teacher burnout.
- 3) **Impact**: Effects of teacher burnout on education (e.g., student learning outcomes) teacher's interpersonal interactions, and teachers themselves.
- 4) **Help**: Currently utilized methods or new ideas to help reduce teacher burnout.
- 5) **Format**: Specific format qualities needed for burnout interventions to be helpful or more feasible for teachers.
- 6) **Barriers**: Challenges that might get in the way of effectively implementing a burnout intervention.

Through an iterative, consensus-building process, transcripts were coded and reviewed to identify emergent themes related to these main topic areas.

What are the CAUSES OF BURNOUT...

...according to administrators *and* Special Education teachers?

- The emotional and behavioral needs of the students
- Challenging parents
- Too much work (especially paperwork)
- Spread too thin to cover for vacancies left by turnover
- Constantly evolving expectations of special education teachers
- Teachers are not adequately prepared
- Accountability to test scores
- Lack of respect in the community or from gen-ed teachers



What are the CAUSES OF BURNOUT...

...according to *just* Special Education teachers?

- Needing to teach other teachers
- Lack of support from administration
- Lack of resources and funding for special education
- Individual personality characteristics



HOW CAN WE HELP?

What do administrators *and* Special Education teachers say?

Administration

Positive feedback from administrators, respect, support

Ask for help when needed, know it is okay to not know all the answers



External

Formal social support, mentor, one-on-one support, adequate training

Further education, more staff, adequate planning time



Internal

Self-awareness of triggers, personal limit, balance point

Learn how to say “no” to requests to stay at an equilibrium



HOW CAN WE HELP?

What are Special Education teachers saying?

Administration

Understanding from administrators, have a realistic expectation of student progress

Leave things at the door, involve in extracurricular activities, good relationship with kids



External

School offer therapy or other activities (e.g., yoga)

Reduce stigma by giving burnout another name



Internal

Work life balances, take time off, stress management

Realistic expectations, patience, get involved in extracurricular activities



HOW CAN WE HELP?

What are *administrators* saying?

Administration

Be aware of the warning signs of burnout and help teachers before they are completely burned out

Debrief with teachers after crisis in the classroom, training for administrators



External

Allow teachers to have input in who may become their co-worker

Have a “recovered teacher” involved with implementing the intervention



Internal

Learn out to set boundaries with coworkers, students, or parents



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One Solution: BREATHE



Author Manuscript

Psychiatr Serv. Author manuscript; available in PMC 2011 May 4.

Published in final edited form as:

Psychiatr Serv. 2011 February ; 62(2): 214–217. doi:10.1176/appi.ps.62.2.214.

BREATHE: A Pilot Study of a One-Day Retreat to Reduce Burnout Among Mental Health Professionals

Michelle P. Salyers, Ph.D., Candice Hudson, B.S., Gary Morse, Ph.D., Angela L. Rollins, Ph.D., Maria Monroe-DeVita, Ph.D., Cynthia Wilson, M.S.N., P.M.H.C.N.S., and Leah Freeland, M.A., L.M.H.C.

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Abstract



FUTURE STEPS

- Utilize information from focus groups to determine possible adaptations for BREATHE.
- Conduct workgroups to discuss and refine adaptations.
- Pilot newly adapted BREATHE with special education teachers later this year.
- Following pilot and further refinement of adapted BREATHE, conduct randomized controlled trial in 2019.

Thank you!



Acknowledgements

- School administrators
- Teachers
- Research team members: Lisa Ruble, Michelle Salyers, Melanie Watkins, Yue Yu, Medina Adams, Jordan Findley, Jorgina Arballo, & John McGrew
- Our funding agency: Grant Number R324A170021 from the Institute of Education Sciences

References

For a complete list of references, please contact the University of Kentucky Autism Research Group

<https://sites.education.uky.edu/asrg/>

