

10-31-2016

What I Didn't Know About Teaching: Stressors and Burnout among Deaf Education Teachers


J. Lindsey Kennon Ed.D.

Stephen F Austin State University, jlkennon@sfasu.edu

Margaret H. Patterson M.A.

Stephen F. Austin State University, mhpatterson@sfasu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/jhstrp>

 Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Disability and Equity in Education Commons](#), [Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration Commons](#), [Elementary Education and Teaching Commons](#), [Higher Education Commons](#), [Higher Education Administration Commons](#), [Junior High, Intermediate, Middle School Education and Teaching Commons](#), and the [Special Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Tell us how this article helped you.

Recommended Citation

Kennon, J. Lindsey Ed.D. and Patterson, Margaret H. M.A. (2016) "What I Didn't Know About Teaching: Stressors and Burnout among Deaf Education Teachers," *Journal of Human Services: Training, Research, and Practice*: Vol. 1: Iss. 2, Article 2.
Available at: <http://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/jhstrp/vol1/iss2/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by SFA ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Human Services: Training, Research, and Practice by an authorized administrator of SFA ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact cdsscholarworks@sfasu.edu.

What I Didn't Know About Teaching: Stressors and Burnout among Deaf Education Teachers

Cover Page Footnote

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of educators who are teaching in the field of deaf education in terms of the effects on their career decisions and future goals. Analyzing survey data from educators across Texas currently and formerly teaching in deaf education classrooms, researchers identified rates of burnout and common stressors, barriers to career satisfaction, and an overall needs assessment for university preparation programs, public school administration, and deaf education programs. The top eight stressors for deaf education teachers ranked by participants (n=116) (listed in order of stress level, number one being the most stressful) were: (1) amount of paperwork, (2) high stakes testing, (3) dealing with parents, (4) lack of administrative support, (5) lack of parental support, (6) lack of resources for deaf education, (7) responsibility of multiple roles, and (8) inconsistency in curriculum for deaf education. Based on these findings, implications were discussed and recommendations were outlined to improve quality of support for teachers in deaf education settings.

What I Didn't Know About Teaching:

Stressors and Burnout among Deaf Education Teachers

The topic of education as a profession and teaching receives a great deal of attention in our society. Issues of teacher quality, retention, salary, effectiveness, and overall performance are all topics on current-event news reels and headlines. Stress and burnout among teachers, especially new teachers and special education professionals, are critical points of attention given the increasing expectations and special needs evident within the general population of children and families nation-wide. Teachers of deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) students fall under the umbrella of special education and are the focus of this study.

Statement of the Problem

Teacher shortages and ongoing burnout in special education fields have been well documented in the literature (Brunsting, Sreckovic, & Lane, 2014; Fore, Martin, & Bender, 2002; Hoffman, Palladino, & Barnett, 2007; Wisniewski & Garguilo, 1997). The same reports of fatigue, stress, burnout, and attrition apply to teachers of DHH students, who have been found to leave the field at higher rates than general education teachers, resulting in a long-standing national shortage of educators for this population of students for decades (Johnson, 2004; Luckner & Hanks, 2003; Meadow, 1981). The literature is replete with evidence that teacher effectiveness is critical for the academic success of DHH students (Easterbrooks & Baker-Hawkins, 1995; Hoffman et al., 2007; Johnson, 2004; Lenihan, 2010; Luckner & Hanks, 2003). It stands to reason that if teachers are fatigued, overworked, and have reached some level of burnout, teacher effectiveness is negatively affected, which means DHH students are impacted directly by the stress and burnout of their educators as well as by the inconsistency in instruction created by high rates of turnover (a direct result of stressors).

In order to define burnout, a definition must first be provided for stress, specifically occupational stress. Wisniewski and Garguilo (1997) define occupational stress as, "...the effect of task demands that teachers face in the performance of their professional roles and responsibilities" (p. 1). "Burnout" has been defined as a cumulative effect of experienced occupational stress over time that reaches a heightened level (Wisniewski & Garguilo, 1997). Brunsting et al. (2014) concur with this definition of burnout as directly related to teachers: "Teacher burnout occurs when teachers undergoing stress for long periods of time experience emotional exhaustion, de-personalization, and lack of personal accomplishment" (p. 681). Identifying common stressors that compound and lead to burnout, resulting in teacher attrition (specifically in educators of students who are DHH) and lower quality of instructional outcomes is the primary focus of this research.

Purpose of the Study

The study examined the experiences of current professional educators who are teaching in the field of deaf education to identify stressors related to turnover and burnout that may influence decisions to remain in the profession. This study is guided by the following research question: What are the common stressors and reasons for burnout among deaf education teachers?

Significance of the Study

Results from this study serve three purposes. First, findings will provide a guide for educator preparation programs (EPPs) in deaf education to better prepare pre-service teachers. Second, pre-kindergarten (PK) – 12 administrators and regional day school programs for the deaf (RDSPDs) may better understand how to improve working conditions for current and future

educators. Finally, enhanced professional development programs may be developed and implemented to increase the longevity of career-related satisfaction.

Review of the Related Literature

Teacher burnout and teacher stress are buzz words in the field of education that reach as far back as the 1980's (Meadow, 1981). The general understanding that educators shoulder a weighty load – professional responsibilities, duties, and service – is not a new concept. In fact, burnout and stressors among educators have become a cultural norm. Societal feedback and perception commonly refers to teachers as being frazzled, worn-out, buried in paperwork, and under pressure to perform to guarantee clearly defined outcomes in students' learning. In an education system heavily driven by a performance-based culture of assessment and accountability, educators are exhausted and depleted of energy, motivation, and drive. Hoffman et al. (2007) warned that prolonged experiences of tension and stress leads to professional burnout and exhaustion, often ending with early exits from teaching positions. Kaufhold, Alvarez, and Arnold (2006) and Brunsting et al. (2014) purport that special education teachers (a sweeping term which also covers teachers of DHH students) are much more likely to experience burnout and leave the profession than are general education teachers. The remainder of this literature review will provide an overview of the experiences of DHH education and educators.

Brief History of the Education of DHH Students

Although the need for educators for DHH students began many decades prior, the first significant step toward the education of DHH students came with: 1) the enactment of Public Law 94-142 in 1975, which called for free, appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with special learning needs; and 2) the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) legislation in 1997 and 2004 (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Since this body of

legislation (i.e., FAPE, IDEA), meaningful improvement has occurred in the education of previously ignored student populations in public school settings. As a consequence, the field of deaf education has also been in a constant state of evolution and improvement.

Despite forward momentum, a history of controversy and heated debate continues to surround the field of deaf education. Authors and researchers in the field of deaf education are all in agreement about one thing: deaf educators and deaf education is full of diversity, both in student characteristics and in teaching and theory (Stewart & Kluwin, 2001). There are many dichotomous aspects to educating DHH students: oral versus manual communication; hearing culture versus Deaf culture; and deafness as a pathology versus deafness as a difference (Scheetz, 2001). Methodologies in pedagogical practice with DHH students present similar polarizing views: American Sign Language (ASL) versus manual codes of English (Scheetz, 2001); inclusion versus self-contained classroom settings (Stewart & Kluwin, 2001); differences of thought in philosophies, questions and opinions about language acquisition (Rose, McAnally, & Quigley, 2004); and an overall discord and disagreement in how best to educate the diverse population of DHH students seated in classroom desks all across the nation. These elements alone are enough to clearly verify deaf educators' charge to dissect philosophies, develop strategies, and resolve the sometimes opposing multiple perspectives that exist within the discipline. There is substantial indirect evidence to support the thought that educators of DHH students unique stressors related to within group differences of opinion even prior to initial placement as a teacher.

DHH Students. Before moving forward, it is appropriate to discuss the population of DHH students that exist in public education today. Having a clearly defined definition of this student population would make the endeavors of educators in the field infinitely less challenging.

What would be missed, however, is the heterogeneity of the DHH population (Lenihan, 2010), a special population that encompasses a wide range of points of diversity that extend beyond being DHH. This diversity is one of the aspects of deaf education that makes it most complex and challenging (Stewart & Kluwin, 2001).

Asking an educator of DHH students to describe the student population would yield enormously varied results. Some are factors common to all student populations (i.e., general education, special education, deaf education), including family background and socioeconomic status. However, in addition to this common diversity there exist factors unique to the DHH student population including mode of communication (manual versus oral or a combination), degree of hearing loss, age of onset and causality of hearing loss, type of hearing loss, family's ability and/or willingness to communicate manually (i.e. via sign language), presence or absence of amplification, type of educational setting within deaf education, educational background (deaf education philosophies used in various programs), transient factors regarding variability of educational program type, etc.; the list is long. What does a deaf student look like? While diversity among all populations of students is common, the factors unique to DHH students, as mentioned above, make effectively meeting educational needs uniquely challenging, potentially adding stress to the deaf education program setting and to the educator of DHH students.

Who Experiences Burnout?

In an extensive literature review related specifically to educators in the field of special education published by Brunsting et al. (2014), the authors found that certain types of educators are more prone to burnout, exhaustion, stress, and leaving the field. The age and gender of teachers was found to correlate to burnout. Older teachers had less of a tendency toward burnout; male educators in special education showed more likelihood for depersonalization in

their careers, leading to higher rates of burnout. Years of teaching experience and burnout were found to be negatively correlated. It can be concluded from this data that the younger and less-experienced the educator, the higher the probably that they will experience burnout in special education settings; inexperienced, young male teachers are at an even greater risk.

Fore et al. (2002) reiterated that burnout exists in heavy doses in the field of education, but offers an additional thought of support to validate that stress and burn out occur more frequently in special education teacher populations. Educators in special education have been found to seek transfers to general education settings, but "...there is no evidence of the reverse phenomenon – i.e. teachers leaving the general education class in order to teach special education students." (p. 39). These authors outline indirect evidence that educators in the field of special education experience higher rates of stress and burnout than do educators in special education settings. However, at this point little is known about the specific experiences related to the perceived challenges associated with teaching of the DHH.

The Teacher of the DHH, Stress, and Burnout

In reference a study of deaf education teachers from 1996 to 1999, Johnson (2004) identified a list of common job description requirements of deaf education teachers. The 2001 survey cited by Johnson (2004) found that job openings for deaf education teachers required the following of applicants (most frequently mentioned out of 297 postings):

- ASL skills
- collaboration skills
- assessment skills
- IEP writing ability
- maintaining records

- effective oral communication
- effective parent communication
- preparation of daily lesson plans
- Total Communication skills
- academic instruction of subjects (p. 84)

It is a reasonable assumption that these same requirements exist for current educators of DHH students, plus many more, as nearly twenty years have lapsed since then. However, these skills, in addition to the competencies and knowledge required in the work with the diverse DHH student population, distinguish this group of professionals from both the general education and general special education educators. Dolman (2010) agrees with this assertion, describing the professional educator in deaf education as a complex role and terms the skill sets “inexact” (Dolman, 2010, p. 357) and difficult to teach to novice teachers. Luckner and Hanks (2003) state that deaf education teachers must be able to meet the same requirements and expectations of general education teachers (and even special education teacher), and be experts in the area of language, language development, linguistics of English, linguistics of ASL and other manual codes, and communication in general. They emphasize the need for deaf education teachers to be familiar with general education curriculum, special education curriculum, formal and informal assessment, be well-versed in accommodations and modifications, understand how to effectively teach reading and writing (despite the content area for which they are actually responsible) to students who typically have large gaps in language proficiency (Johnson, 2004; Stewart & Kluwin, 2001), and able to troubleshoot amplification systems in the classroom.

In summary, it appears that the deaf education professional must be competent in a broader knowledge and skill set than general education professionals and special education

professionals, as they are also held to the same accountability and standards (Dolman, 2010). This issue of accountability found in our current state of affairs in education across the nation can be considered a stressor itself and is discussed further in the following paragraph, with other common stressors and reasons for burnout found in the literature following.

State assessment and accountability. Deaf educators are expected to meet the same ever-increasing accountability standards by state-mandated assessments as any other educator (Luckner & Hanks, 2003), which creates the need for them to cover large amounts of material for students in unreasonable timeframes, seemingly favoring quantity over quality (Johnson, 2004). Not only are educators expected to cover great sums of content, but they are required to do so despite the large gaps in information and content that their students often have (Johnson, 2004). This requires the teaching of background knowledge prior to teaching the required content, adding to the already heaped-over pile of knowledge and skills competencies needing to be covered. This burden is not a simple or easy responsibility. The result is that the seemingly impossible is expected, the students move on to another year in another classroom, and the same issues and problems of too much information to cover in too short of time persists. Instead of closing the gaps, the gaps simply widen, pushing students decreasing the probability of academic success and increasing the probability of teachers' burnout. The high-stakes culture of assessment and accountability is cited again and again in the literature as a source of great stress and frustration for teachers.

Increased caseload and diversity of students. Johnson (2004) also notes that while the numbers of DHH students requiring services has been on a steady increase, the number of teachers available to teach them has remained stagnant. Higher numbers of DHH students in educational settings, yet the same amount of teachers to teach them, indicates that teachers likely

are experiencing larger and more diverse caseloads. Instead of increasing the number of teachers, current teachers may be assigned a larger number of students. As mentioned previously, the diversity of DHH students in terms of residual hearing (due to increased use of amplification) (Lenihan, 2010), ethnicity (Johnson, 2004; Lenihan, 2010), and educational needs is rapidly increasing. Lenihan (2010) describes the need for educators of the deaf to be highly adaptable in order to be effective in a variety of settings. Luckner and Hanks (2003) explain that teaching more students, held to higher standards of accountability, with more diverse educational needs than ever is a societal pressure weighing heavily on today's educator.

Limited resources in Higher Education and EPP programs. Lenihan (2010) suggests the EPP curricula should align with the programs, resources, and curriculum being used by partner programs in deaf education. This suggestion is valid, but does not take into account the vast variations that exist in program philosophy, resources, and adoption of curricula. Exposing students in EPPs to all the possibilities of philosophies, resources, and curricula in deaf education would be impossible, not to mention that deaf education programs often change curricula on a regular basis; keeping up with these fluctuations and aligning the programs and curricula with standards in the field is a daunting task. Stabilizing inconsistencies in resources used by deaf education programs would better serve DHH students as well as the future educators in deaf education EPPs.

Poor working conditions. Overall working conditions seem to be an important factor in job satisfaction of deaf education professionals. Luckner and Hanks (2003) actually cite a 1998 statement by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) that poor working conditions may be responsible for the large number of dissatisfied educators leaving the profession, for high burnout rates, and – arguably worst of all – decreased teacher effectiveness of educators in

special needs areas. When work conditions are negative (i.e., when teachers feel the stressors of the job outweigh the benefits), quality of instruction, overall morale, and effort are negatively affected. Poor working conditions identified in this study were variables such as: “excessive paperwork, large caseloads, low salaries, lack of collegial support, challenging student behaviors, and lack of visible student progress.” (p. 6)

A 1983 study conducted by J. L. Johnson as reported by Luckner and Hanks (2003) in their review of the literature identified 10 common stressors among deaf education teachers:

- (1) paperwork, (2) developing IEPs, (3) planning and preparing materials for a wide range of disabilities, (4) inappropriate and/or disruptive behavior of students, (5) inadequate time for planning, (6) inadequate salary, (7) attitude and behavior of some teachers, (8) uncooperative parents, (9) inadequate financial support for school programs, and (10) inadequate communication among school personnel. (p. 7)

The actual study conducted by Luckner and Hanks (2003) yielded some overlapping results to the 1983 list. At least half of all participants in their questionnaire scored the following as “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied”: amount of paperwork, state assessments, family involvement, time for nonteaching responsibilities, providing deaf role models for students, professional development opportunities related to the field of deaf education, and the amount of planning time required. A twenty year span between these two studies informs the research that not much has changed. Wisniewski & Garguilo (1997) reported nearly identical stressors for deaf education professionals, offering a half-way point perspective between the two studies. It has now been 13 years since the Luckner and Hanks (2003) study, but it can be reasonably assumed that these trends continue, as there has been no notable reform in deaf education that has occurred since these reports. Expectations have increased, but accrediting bodies’

recommendations for standardized systemic changes to address the reports from teachers are not evident.

Luckner and Hanks (2003) also identified the variables that teachers in deaf education associated with overall job satisfaction: healthy relationships with colleagues, affirmation from administration as important contacts within the school setting, job security, and working with a diverse population of students (Luckner & Hanks, 2003). Nonetheless, 32% of the participants indicated questions about remaining in the field of deaf education.

Compassion fatigue. Overall, it was clear from this study by Luckner and Hanks (2003) that the participants valued their students and their learning above all. While caring deeply for the success of students is a positive characteristic exhibited by educators (deaf education or otherwise), this value and compassion for students can also become a stressor. This was supported in their finding that indicated the diverse student population as a source of job satisfaction even though it is intuitively associated with greater need for flexibility and adjustment. Hoffman et al. (2007) term this stressor as *compassion fatigue* and attribute this deep empathy and caring of students in special education settings by their educators to high rates of burnout and likelihood of these professionals leaving the field of education. The weightiness of the responsibility of meeting students' needs and being effective can become too much to bear for compassionate and passionate educators who no longer feel they are making a difference. Wisniewski & Garguilo, (1997) corroborate this idea of compassion fatigue, although not utilizing the same terminology. They found that teachers of DHH students experienced high levels of emotional exhaustion.

Limited administrative support. Wisniewski & Garguilo (1997) conducted a study that produced several indicators that administrative support was limited in special education

classrooms. While this study was not specific to deaf education, the related special education umbrella can reasonably be generalized to this population. These authors found that educators in special education settings cited lack of administrative support to implement curricula, the failure to provide effective and quality performance feedback, the tendency of administrators to criticize rather than offer recognition for positive teacher performance, and “hassles” in general from administration involving delivery of services to students. The authors also found that teachers reported being subjected to excessive control by administration, describing them as inflexible and making teachers feel powerless to adequately do the job they need to do.

In a study of teacher efficacy beliefs (i.e. how impactful teachers view themselves to be) specific to deaf education (a related topic to stress and burnout, although not directly applicable), Garberoglio, Gobble, & Cawthon (2012) state that healthy efficacy views by teachers are directly linked to leadership who employ transformational leadership theory and practice to their administrative roles. For example, administrators who demonstrate to teachers their value through positive and effective motivation and inspiration see higher rates of efficacy beliefs than administrators who adopt transactional leadership theory. A transactional leader will not see higher rates of efficacy belief in their teachers, as this type of leadership values goal-and-reward oriented approaches to leading teachers. To put it more plainly, administrators who lead in such a way as to make teachers feel valued will have higher rates of belief that what they are doing makes a difference. When an educator has a strong, internal core belief that the work they do matters and makes a difference, stress can be effectively managed through use of coping mechanisms and affirmation of the belief that the cost-benefit (Foster, Long, & Snell, 1999) is worth the investment of time, energy, and experience stressors. When educators are able to see

benefits to the stress, it is reasonable to conclude that burnout rates could potentially decrease; this, in turn, also reduces retention.

Not only are teachers faced with all of the above stressors and others not stated explicitly in this review, the literature consistently points to limited preparation by the teachers' EPPs. Some report a discrepancy between what EPPs are teaching and what teachers need to be taught in order to be successful in their particular curricular areas, specifically in general-education content (Johnson, 2004). A standardized curriculum that enhances and complements the instructional needs of DHH students in today's classrooms has yet to be developed. In the following section, the literature related to EPPs is discussed in relation to efficacy, challenges, and need for reform.

Challenges of EPP's

Low incidence. There continues to exist a great need for qualified educators of DHH students, yet a significantly small pool of graduates to fill the need for the increasing demands (Benedict, Johnson, & Antia, 2011; Brunsting et al., 2014; Johnson, 2004; LaSasso & Wilson, 2000; Lenihan, 2010; Luckner & Hanks, 2003). In fact, the number of students enrolling in deaf education EPPs is declining rather than even remaining steady (Benedict et al., 2011; Dolman, 2010).

Students lacking needed skills. There is much discussion in the literature about what skills teacher candidates in EPPs do not seem to be receiving. The literature review on this topic included voices from professionals in the field, who have reflected upon or analyzed EPPs for effectiveness. Typical skills that seem to be lacking or that cause excessive stress in new educators of DHH students include:

- writing effective individualized education plans (IEPs) an important legal document that specifies each child's learning needs, the services the school will provide, and how progress will be measured (Wisniewski & Garguilo, 1997; Rittenhouse, 2004);
- content-specific knowledge (Johnson, 2004);
- differentiating instruction (Johnson, 2004);
- understanding the hard-of-hearing student and how to communicate and instruct them effectively (as opposed to manual/ASL students) (Lenihan, 2010; Miller, 2000);
- early intervention knowledge and strategies (Lenihan, 2010); and
- understanding of multi-handicapped DHH students (Guardino & Cannon, 2015; Johnson, 2004; Lenihan, 2010).

We have persisting documentation of the deficits within training programs from key professionals within the K-12 work environments, but we have no clearly defined guidelines about how to effectively address these deficits within the 120 credit hour restriction.

Increased diversity of educational settings in deaf education. The swiftly changing terrain of the typical deaf education settings in today's educational environment has created a need for deaf education EPPs to shift the focus of preparation. Gone are the days of simple choices for DHH student educational placements. The choice is no longer residential school for the deaf or self-contained classrooms. Changes in assistive technology (i.e., cochlear implants, better quality hearing aids, more sophisticated FM systems, etc.), increased accountability in a more assessment-driven academic culture, constant changes in adopted philosophies of various districts and the communication methods they employ, and increased diversity in the DHH

student population have created a significant number of additions to the two traditional placement options. The task now set before EPPs is to prepare educators of DHH students to be ready to teach in a variety of possible settings including itinerant settings, inclusion settings, oral-only classrooms, and Signing Exact English (SEE) classrooms/programs. The educator of DHH students graduating from deaf education EPPs today must be much more versatile and ever-ready to serve in any number of these settings. School districts expect these students to be adequately prepared to teach, despite the fact that there is such an array of employment possibilities now awaiting them than there was thirty, twenty, or even just ten years ago.

Standardization of curricula. Standardization of content and curriculum is difficult to accomplish for deaf education EPPs due mostly to the sheer volume of content, skills, and standards that must be met. Even in programs that value and use the standards set by the Counsel on the Education of the Deaf (CED) face difficulties. The CED suggests that in addition to the guidelines and standards for teaching DHH students, teacher candidates in deaf education programs should also meet the required standards for general education content for the grades they will be teaching. Considering that the vast majority of deaf education EPPs are all-level degrees (decisions that are set by state education agencies, not EPPs) (Johnson, 2004), it is challenging, expensive, and time-consuming mountain to climb to prepare students in the DHH standards as well as any possible grade and content area in which they might find themselves teaching. Such a demand is daunting, especially when the goal is to meet established standards of excellence. Further complicating the matter is the vague and ambiguous nature of the CED standards. Although these standards are the agreed-upon measuring stick for deaf education EPPs, they lack clear goals and objectives that would strengthen the standards of the profession (Johnson, 2004).

Forced limitations on EPPs. Adding a third layer to this complicated preparation conundrum is that EPPs are limited by state policies on the number of college credit hours and faculty available to teach additional courses (Johnson, 2004). Several articles also warn that roughly half of the current body of faculty teaching in deaf education EPPs is approaching retirement (Benedict et al., Dolman, 2010; LaSasso & Wilson, 2000). Because most deaf education degrees and certificates are all-level (PK – 12 grade), the amount of hours needed to train teachers for possible positions in language/English, mathematics, sciences, and social studies/history would far exceed the allotted number of hours allowed. Johnson (2004) asserts that acquisition of the necessary comprehensive body of skills and knowledge within an EPP is impossible. Resolution of the dilemma is exacerbated by the ever-changing certification requirements by state education agencies and accreditation agencies require constant vigilance on the part of EPPs to meet multi-layered standards as well (Johnson, 2004; Lenihan, 2010). Now only are the individual teachers of the DHH stressed, faculty within their training programs may have been stressed as well.

Qualities of Master Teachers in Deaf Education

Scheetz and Martin (2008) designed a study that conducted interviews beyond the initial literature review surveys to further examine qualities and traits of master teachers in deaf education. Data from these interviews revealed specific actions that characterize master teachers: staying late at work, doing “whatever is needed” (p. 337) to help students be successful; engaging in extracurricular work; commitment to differentiating instruction; having high expectations of their students; and knowledgeable of their content. A few reasons master teachers leave the field of deaf education (or education in general) were also outlined by the results of this study. These qualities associated with having high expectations of self and

students may also be considered in better understanding reasons for burnout. This conclusion is further supported by this same study that found the following reasons teachers report leaving the field of teaching: feeling unappreciated, being burned-out, experiencing a lack of support, having too many responsibilities, feeling isolated, not having enough authority in the educational decisions of students, and receiving low levels of compensation (in terms of salary) for their work.

The literature reviewed supports a conclusion that teacher of the DHH student population may be at high risk for burnout and occupational stress. The objective of this study is to add to the pre-existing body of literature specifically addressing the experiences of occupational stress and burnout within the population of teachers of DHH students.

Method

The present study surveyed teachers who are teaching in the field of deaf education to better understand their perceptions of within their work environment. This study was guided by the following research question: What are the common stressors and reasons for burnout among deaf education teachers? The researchers of this study employed a mixed-methods research approach, utilizing survey questions as the sole means of data collection. More specifically, a QUAN-QUAL Model (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009) was used to analyze data. Using this model, both qualitative and quantitative data are collected concurrently (in the case of this study, via an online survey) and both types of data are weighted equally. This method of research was selected by the researchers in order to ensure rich data interpretation, allowing the weaknesses of the quantitative data to be strengthened by the qualitative data and vice versa (Gay et al., 2009). Descriptive data was obtained from the responses, as well as qualitative data from short- and long-response survey questions. A 30 – 50+ sample size was established by the researchers to be

sufficient to explore the range of perspectives and experiences of the targeted group. Questions for the survey were informed by the literature address occupational stress and burnout within the teaching profession, and where available, specifically focused on the experiences of the teachers of the DHH student population.

Participants

Participants were selected using a convenience sampling scheme (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). The Deaf and Hard of Hearing educator preparation program for the researcher's university facilitates a closed Facebook® group for alumni of the program. The initial pool of applicants were recruited from this pool of 146 (this was the membership total at the time this research was conducted). Additionally, directors and coordinators of public school regional day school programs for the deaf known by the research faculty and the state school for the deaf located were contacted with a request that they distribute the survey among their professional faculty. In total, the responses to the survey (n=116) were sufficient to inform the research and far-surpassed the goal of 30 – 50 participants set by the researchers. Participants completing the survey were currently teaching in a deaf education classroom at the time of the survey or were former educators in the field of deaf education.

Instrument

A 28-question online survey was created by the researchers utilizing Qualtrics®, an online survey tool. Careful consideration was given to the questions asked, the wording of the questions, and the question order. Questions were reviewed by educators in the field and edited and revised according to their feedback and counsel. The researcher-developed survey consisted of questions of mixed-format; multiple choice, short-answer, ranking items, and Likert scale were included. The following categories of information were addressed: general teaching status

and years of experience; identification of stressors; access to support and resources; and professional consideration regarding career changes. Sample questions are presented in the Appendix.

Procedure

Data were collected via an online Qualtrics® survey. The survey was sent to partnering deaf education programs with the university as well as known deaf education professionals in the field. The distribution process spanned several venues. Program administrators of Regional Day School Programs for the Deaf (RDSPDs) were emailed the survey, asking them to distribute among teaching faculty. A portion of the participants were emailed directly, as they were known by the researchers to be colleagues in the field; some of these are educators in RDSPDs and some at residential schools for the deaf. A closed Facebook alumni group affiliated with the research university was utilized to spread the survey as well. The survey link was posted frequently within a time span of approximately five weeks in order to solicit as many responses as possible. The survey results were completely anonymous. The identities of the individuals completing the survey were not identified in any way through the survey questions (age, grade level taught, state or school district identification, gender), nor could they be identifiable via the survey submission data by the researchers. The survey was closed after a specified time period and all data were collected by the researchers for data analysis.

Data Analysis

The data set resulting from the survey was mixed, offering both quantitative data and qualitative data. Quantitative data was analyzed via the Qualtrics® software and reported as is. Qualitative data were analyzed by both authors via a constant comparative analysis method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), allowing themes to emerge from the data without any preconceived

bias (Miles & Huberman, 1994) from the researchers. Utilizing this method, data were analyzed in terms of codes and themes that are prevalent in the data in order to describe the voices of the participants. A compare-and-contrast method is employed as data are sorted, allowing the researchers to group data points into common threads, broad and specific categories. The emerging themes describe the participants' experiences. As patterns were revealed, the data was grouped accordingly; if new codes did not fit with emerging themes, new themes were added; as data sets were found to be similar, some themes were merged and collapsed in order to more accurately describe the data (Creswell, 2013). Data were grouped in this way throughout the analyzation process, constantly being compared and contrasted by the researcher to identify major themes emerging from the data.

Results

Demographics of Participants

There were 116 total responses to the survey (n=116). Of the total participants, 70% (n = 81) indicated that they were currently teaching in a deaf education classroom/program at the time of the survey; 16% (n =18) indicated that they had taught in a deaf education setting in the last 10 years; 11% (n=13) were still in the field of deaf education but no longer in a teaching role; 4% (n=5) indicated that they were not currently teaching in a deaf education setting and had not done so in the past 10 years. Of those participants no longer teaching in a deaf education setting, but still fulfilling a role within the field, the majority indicated they were working in the interpreting profession or teaching ASL as a foreign language. Those in interpreter positions indicated working in educational settings and others reported working with agencies or freelance interpreting outside of education. Those no longer teaching in the deaf education classroom stated that they had taken on other roles within education such as librarians, counselors, or

teaching in other content area. The remainder of participants who indicated they no longer were teaching listed their roles as administrators in deaf education, faculty in university deaf education programs, retired teachers, stay-at-home-mothers, or in a profession completely outside the realm of education.

Ninety-four percent ($n = 109$) of participants received their initial certification in deaf education; 5% ($n = 6$) obtained certification in deaf education as a certificate add-on by exam; 1% ($n = 1$) of participants indicated holding no deaf education teaching certificate. The majority of participants (43%; $n = 50$) indicated that they had been teaching in deaf education between 4 – 10 years; 27% ($n = 31$) were new teachers, indicating teaching between 0 – 3 years in a deaf education setting; 16% ($n = 19$) of participants reported 11 – 15 years of service; 15% ($n = 17$) of participants indicated 15+ years of service teaching in deaf education classroom settings.

Description of Workload

Participants were asked to indicate the approximate number of hours per week worked in an average week while teaching in a deaf education classroom. Of the total participants, 87% ($n=101$) responded to this item. The most common range of hours worked was between 50 – 60 hours per week. The other ranges were fairly evenly split – some indicating a 40 – 50 hour work week and about the same indicating a 60 – 75 hour work week. There were three outliers who indicated working between 15 – 25 hours per week teaching in a deaf education classroom.

Of the participants that responded to the hours worked per week item, there were several comments added to responses. One participant stated that hours increased on weeks that they had an IEP meeting. Another participant that indicated working 70 hours per week stated that this was largely due to paperwork. Still another response was simply, “too many to count” in reference to the number of hours worked per week as a deaf education teacher.

The item following the hours worked per week item asked participants to indicate whether or not they felt they worked more or less per week than teachers in a mainstream setting (i.e. general education teachers). A total of 102 participants responded to this item; 29% (n = 30) answered that deaf education teachers “most definitely” work a great deal more than mainstream teachers; 31% (n = 31) indicated they worked “significantly more”; 17% (n = 17) felt they worked “a bit more” than mainstream teachers; 21% (n = 21) selected “about the same” to indicate that they felt deaf education teachers and mainstream teachers work about the same number of hours; 2% (n = 2) of participants indicated that in their opinion deaf education teachers work “significantly less” or “most definitely a great deal less” in terms of hours than mainstream teachers.

The next question in the series related to workload was an open-ended asking participants to indicate why they felt they worked more hours than a mainstream, general education teacher. A total of 78 (67%) participants responded. These responses were analyzed for codes and themes. Nine major themes evolved indicating the reasons why deaf education teachers feel that teaching in their professional field requires more working hours than that of general education teachers. The Table 1 summarizes this data.

Table 1

Deaf education workload hours – time spent at various tasks

Theme	Relevant Codes	Sample Participant Responses
Attending to Student Needs	Student diversity; differentiation of instruction; expectation of grade-level performance despite ability-level of student	<p>They [general education teachers] do not have to adapt/modify/create as much curriculum.</p> <p>Individual prep for each student took time to ensure effectiveness and high quality of my lessons.</p> <p>The demand to teach on grade level and for deaf kids to be like their hearing counterpart.</p> <p>Another reason I felt I worked more is the simple fact that there were multiple grade levels and subjects that I had to prepare lesson plans for and teach. DAILY.</p>
Paperwork	IEPs/ARDs; state-required paperwork; program-specific paperwork; Medicaid billing documentation; various paperwork	<p>In addition, I have to prepare IEP paperwork which consumes a lot of time.</p> <p>all paperwork required by my boss for working in a special needs program</p> <p>Writing and updating IEPs was time consuming.</p>

Theme	Relevant Codes	Sample Participant Responses
Teacher Duties	Teaching; lesson planning; grading; developing materials; communicating with parents	<p>I make thirteen lesson plans each week.</p> <p>The students are only mainstreamed for electives; that leaves me teaching all four core classes to these three grade levels.</p> <p>My lesson plans become even longer because I have to modify it to each students' capability.</p> <p>The thing that takes the most time for me is lesson planning.</p>
Other Duties	Training and collaboration with mainstream teachers; same duties as general education, just magnified and more excessive; large caseloads; committee work; professional development	required to attend all mainstream meetings and special ed trainings and deaf ed meetings and literacy meetings and math meetings
Assessment Responsibilities	Data collection; modifying assessments; documentation	<p>extra time is spent on paperwork-progress monitoring</p> <p>documenting accommodations and such</p>
Multiple Roles	Interpreting duties; mentor to new teachers; tutoring; transportation coordinator	<p>planning and conference time spent covering for interpreters</p> <p>interpreting when staff interpreters are unavailable</p> <p>I am an itinerant teacher and classroom teacher</p> <p>Management is harder too since not everyone in the building signs, so if there are issues you are pulled to interpret, or call parents etc.</p>

Theme	Relevant Codes	Sample Participant Responses
Lack of Resources	No curriculum; no specialized curriculum; no collaboration; need for more staff	A lot of times the resources aren't available on the students' reading level like they are for the regular ed. students. There aren't enough deaf educators to match the needs of students in our building, program, or city. no consistent support from district in curriculum needs
Administrative Tasks	Managing staff; additional meetings	making and coordinating interpreter schedules
Special Skills Needed	Sign language; extra patience/determination	I have to spend time looking up signs for a lessons.

Note. Responses were recorded as-is. Ed. = Education

Description of Stressors

Based on the review of the literature, common stressors were listed on the questionnaire, asking participants to rank each item according to level of stress induced by each. The top eight stressors ranked by participants (listed in order of stress level, number 1 being the most stressful) were: (1) amount of paperwork, (2) high stakes testing, (3) responding to parents, (4) limited administrative support, (5) limited parental support, (6) limited resources for deaf education, (7) responsibility of multiple roles, and (8) inconsistency in curriculum for deaf education. Three additional stressors ranked low on the scale were attending to administrative tasks, lack of mentorship, and obtaining “highly qualified” status.

Participants were given the opportunity after ranking the given items to identify any additional stressors that were not listed. Reports included: addressing low-functioning deaf students, the stress involved with lesson planning, lack of understanding from those outside the field, behavior and classroom management, hostile work environments, lack of relatable

professional development, and feelings of inadequacy, isolation and lack of progress were all major themes emerging from the prompt concerning additional stressors. One participant responded by stating: “feeling failure to give [my students] all they need.” Another explained stress by sharing: “People [do not] understand my job and why I am needed.”

When asked if any of the stressors listed or written in were felt more strongly during the first three years of their teaching experience, 81% of new teachers indicated affirmatively. Analysis of responses resulted in three major themes: paperwork, lack of mentorship, and lack of administrative support were the most stressful during their beginning years as a teacher. One participant explained about both paperwork and mentor stressors,:

“That person just showed me around, but didn’t really show me the way things are done. I felt like I had to ask a lot of questions from numerous people and picked what seemed to work the best especially with ARD paperwork...had a lot of trial and error.”

Another participant painted a vivid picture, stating what they shared with a mentor:

“I felt as though I was drowning in deaf education. I couldn’t stay afloat anymore, so I chose to get out of the water...I quit.”

Responses to questions about mentorship indicated that 62% of new teachers were provided a mentor teacher. A subsequent question led participants to outline the effectiveness of their mentorship: 60% of those provided a mentor indicated that this relationship was “moderately effective”, “slightly effective”, or “not at all effective”; 40% of participants reported this mentor-mentee relationship to be “extremely effective” or “very effective”.

Participants were asked to indicate in a scaled response format whether or not they had ever felt burnout as a teacher. A total of 83% (n = 96) of the participants responded to this question: 47% (n = 45) of those participants indicated feeling “extremely burned-out” or “very

burned-out” at some point in their teaching experience; Thirty-two percent ($n = 31$) of the participants reported “moderately burned-out”; 14% ($n = 13$) indicated a “slight burnout”; and 7% ($n = 6$) indicated they had never experienced burnout as a deaf education teacher.

Responses to questions related to overall retention and future career outlook resulted in 47% indicating that they would “definitely” or “probably” be retiring from teaching in deaf education; 53% indicated they “might not”, “probably will not”, or “definitely will not” retire from teaching in a deaf education setting. Participants were asked directly if they had ever considered leaving the field of deaf education altogether and 77% ($n=94$) of the sample responded affirmatively.

Affirmative responses to open-ended questions related to plans to leave the field included: feeling overwhelmed; being overworked with little cost benefit in terms of seeing improvement in students, salary; and not feeling valued as contributors to the field. Many of the stressors already discussed were reiterated in responses to this question.

Another related question was posed to participants who had already indicated they had thought about leaving deaf education, asked why they had not already left the field (if they were still teaching). Two major themes were present in these responses: teachers love their students and they need a paycheck. One stated:

“I love my students and I knew the first year would be hard. I need to give it more time to see if this is where I want to stay.”

Another teacher’s passion for students was reflected in the statement:

“I really, truly love what I do. I couldn’t imagine leaving the kids I currently have now, and the ones I have coming up to me in the future. I realize that the kids enjoy me being

their teacher, and I would not want to disappoint them. I feel like this is what I am supposed to do with my life, it's just not an easy life.”

The second theme captured is reflected in the response that connotes the burden and burnout discussed in the literature:

“I need a job and don't know what else I would do.”

The following statement reflects both of these themes in one succinct and sobering statement:

“I need a job. I don't want to abandon my kids.”

Description of Resources and Support

When asked to rank the sources of stress and burnout, the most frequently ranked was lack of administrative support from their programs/districts; high stakes testing was ranked second; and a disconnect between content in educator preparation programs and the reality of issues in the classroom (inadequate training).

Program/district support. Participants were then asked whether or not they felt their program/district made every possible effort to provide adequate resources for them to perform their job to the best of their ability. Forty-one percent (n = 47) of participants indicated that their program/district provided “some [support], but not enough”; 30% (n = 35) indicated that their program/district provided “enough to meet minimum needs”; 18% (n = 21) shared that their program/district “definitely” provided adequate support to meet their needs; and 11% (n = 13) indicated that their program/district “definitely did not” provide adequate support to meet their needs.

Employer/administrative support. Responses to an open-ended question requesting the ways employer/administrator/program could have better supported them in the deaf education classroom resulted in five major themes from 67 responses: (1) consistency and follow-through,

(2) relevant training, mentoring, and increased observation with constructive feedback, (3) seek out and provide specialized and relevant curricula and resources, (4) greater understanding from non-deaf education administration, and (5) providing more qualified paraprofessional staff (e.g. instructional aids and certified interpreters). Responding participants reported a perception that administration generally maintained a “hands-off” approach, rarely visited classrooms and offered negative feedback with little encouragement. One participant voiced concerns about limited administrative visibility:

“The person who hired me said she would mentor me but never comes to observe or check on me. When answering questions [she] most often just directs me to someone that does not know my field. The school gave me a general education mentor which I have only seen one time and all they came in to do was ask me if I completed PDAS training.”

Teachers indicated that they did not feel supported, valued, or understood. One teacher, recalling the first year of teaching, stated:

“[They] expect teachers new to the field to know everything. They need to realize that we are going to make mistakes. Give us support and stand behind us.”

Some reported being disrespected:

“We are teaching different subjects at different grade levels. Respect of the time needed to plan for that (and plan well) would have been greatly appreciated. Even just an acknowledgement of the workload would have helped.”

In addition, participants indicated that the expected responsibility to provide specialized materials, resources, and curriculum should be shared between deaf education administration and teachers and not be assumed totally by the teacher.

University support. An open-ended question asked participants to indicate ways in which their university EPP could have better prepared them for the deaf education classroom. Six major themes emerged from this data set of 82 (71%) responses: (1) more experience in deaf education classrooms prior to graduation that provided a realistic view of what to expect; (2) more instruction related to the standard, required, paperwork and documentation required for IEPs, IEP meetings, assessment documentation; (3) more instruction on the variety of settings that exist in deaf education (inclusion, itinerant, oral classrooms); (4) Education Preparation Programs (EPPs) staying current on what is occurring in deaf education programs in terms of curricula, responsibilities, and types of students; (5) more information on audiology and amplification related responsibilities; and (6) more varied instruction on communication systems, which included Signing Exact English (SEE), exposure to ASL, and oral communication. “More real life, hands-on experience,” and “having more time in classrooms” are examples of frequent comments. When reflecting on their EPP, participants reported a desire for more time in classrooms, but more time in “real” classrooms, which would allow them to hone skills in formulating more realistic expectations for what they would encounter and exposure to a broader range of experiences and effective strategies for intervention and responding.

Discussion

The results of this study provide relevant and immediate call-to-action for the field of deaf education. The participation was significant (n=116) and provided rich data to inform professional educators in the field, administrators, and EPPs as the field of deaf education continues to change and grow. In addition, by the nature of the responses, it can be concluded that the types of educators completing the survey have experience in a diverse range of settings, providing a well-rounded and robust pool of data that can be put to use to improve the profession

as a whole. Responses were sufficient to answer the research questions of this study: What are the common stressors and reasons for burnout among deaf education teachers? Following is a discussion of the limitations of the study and discussion of the major findings of the survey data.

Demographics of Participants

The participation pool offers an updated look at the stressors of deaf education teachers that has not been examined in the literature for decades. Given that in this study, the majority of participants indicating that they are currently teaching in the field or have done so in the past 10 years, findings enhance the body of literature by providing an updated perspective. The only study uncovered in the review of the literature directly relating to the focus of this study was authored by Meadows (1981), thirty-five years ago. This more recent glimpse into burnout for the current educators of the deaf is important in an education system that changes rapidly and has changed dramatically in the past several decades.

In addition, the diverse nature of experiences that responses indicated (varied settings and variability in terms of years of service) widens the scope of the literature. There were several studies cited that were related to deaf education, but either broadly in terms of special education in general (Brunsting et al., 2014; Wisniewski & Garguilo, 1997) or in a specialized sector of deaf education, such as the study of deaf education teachers in oral classrooms only (Lenihan, 2010). Luckner and Hanks' (2003) study on job satisfaction of teachers in deaf education is also over a decade old and the focus of job satisfaction did not dive into the specific stressors and burnout experienced by educators in the field.

Description of Workload

Participants' description of the vast array of responsibilities required of them mirror the literature. The self-reported hours worked by participants corroborates a characteristic Scheetz

and Martin (2008) attribute to master deaf education teachers – they will do what it takes, including working long hours and staying late, to do what is needed for their students.

Participants described the need to constantly differentiate instruction for a diverse population of students, echoing the findings of Stewart and Kluwin (2001) who state that diversity among DHH students make the task of defining them an impossible one and meeting the needs of such a varied subpopulation challenging. The paperwork, constant demands of IEP preparation and meetings, excessive and time-consuming lesson planning, large caseloads, assessment responsibilities, and the need to locate or create appropriate curricula could have been directly inserted into some of the older studies cited in the literature review (Johnson, 2004; Lenihan, 2010; Luckner & Hanks, 2003). The sheer volume of expected competencies for deaf education teachers is clearly overwhelming and daunting and has become increasingly demanding. The list of workload stressors given by participants alone is evidence that burnout is inevitable without serious reform, cementing the findings in the literature that claim special education professionals are far more likely to experience burnout and stress, leading to exodus from the field (Brunsting et al., 2014; Kaufhold et al., 2006).

Description of Stressors

Probably the main theme emerging from reported stressors by participants could be mistaken for a broken record: paperwork, paperwork, paperwork. In response to survey items for this study, paperwork was the number one stressor and time-consuming task experienced by educators. The authors of the related literature nod in agreement; nearly every article and book cited in the literature review mentions excessive paperwork for educators in the fields of special education and deaf education, spanning the decades. This stressor seems to be persisting throughout the decades with no resolve. Participants cited paperwork repeatedly throughout all

responses in the survey, blaming this stressor for the consumption of massive chunks of time for educators. The fact that again and again, paperwork as a stressor and reason for burnout continues to be mentioned warrants serious and strategic scrutiny by stakeholders in the field if the cries of professionals in the field are to be taken with any value.

High-stakes, testing stressors are a result of increased accountability in the current standards-and-assessment culture in education. These standards continue to increase (Johnson, 2004; Luckner & Hanks, 2003) and yet lack of resources (ranked second as a stressor by participants of this study) also continues to be cited as a stressor for teachers, both in the literature (Johnson, 2004; Lenihan, 2010) and in the results of this study. With increasing standards and continued lack of resources to meet them, the creation of a perfect storm is amiss. This climate is setting up teachers and students to fail instead of setting them up for success.

Dealing with parents that either cannot or are not willing to be involved in their child's education or language was the third and fifth stressors ranked by participants in this study. Again, the literature is in agreement. Challenges in communicating with parents is widespread in the literature. Lack of administrative support was ranked number four in this study and is discussed at length throughout this study. Negative work conditions created by administration is cited by Luckner and Hanks (2003) as a factor in poor overall job satisfaction of deaf education professionals. Lack of administrative support in educational settings (specifically special education) is a trend found in the literature, specifically the article cited in the literature for this study by Wisniewski & Garguilo, (1997). Many of the participants' in the survey outlined the desire for greater involvement by administration in giving teacher feedback, providing quality mentors, and seeking out relevant curriculum and resources. These suggestions echo those of these authors as well.

Description of Resources and Support

Participants expressed lack of support from administration as well as being ill-prepared by their EPPs in deaf education. Both of these weak points in resources and support can be found in the literature. The lack of administrative support has already been discussed, so the focus here will be on discussion of EPPs and how they can rally support for future educators. Participants repeatedly mention the amount of planning that goes into teaching their students in varied grade levels, ability levels, and content areas. The need for educators to be prepared in all of these areas is a steep mountain for EPPs to climb. To some extent, the hands of EPPs are tied in red-tape from accrediting agencies, state education agencies, lack of faculty, and the need to cover specific standards and criteria while maintaining specific parameters related to the amount of hours allowed for a degree plan. These limitations and concerns are evidenced in the literature (Benedict, Johnson, & Antia, 2011; Dolman, 2010). IEP-related gaps appeared repeatedly in responses from participants – writing IEPs, implementing IEPs, maintaining IEP documentation, preparing for IEP meetings, paperwork for IEP meetings. Participants made it abundantly clear that IEP related tasks and paperwork is a monumental portion of the workload. They also made it clear that this is an area of weakness in deaf education EPPs, a position also supported by Rittenhouse (2004).

Limitations

Although the results of this survey yielded an adequate pool of responses and may be generalized to the field of education at large, there are a few limitations of this study that are appropriate to mention. There were no questions asked about the types of settings in which the participants had experience. Varied reports may likely be explained by regional differences in programs and/or whether or not the participants' experiences were from residential schools for

the deaf or RDSPDs. Similarly, there is no way to know what roles these participants were fulfilling at the time of the survey (e.g. self-contained classroom, inclusion support, itinerant, etc.) The type of role could certainly explain the variability in the responses. Additionally, the participants of the survey were likely mostly teaching in Texas public schools. There could have been participants on a more national scope due to the networking of the profession, but again, there is no way to know this for sure. The survey was also sent in the middle of spring, prime state assessment season and IEP meeting season. Some professionals who might have otherwise completed the survey may not have been able to find time to do so due to the busy nature of the academic calendar at the time. A final limitation is related to the very nature of the focus of the study: some educators who are experiencing burnout and high levels of stress may not have taken the time (nor had the time or desire to do so) to complete the survey, creating a self-selection bias.

Recommendations

Recommendations for educators. Responding to calls for research, such as the survey for this study, is a sound place for educators to begin to have their voices heard. Such contributions to the literature can begin to transform practice and cultural norms in deaf education. Staying abreast of related literature and current practice in the field is also a recommendation, as this is a characteristic of a master teacher outlined by Scheetz and Martin (2008). Self-advocacy by educators within programs and with administrators would also do well to raise awareness of stressors. Collaboration with other teachers, administration, and colleagues in the field have the potential to effectively address feelings of isolation and create a culture and climate of collective and productive problem-solving. With the technology available today to synchronously meet with professionals across the nation without leaving the classroom,

opportunities abound for accessible, and positive mentorship, collaboration, and unity within the profession.

Recommendations for administration. The voices of the participants of this study call for change that could easily be implemented by administrators in deaf education settings. New teachers seem to crave feedback and constructive input. Increasing visibility and offering genuine praise, constructive suggestions, and fostering an overall work environment that is warm and encouraging would seemingly be a step in the right direction. Such changes require little more than a shift in attitude and creative manipulation of schedules to clear time to visit with teachers. Providing mentors to new teachers is essential, as is training those mentors in effective practice. This could be done through professional development. Again, if the environment fostered is one of collaboration, warmth, and encouragement, a successful mentor/mentee relationship should complement the norms already set by programs. Proactive research in up-to-date methodologies, curricula, and appropriate resources and materials on the part of administration would lighten the burden of teachers to both seek out such resources *and* learn to implement them effectively. Creating partnerships with EPPs in the quest for more specialized curricula, assessment, and effective best practice would be ideal, as this would mean teachers currently being trained by EPPs would graduate with ready-knowledge of EPPs and the curricula, programs, and resources in place in classrooms. The learning curve for new teachers would be lessened, resulting in reduced stress, reduced burnout, and greater rates of retention.

Recommendations for EPPs. Greater attention must be placed on preparing teacher candidates for IEP related job responsibilities and skills. EPPs could purchase IEP preparation software commonly used by districts in order to train preservice teachers. Such a change would mean allocation of funds to pay for the software and clearing space in coursework to cover this

material, both of which are feasible and realistic changes that could occur. Creation of mock IEP meetings or even participation in IEP meetings via technology would also be beneficial in training. Professionals in the field could be invited to mock IEP meetings and offer feedback to students immediately, so that they are learning in a safe environment instead of in a legally-binding, high-stress environment as a first year teacher.

As mentioned in the previous section, EPPs fostering partnerships with RDSPDs, residential schools, and other deaf education settings would create a win-win for future educators and deaf education programs. Reform in degree plans and coursework might also be in order for EPPs in deaf education, allowing for either broader exposure to the various settings in which their graduates will be employed (teaching both ASL and SEE, for example) or more specialized tracks so that graduates can seek out specific programs and/or settings that more closely match their training. For example, EPPs might offer a track for early intervention specialists in deaf education, a track for secondary settings (middle and high school), a track for orally focused programs, and a track for manual/ASL programs. Increasing field experiences prior to graduation would be appropriate, offering exposure to a variety of settings. Again, with the technology available, programs do not have to be limited to whatever local classrooms are available. This antiquated practice not only limits the practicum experiences and clock-hours teacher candidates can receive in classrooms, it also narrows the scope of exposure. Whatever the case, EPPs must recognize that there is a need to expand philosophies and niches in order to more adequately prepare educators for the field.

Future Research and Practice

Specific research related to the various sub-groups in deaf education (i.e. manual-only programs, oral-only programs, SEE philosophies, ASL philosophies, residential schools, day

school programs, itinerant teachers, early intervention specialists, etc.) as they related to teacher responsibilities, workload, stress, and burnout would be beneficial. As it is with defining a DHH student, defining an educator of DHH students is equally as difficult. There exist such varied educational settings, philosophies, and methodologies that results of studies can become too diverse to be practically applied. One such example from this study would be the responses from participants who requested EPPs provide more instruction in SEE and others requested more instruction in ASL. Which is the need? Where is the need? What types of educators have this need? These questions could be answered with more targeted research in the various facets of the field. Grade-level specific stressors could also be identified in future research.

Highlighting excellence in teaching in the field of deaf education must also become a priority. As a whole, the profession of deaf education must be vigilant in identifying master teachers in the field. We must bring them to EPP classrooms, have them share, have them mentor, have them write about their successes and their struggles. Allowing preservice teachers to talk with those that have gone before and have been successful will boost passion, will foster collaboration, and will keep EPPs up-to-date on current practice in actual classrooms. All of these are characteristics of master teachers in the field as outlined by Scheetz and Martin (2008). Once again, today's technological advances make this a cinch.

Regular and continued exploration of teacher stressors, burnout, and retention rates should become the norm in the field of deaf education, specifically. Although still a low-incidence sector in the overall field of education, these voices are important to be heard in order to increase the efficacy and quality of the education of DHH students. In 1981, a staggering 35 years ago, Meadows' stated, "It would seem that the problem of stress and burnout among professionals working in educational settings for deaf children is one that needs serious

attention.” (p. 19) She goes on to deem this as an “accelerating concern” (p. 19). The issue of teacher stress and burnout was serious and of concern 35 years ago; how long is the profession going to continue to exacerbate the problem without adequately and effectively addressing the needs of educators? Researchers in the field must stay abreast of the phenomena contributing to burnout; professionals in the field must take heed of the research findings; and practitioners and decision-makers must set forth action to spur change if we are to maintain quality educators in the field.

References

- Benedict, K. M., Johnson, H., & Antia, S. D. (2011). Faculty needs, doctoral preparation, and the future of teacher preparation programs in the education of deaf and hard of hearing students. *American Annals of the Deaf, 156*(1), 35-46.
- Brunsting, N. C., Sreckovic, M. A., & Lane, K. L. (2014). Special education teacher burnout: A synthesis of research from 1979 to 2013. *Education and Treatment of Children, 37*(4), 681-712.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Dolman, D. (2010). Enrollment trends in deaf education teacher preparation programs, 1973-2009. *American Annals of the Deaf, 155*(3), 353-359.
- Easterbrooks, S., & Baker-Hawkins, S. (1995). Deaf and hard of hearing students: Educational service guidelines. Alexandria, VA.
- Fore, C., Martin, C., & Bender, W. N. (2002). Teacher burnout in special education: The causes and the recommended solutions. *The High School Journal, 86*(1), 36-44.
- Foster, S., Long, G., & Snell, K. (1999). Inclusive instruction and learning for deaf students in postsecondary education. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education, 4*(3), 225-235.
- Garberoglio, C. L., Gobble, M. E., & Cawthon, S. W. (2012). A national perspective on teachers' efficacy beliefs in deaf education. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education, 17*(3), 367-383.
- Gay, L. R., Mills, G. E., & Airasian, P. (2009). *Educational research: Competencies for analysis and applications* (9th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Guardino, C., & Cannon, J. E. (2015). Theory, research, and practice for students who are deaf and hard of hearing with disabilities: Addressing the challenges from birth to postsecondary education. *American Annals of the Deaf*, *160*(4), 347-355.
- Hoffman, S., Palladino, J. M., & Barnett, J. (2007). Compassion fatigue as a theoretical framework to help understand burnout among special education teachers. *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research*, *2*, 15-22.
- Johnson, H. A. (2004). U.S. deaf education teacher preparation programs: A look at the present and a vision for the future. *American Annals of the Deaf*, *149*(2), 75-91.
- Kaufhold, J. A., Alvarez, V. G., & Arnold, M. (2006). Lack of school supplies, materials and resources as an elementary cause of frustration and burnout in south Texas special education teachers. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, *33*(3), 159-161.
- LaSasso, C., & Wilson, A. (2000). Results of two national surveys of leadership personnel needs in deaf education. *American Annals of the Deaf*, *145*, 429-435.
- Leech, N. L., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2007). An array of qualitative data analysis tools: A call for data analysis triangulation. *School Psychology Quarterly*, *22*(4), 557-587.
- Lenihan, S. (2010). Trends and challenges in teacher preparation in deaf education. *The Volta Review*, *110*(2), 117-128.
- Luckner, J. L., & Hanks, J. A. (2003). Job satisfaction: Perceptions of a national sample of teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. *American Annals of the Deaf*, *148*(1), 5-17.

- Meadow, K. P. (1981). Burnout in professionals working with deaf children. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 126(1), 13-22.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.
- Miller, K. (2000). Welcome to the real world: Reflections on teaching and administration. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 145(5), 404-410.
- Rittenhouse, R. K. (Ed.). (2004). *Deaf Education at the Dawn of the 21st Century*. Hillsboro, OR: Butte Publications, Inc.
- Rose, S., McAnally, P. L., & Quigley, S. P. (2004). *Language learning practices with deaf children* (3rd ed.). Austin, TX: PRO-ED, Inc.
- Scheetz, N. A. (2001). *Orientation to deafness* (2nd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Scheetz, N. A., & Martin, D. S. (2008). National study of master teachers in deaf Education: Implications for teacher education. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 153(3), 328-343.
- Stewart, D. A., & Kluwin, T. N. (2001). *Teaching deaf and hard of hearing students: Content, strategies, and curriculum*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2007). *Archived: A 25 Year History of the IDEA*. Retrieved November 11, 2015, from <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/leg/idea/history.html>
- Wisniewski, L., & Garguilo, R. M. (1997). Occupational stress and burnout among special educators: A review of the literature. *The Journal of Special Education*, 31(3), 325-346.

APPENDIX

Sample Survey Categories and Questions

Category	Survey Question
Establishing Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select your current teaching status. • If you are no longer teaching in a Deaf Education classroom, please indicate your current career/job title. • Indicate how long you have been teaching in a Deaf Education classroom.
Identification of Stressors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listed below are common stressors for teachers found in the body of literature related to teacher stress and burnout. Rank each item according to the level of stress it induces for you (or recently induced for you if you are not currently teaching in a Deaf Education classroom.) • Were any of the stressors listed above felt more strongly during your first three years of teaching? • Indicate which stressors were particularly more stressful during your first three years of teaching. • Do you currently have (or before leaving the classroom, did you have) a feeling of being “burned out” in your teaching?
Support and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider your stressors. Please rank the following lack of resources/supports in order of contribution to your stressors as a teacher, number one being the most stressful and following in order to least stressful. • Do you feel your district/program made every possible effort to provide adequate resources for you to do your job to the best of your ability? (e.g., appropriate curriculum, technology in the classroom, classroom support personnel when needed, etc.) • What could your university Educator Preparation Program have done to better prepare you for the classroom, if anything? • What could your employer/program/district have done to better support you in the classroom, if anything?
Professional Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever considered leaving the field of Deaf Education altogether? • Please indicate the main reasons why you have considered leaving the field of Deaf Education or education altogether. • Have you already left the field of Deaf Education or education altogether? • Do you envision yourself retiring from the field of Deaf Education?