5-2016

The Effects of Reviewing a School's Mission and Vision on Teacher Stress

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An Action Research Report
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Submitted on May 17, 2016

in fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to see what effect reviewing a school's mission and vision would have on teacher stress in an urban, public charter Montessori school located in the Midwest. Four teachers participated in this research over the course of three weeks. Teachers were given laminated notecards containing the school's mission and vision statements and were asked to read the notecards throughout their days and to log when they read these notecards. Teachers completed pre and post-intervention attitude scales to gauge perceived stress levels. Teachers were invited to take notes throughout the intervention, and I wrote a narrative describing a typical morning. At the end of the three weeks, I conducted interviews with each participating teacher. Reviewing the school's mission and vision did not have a significant impact on teacher stress. Teachers expressed a high level of stress and had difficulty finding effective coping strategies for dealing with this stress. Highly stressed myself, I made the decision to leave my teaching position at the end of the academic year.

Keywords: teacher stress, mission and vision, urban public charter Montessori

To teach is to be vulnerable. A teacher commits her time, efforts, and energies to the worthy cause of educating others. A Montessori primary teacher is trained to gently and humbly guide young children, inviting concentration and independence. Montessori (1995) wrote exultantly of the prototypical Montessori teacher: "She feels worth only to serve, in the humble sense of preparing the environment and keeping out of sight." (p. 274)

What happens when reality does not meet this idyllic picture of a Montessori teacher? Montessori teachers are trained to move gracefully in the classroom environment and to never raise their voices. They are trained to give focused one-on-one lessons, never allowing interruptions to disrupt their concentration. In practice, though, these ideals may be difficult to achieve. Emotionally disturbed students, year-round testing, and uninvolved parents are just a few challenges teachers may face. In place of Montessori miracle workers, one may instead find frazzled, stressed teachers trying to work through a variety of modern classroom realities.

I began my work as a Montessori teacher as I imagine many do: excited, nervous, and determined to improve our world through children. I believed I should and could make a difference through my work in education. I started work in a public Montessori charter school in its first year of existence. I knew I was signing up for a challenge, and I aimed to be realistic with my expectations. I imagined that I would spend long hours at work, certainly more than forty or even fifty hours. I imagined I would have to have difficult conversations with parents about the needs of their children. I also imagined some of the rewards I might find in my first year of teaching, chief among them the

satisfaction I would feel in helping children develop socially, emotionally, and academically.

Reality fell short of my expectations. I found a sixty-hour workweek was not enough to administer my job. I found I had to complete required state testing on children as young as three. I found that rather than giving lessons and gently guiding children through their natural development process, as I was trained to do, I instead spent the majority of my time in the classroom managing behaviors such as punching, kicking, and screaming. I came home at the end of the day with bruises, exhausted. I cried often, vomited before work, and experienced hair loss. I was stressed and at a loss as to how to cope with this stress.

It was against this backdrop of vulnerability that I explored teacher stress as an action research topic. I looked at typical causes of teacher stress as well as coping strategies for teachers experiencing stress. As I dealt with the emotional and physical manifestations of my own stress, I asked myself, "Why am I even here? Why am I doing this?" I sought meaning in my struggle as a teacher. I focused on the mission and vision of our startup Montessori. In reviewing the school's mission and vision statements, I found answers as to why I was teaching through such difficulty. I arrived at a question to guide my research: What effect will regular review of a school's vision and mission statements have on high teacher stress in an urban, public Montessori environment? This research took place over a three-week period in a public charter Montessori school located in the Midwest. Sixty-six percent of students served at the school were low-income, meaning family income levels fell below 150% of the federal poverty level based on the Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines. Four teachers, including myself,

participated in this study by regularly reviewing the school's mission and vision; all teachers worked with children ages three to six.

Literature Review

Causes of Teacher Stress

Teaching can be a stressful occupation. The stress teachers experience manifests itself in a variety of ways, and teachers employ a variety of coping strategies to deal with it. A review of the literature offered many effective coping strategies, but there remains room to more effectively address teacher stress.

Teachers experience stress for a variety of reasons. Richards (2012) reported the top five sources of teacher stress among California teachers. The highest source of stress for these teachers was teaching high-need students without enough support. Teachers also felt over committed, with too many duties and responsibilities, often having to take work home. Teachers cited a lack of control over school decisions that affected them as another source of stress. Richards reported that teaching unmotivated students and also feeling the pressure of being accountable was stressful for these teachers. Richards also explored how a community's level of poverty is brought into classrooms. Teachers found themselves dealing with social issues such as student hunger, gang violence, or drugs. These factors were woven into the fabric of a teacher's day, and teachers in lower wealth schools reported higher levels of stress nationwide.

Managing individual behaviors can be challenging and stressful for teachers. Child behavior problems were significantly and positively associated with teacher stress (Friedman-Krauss, 2014). Teacher stress can have a cyclical effect: once stress occurs,

teachers become less able to cope with it, and their own behavior may contribute to the children's behaviors that cause them further stress. The lower level of stress a teacher reported, the more empathy and less disruptiveness the children displayed; high teacher stress was associated with higher impulsivity and lower cooperation skills among children (Siekkinen, 2013).

Manifestations of Teacher Stress

Teacher stress can manifest in a variety of ways. In a survey of California teachers, Richards (2012) presented the top five manifestations of stress. The most common manifestation was physical exhaustion. Other results included a loss of idealism and enthusiasm about teaching as well as negative effects on personal relationships. Idealism, enthusiasm, and personal relationships may act as a buffer to stress so the loss of these things leave teachers vulnerable. Teachers also reported feeling overwhelmed with what was expected of them and expressed doubts about their abilities to make a difference in students' lives. Stress also caused teachers to worry about their job security. The results of Richards' study suggested that if teachers experience stress over time, they are candidates for burnout.

Maslach (1982) defined burnout as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do "people-work," such as nurses, social workers, and teachers. Burnout is a response to the chronic emotional strain of dealing extensively with other human beings, particularly when they are troubled or having problems. With emotional exhaustion, people feel their emotional resources depleted with no source of replenishment. In response to this drained feeling, they detach themselves

psychologically to achieve emotional distance from others' overwhelming needs; this detached response is depersonalization. Those who are emotionally detached may fail to provide the appropriate help, care, or service and at this point, the third aspect of burnout appears: a feeling of reduced personal accomplishment.

Coping with Teacher Stress

How do teachers cope with stress? Richards (2012) listed the top five coping strategies among teachers in California. Teachers reported their most effective coping strategy was reaching out to supportive friends and family. Humor and times of solitude were also listed. Viewing stress as problem to be solved helped teachers overcome it. Teachers also cited maintaining a positive attitude as a way to cope with stress. Richards pointed out that the causes of teacher stress were largely outside the control of teachers; the power of stressed teachers was in their choice of coping strategies. This is why the topic of teacher stress and possible strategies for coping with it is an important area of study. Betoret (2010) found that active coping strategies eased the occurrence of teacher burnout and recommended giving active coping strategies during teacher training so that teachers will be able to cope with difficulties rather than become overwhelmed by them.

Klassen (2010) explored how a sense of collective efficacy ameliorates the effects of high stress and low job satisfaction. Klassen defined this sense of collective efficacy as teachers' perceptions that the school staff, as a group, could effectively improve student learning and behavior. Klassen reported that a high sense of collective efficacy among teachers mediated the effects of stress. When teachers shared a collective and achievable goal, stress was lower.

Mission-Oriented Work

Connecting to a mission plays a role in how one does their job. Pink (2009) proposed that we consider the motivations behind the work we do. Pink offered three forces that motivate us in the workplace: autonomy, mastery, and purpose. He asserted that autonomous people working toward mastery perform at very high levels, but those who do so in the service of an objective serving a greater purpose can achieve even more. The most productive, satisfied, and deeply motivated people connect their desires to a cause larger than themselves. Humans have sought purpose since the beginning of time. Montessori defines this urge to propel ourselves forward as "horme." "Horme belongs to life in general, to what might be called the divine urge, the source of all evolution" (Montessori, 1995, p. 83).

When people are connected to a purpose, they are better workers. Grant (2008) conducted a study of call center representatives making calls for a university fundraising operation. He divided his participants into three groups. One group, each night before making calls, read brief stories from previous employees about the personal benefits of working in that job. They read of benefits such as earning money, developing communication skills, and so on. The second group, before making calls, read stories from people who had received scholarships from the funds raised; they read how the money had improved these people's lives. The third group was the control group and worked as they usually did, reading no stories. The people in the group reminded of the personal benefits were not more successful in raising money than those in the control group. The people in the second group, who had read about what their work

accomplished, raised more than twice as much money, through twice as many pledges, as the other groups. A brief reminder of their purpose doubled their performance.

Niemiec, Ryan, and Deci (2009) explored the effect of purpose goals in their study of recent undergraduate college graduates beginning their careers. The researchers asked the soon-to-be graduates about their life goals and then followed up with them early in their careers to see how they were doing. Before graduating, some of the respondents had extrinsic aspirations such as to become wealthy or to achieve fame. Others had intrinsic aspirations such as to help others improve their lives and to learn. When researchers followed up with the graduates one to two years later, the people who had intrinsic purpose goals and felt they were attaining them reported an increase in satisfaction and well-being from when they were in college. They reported low levels of anxiety and depression. The results for those with extrinsic profit goals who felt they were attaining them did not show an increase in satisfaction and well-being from when they were in college. They show increases in anxiety and depression. Connecting purpose and mission with one's well-being can offer coping strategies for those experiencing stress.

Connecting a great purpose to one's work can provide an effective coping strategy for those who feel they are accomplishing that purpose. For teachers who do not feel they are achieving their purpose, more research would be useful. Continued research on how stress may manifest itself and effective coping strategies for teachers dealing with stress can help to address this important issue. Further research on the causes of stress, including the complex effects of poverty, may help ease teacher stress.

Methodology

Participating teachers were given active consent forms (see Appendix A), which provided an overview of the project. In the form, I outlined the intervention to address teacher stress: teachers would receive notecards containing our school's mission and vision statements. Teachers were asked to read the notecards throughout the work day, at times of their own choosing and convenience, regardless of stress level. They were asked to log the dates when they read these cards and, if convenient, note why they chose to read the card in a reflective journal. I explained that the intervention would last three weeks and would include pre and post-intervention attitude scales (see Appendix B). I also explained that teachers would have a discussion with me at the conclusion of the intervention. I emphasized that all data collected would be kept confidential. On receiving the consent forms, teachers had an opportunity to ask me questions and to learn more about the project. Every teacher opted to participate in the project. Including myself, four teachers participated in this research. All participating teachers worked with children ages three to six.

We each began by filling out a short, five-question attitude scale designed to gauge our perceived stress levels. In using this attitude scale, I aimed to gain concrete numerical data reflecting our stress levels. I used the same attitude scale at the end of the intervention to see if there had been any change in perceived stress. Teachers were given the attitude scales individually and completed them immediately.

After completing the first attitude scale, I distributed the mission and vision notecards and tally sheets (see Appendix C & D) to teachers. Teachers received the notecards and tally sheets on the same day, at the beginning of day. The tally sheets were

glued to the front page of a small journal I provided to each teacher, with the aim of

making notetaking conveniently available at the same time as making tally marks. As an

active participant in the intervention, I realized in the first week that I had forgotten to

take out and read my notecard for three days in a row. I reasoned that if I was having

difficulty remembering, other teachers might be as well. With that in mind, I sent my

fellow teachers an email, thanking them for participating. This provided us an

opportunity to check in and also served as a reminder to read the notecards when able. In

my own journal, I wrote a narrative of a typical morning teaching, including stressful

events, to generate as much rich data as possible. I did not ask other teachers to write a

narrative to minimize any added responsibility related to this intervention. At the end of

three weeks, I collected the tally sheets and journals from teachers.

Finished with the intervention, I sought more data by conducting semi-structured

discussions with each of the participating teachers. I wrote three questions (see Appendix

E) to provide a framework for each discussion. Using a semi-structured format allowed

me seek the answers to specific questions while also providing me with the flexibility to

follow the natural flow of conversation. These discussions provided me with additional

data on the effectiveness of the intervention and also created a safe space for teachers to

reflect on and explore the issue of teacher stress. I listened to and transcribed these

discussions in full; after transcribing, I began the process of analyzing the data.

Analysis of Data

I first sought to measure each teacher's stress level using a pre-intervention

attitude scale. This assessment contained five statements. I asked teachers to rate their

attitude in response to each statement on a scale from one to five, one meaning never and

five meaning always. To measure changes in stress level after the intervention, teachers

completed the same attitude scale post-intervention.

Figure 1 illustrates average teacher responses to the attitude scale pre and post-

intervention. Teachers felt less emotionally healthy at work after the intervention. This

could have been a result of the intervention, or perhaps the emotional toll of stress

weighed heavier as the school year progressed. Teachers felt slightly more anxious or

unable to cope post-intervention as well as more overwhelmed by expectations. Notably,

after the intervention, all teachers responded that they "always" felt overwhelmed by

expectations. Teachers' feelings of doubts about their ability to make a difference rose

slightly post-intervention. On average, teachers felt optimistic about the future before the

intervention with a score of 2.5. After the intervention, that score rose to 3.5, showing an
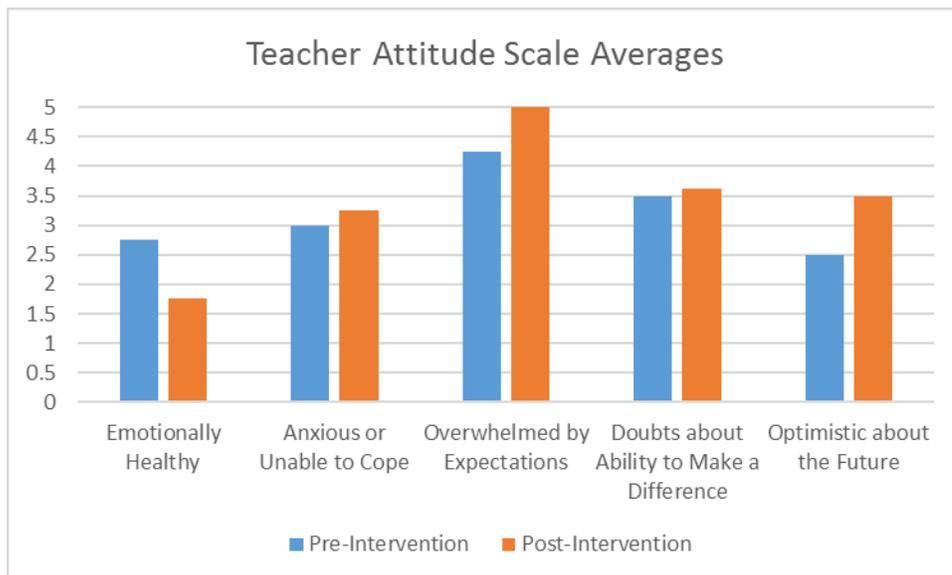
increase in optimism.

Figure 1. Teacher Attitude Scale Averages

During the intervention, teachers recorded how many times they read their

mission and vision cards on a chart, placing a tally under the appropriate date each time

they read their card. In total, teachers read their cards thirty-seven times over the course

of the intervention. The tally chart reflects a variation across teachers in consistency and

frequency of reading the card. For example, Teacher A read her card a total of fifteen

times, once each day while Teacher D read her card a total of four times, never reading it

the first week. Overall, teachers read the cards with low frequency. Why is this? Cards

were small and convenient, designed to be read in about a minute. The low frequency

with which teachers read the cards may indicate that teachers did not feel they had even a

minute to spare over the course of their day. Perhaps teachers were so busy they didn't

even think of the cards.

2/8	2/9	2/10	2/11	2/12
I	IIIII	II	I	II
2/15	2/16	2/17	2/18	2/19
I	IIII	II	III	IIIII
2/22	2/23	2/24	2/25	2/26
IIII	I	I	III	II

Teacher A	I
Teacher B	I
Teacher C	I
Teacher D	I

Figure 2. Tally Marks Reflecting When Notecard Read

Along with the chart to record when they read the notecards, teachers were

provided with journals at the beginning of the intervention. To minimize added stress on

teachers, they were asked to record any relevant thoughts only if they felt compelled to

do so. Three out of four teachers chose to record thoughts. One teacher wrote that using the notecards "…forces a moment alone even if not reflecting on stress." This could indicate that the intervention caused a teacher to take an ostensibly much-needed moment for herself. Another teacher noted specific words in the mission and vision stood out to her, such as "joyful" and "urban." While it may not have had an effect on the teacher's stress level, reading and rereading the notecard gave her the opportunity to reflect on the school's mission and vision. Another teacher remarked that on a particularly challenging day, she didn't have time to read the card until after school. She noted that on another day, the mission and vision reminded her how important nature is and helped guide her judgment call to bring the children outside to play on a cold day. On reading the cards, she also wrote, "The days I actually had sixty seconds to read this did make a difference. It reminded me of my focus- the children, not my comfort."

To collect data on some of the daily stressful moments of a teacher in our school, I wrote a narrative based on field notes gathered during a typical morning. These notes were gathered during the first hour of the school morning. To minimize added responsibility and stress, I did not ask other teachers to complete field notes or narratives. **Narrative**: I arrive at 8:00am and say good morning to the assistant and children in the room. Designed to be a "full-day" environment, children are in the room as early as 7:30am, well before the official school start time of 8:30am. I hang up my coat and store my things. Within minutes, children begin jumping on each other in the book corner. I separate the children and assign them seats to sit in, feeling guilty for taking away their freedom of movement. Around 8:15am, I call the children over to a gathering space for a morning meeting/activity. Again, I feel guilty for this action, preferring instead to allow

the children the freedom to work independently and choose work for themselves. We re-instituted a morning gathering, though, when we found the children were not able to peacefully enter the classroom and choose work for themselves. Children intermittently scream and argue with each other as they arrive. Once most of the children are present, I ask a child to fetch some flowers I've brought in. As a class, we present them to our classroom assistant who has been experiencing some health issues. I talk to the children about doing nice things for the people we care about. When we begin to dismiss the children from the gathering, one child begins a constant high-pitched scream. She stands and shoves her face into other children's faces, all the while screaming. I calmly tell the child to stop screaming; the child looks at me, smiles and continues her disruption. After a couple more entreaties, I harshly tell her to leave the gathering space. She does not comply. I take the child's hand and lead her to an individual chair in the book corner. She continues screaming but does not rise from the chair. After about a minute, she stops screaming. I am rattled by the episode and briefly step in the hall to take a deep breath. The school principal passes by, and I feel ashamed and embarrassed about my need to step outside the classroom. I return to the classroom and continue dismissing the children, assigning many of them work of my choosing rather than their choosing. I feel guilty about this, understanding the importance of choice in the Montessori method. I have doubts about so often taking away the children's freedom of choice, but I remind myself that when I allow more complete freedom in the classroom, the children's behavior as a group is often chaotic, aggressive, and dangerous. Just after 9:00am, the school principal steps in and hands me a note indicating that one of the school's founders, a prominent Montessorian, will be in shortly to observe my classroom. She points out to

me that he is not coming to observe me but to observe the classroom as a whole and to experience first-hand the realities of our environment. I understand her point but feel anxious nonetheless. I resolve to continue my morning as usual.

My narrative reflected feelings of guilt, shame, and embarrassment, all of which contributed to my high level of stress. I wrote of struggling with applying the Montessori method in an environment much different than the theoretically ideal environment presented in my training. I also struggled with a difficult and disruptive behavior from a child, typical of my time in the classroom. This narrative reflected only my own personal experience in the classroom. I cannot claim these same feelings for other participating teachers, though I later interviewed teachers to gain more insight into their feelings on teaching and stress. Of the four participating teachers, I was the only first year teacher, and this may have exacerbated my feelings of guilt, shame, and embarrassment.

At the conclusion of the intervention, I conducted semi-structured discussions with each of the participating teachers. A few key themes emerged from these discussions. First, all participating teachers described their stress level as very high. One teacher described her stress level as "…the highest I've ever had at any job." Of her stress level, another teacher said, "Always high, all day long. There's no break from it…" "You never come down," a different teacher said.

I discussed sources of stress with teachers. One main source of stress was that there was simply too much to do. "I feel like there's so many things that we have deadlines for…there are so many things happening at the same time…I feel so far behind and I feel so burdened that it brings on, for me, anxiety." Safety was another source of stress. "The violence is the most stressful thing, trying to keep people safe." Another

teacher touched on the safety issue: "If somebody comes in 'off' and I'm trying to keep the pot from blowing all day long, that's like a prolonged stress that may or may not come to fruition. I feel like that affects me as a teacher." Teachers also identified parents, insufficient financial compensation, and managing classroom assistants as sources of stress.

Teachers coped with their stress in a variety of ways. Two teachers shared that they felt they didn't cope with it in healthy ways. One teacher said, "Sometimes I deal with it by screaming at the kids and that makes me feel bad." Another teacher said, "I can't turn school off. I can't de-stress in that way…It's constantly there." Teachers listed alcohol and Netflix as coping tools. Another coping tool discussed was lowering expectations: "I have coped by accepting less from myself. My standards have lowered…I'm quite, in many ways, especially with Montessori, I'm a perfectionist and…not anymore." Teachers cited leaning on coworkers as an effective coping strategy. "Talking about it with coworkers helps, knowing that I'm not the only one that's struggling and that it's not necessarily a failure on my part, it's a function of the situation." All three teachers I interviewed brought up the school's supportive administrative team. "We couldn't do what we do without them," one teacher said.

One teacher found reviewing the school's mission and vision helpful and another said that reading the mission statement "directly speaks to working with children in an urban environment." Another teacher shared that "…the fact that we are serving an underserved population is the biggest thing I think about when I'm trying to give myself a pep talk."

Regularly reviewing the school's mission and vision did not lower teachers' stress levels. In fact, the pre and post-intervention attitude scales show most measures of stress went up after the intervention. I believe, however, that this opportunity to explore teacher stress together was an important one. Teachers cited the importance of supportive coworkers when dealing with stress; I found it therapeutic to openly and honestly discuss the stress of teaching with my coworkers.

Discussion

Through the course of this action research project, I was able to explore the high level of stress teachers experience in an urban start-up Montessori school. Reviewing the school's mission and vision statements did not have a significant impact on teachers' stress levels. It was and is challenging to find strategies to cope with such a high level of stress.

The results of this research will not significantly change my practice in the classroom, though the process of action research has been invaluable as I make decisions about my future as a teacher. The process of action research is a reflective one; action research begins with systemic, critical reflection to identify a problem, and that reflection is ongoing throughout the study (Hendricks, 2013). Throughout this action research project, I challenged my own assumptions and biases. I explored current research on teacher stress, paying particular attention to coping strategies. I reflected on my values and actions. I found my ideals were not represented in my teaching. Perhaps this was because I was not living up to the idyllic Montessori teacher I had thought was necessary to guide children. Perhaps I was disappointed in my performance in a difficult classroom environment. Perhaps the day-to-day life in a start-up, urban, public Montessori was too

different from what I had once thought was "authentic Montessori." There were a host of reasons why I felt so much stress in my first year as a Montessori teacher, and through action research, I was able to reflect on this in a critical way. At the end of this process, I made the decision to leave my high-stress teaching position at the conclusion of the academic school year. I think it is worth noting here that I received abundant support from a network of family, friends, mentors, and colleagues throughout my year of teaching. The principal of my school, in particular, supported me with understanding, humor, and grace. I made the decision to leave teaching with an overwhelming feeling of gratitude.

There is potential for future action research investigations. In interviews, two teachers expressed difficulty finding the time to read the notecard containing the mission and vision statements. "So many words!" one teacher said. Perhaps simple key words would be more effective given the busy and chaotic nature of daily life in these teachers' classrooms. Using key words to invoke the mission and vision statements could be implemented and studied. Meditation, professional counseling, and fostering deep connections amongst staff are other strategies for dealing with a stressful work environment; these could be implemented and studied as well. Further investigation can be conducted on the root causes of teacher stress. What is it in a teacher's work that causes him or her stress? If it is lack of planning time, perhaps an increase in planning time could be implemented and teacher stress level could be measured before and after. If teachers feel stress over standardized testing, perhaps they could receive assistance with this. Other stressors for teachers may include emotionally disturbed children or communication with parents. Potential future action research could focus on aiding

teachers in these areas in order to treat the root cause of their stress. Coping strategies are important, but they are reactive; future research could focus on preventative measures.

Teachers in a variety of settings and circumstance may be studied: are teachers with less experience more stressed and why? Are there strategies to help these new teachers? Montessori teacher training may also be studied; does this training prepare teachers for a variety of settings, such as public, private, and charter? Does Montessori teacher training provide the future teacher with tools to deal with the stress of teaching, or do the expectations of the "Montessori ideal" add to teacher stress? It is important to ask these questions and to seek their answers so we can make education, Montessori education, in particular, stronger and more effective.

By exploring teacher stress and looking for ways to help lower teacher stress, we can help both students and teachers. Child behavior problems are significantly and positively associated with high levels of teacher stress (Friedman-Krauss, 2014). The lower level of stress a teacher reports, the more empathy and less disruptiveness children display; high teacher stress is associated with high impulsivity and lower cooperation skills among children (Siekkinen, 2013). Further, if teachers experience stress over time, they are candidates for burnout (Richards, 2012). We must continue to conduct research on teacher stress. We can help empower teachers to be at their most effective in the classroom and in doing so, aid children in realizing their full potential in all areas of life.

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Appendix A
The Effects of Reviewing a School's Mission and Vision on Teacher Stress
Active Consent Form

_____

Dear _____,

As you may know, I am a St. Catherine University (St. Kate's) student pursuing a Masters of Education degree. An important part of my program is the Action Research project.

I will be writing about the results that I get from this research, however none of the writing that I do will include the name of this school, the names of any staff or students, or any references that would make it possible to identify outcomes connected to a particular staff member. Only I will have access to the identifiable data for this study; I will keep it confidential.

When I am done, my work will be electronically available online at the St. Kate's library in a system called SOPHIA, which holds published reports written by faculty and graduate students at St. Kate's. The goal of sharing my final research study report is to help other teachers who are also trying to improve the effectiveness of their teaching. The foreseeable benefit to this study is a possible reduction in teacher stress by regular recommitment to the school's mission and values; likewise, the foreseeable risk to this study is a possible increase in teacher stress by regular recommitment to the school's mission and values.

Procedures:
If you decide to participate, you will be asked to read notecards containing the school's mission and values at least once a day, at times of your choosing, over the course of three weeks and to log the times when you have read these cards. You will be asked to record reflections in a journal and to participate in one 20-minute semi-structured interview conducted by me. Before and after the notecards are distributed, you will be asked to complete a short, five-question self-assessment. This study will take place over the course of three weeks. The time commitment consists of the time it takes to read the notecards and to record short reflections in the journal. The time commitment is estimated to be 5-10 minutes per workday.

This study is voluntary. If you decide you want to be a participant and have your data, which includes your self-assessments, notecard log times, and journal reflections, included in my study, you need to sign this form and return it by 1/22/16. If at any time you decide you do not want to continue participation in the study, you can notify me and I will remove included data to the best of my ability.

If you decide you do not want to participate / have your data included in my study, you do not need to do anything. There is no penalty for not participating / having your data involved in the study.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, Erica Adams. You may ask questions now, or if you have any additional questions later, you can ask me or my advisor, Syneva Barrett, snbarrett@stkate.edu, who will be happy to answer them. If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you may also contact Dr. John Schmitt, Chair of the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board, at (651) 690-7739.

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

Opt In

I DO want to participate in this study. Please respond by 1/22/16.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant in Research   Date

_____   _____

Appendix B
Pre and Post-Intervention Attitude Scale

Please rate each attitude from 1-5. **1 means never. 5 means always.** Your responses are confidential. Thank you for your help on this important topic.

I feel emotionally healthy at work.
1   2   3   4   5

I feel anxious or unable to cope at work.
1   2   3   4   5

I feel overwhelmed with what is expected of me as a teacher.
1   2   3   4   5

I have doubts about my ability to make a difference in students' lives.
1   2   3   4   5

I feel optimistic about my future in this classroom environment.
1   2   3   4   5

Appendix C
Mission and Vision Notecard

Mission
We serve the individual needs of Cleveland's urban children from birth through age 15, in Montessori classroom environments that meet the highest standards and through regular interactions with nature, the neighborhood and each other. We nurture children and cultivate community.

Vision
We are a thriving community that provides broad access to Montessori education, where children are joyful, engaged learners acquiring confidence in their personal and academic skills in preparation for lifelong success as capable, responsible citizens.

Appendix D
Tally Sheet

Please make a tally mark each time you read the mission and vision card.

2/8	2/9	2/10	2/11	2/12
2/15	2/16	2/17	2/18	2/19
2/22	2/23	2/24	2/25	2/26

Appendix E
Semi-Structured Discussion Question

How would you describe your general stress level at work?

What are your methods for coping with stress at work?

How do you think our school's mission and vision impact your day-to-day experience as a teacher?