

## Effects of Stress on Beginning Educators

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 75% of Americans say their jobs are stressful, but what educators experience isn't the everyday variety of workplace tension: "It's nerve-jangling, sleep-robbing, heart-pounding stress that comes from all directions and can leave them constantly anxious and fatigued."<sup>1</sup> The Oregon Mentoring Program provides beginning educators with resiliency and self-care strategies to reduce the stress that they are experiencing, thus increasing job satisfaction and teacher retention.

Forty-six percent of teachers report high daily stress during the school year. That is tied with nurses for the highest rate among all occupational groups.<sup>2</sup> Forty-four percent of educators leave the profession within the first five years.<sup>3</sup> One of the stated reasons beginning educators leave is the level of stress in their position.<sup>4</sup> Recently, teachers were asked to describe in their own words the three most frequent emotions they felt each day at school. They responded with *frustrated, overwhelmed, and stressed*.<sup>5</sup> In a 2016 study, teaching was identified as one of the most stressful occupations in the United States. Teachers are experiencing high levels of stress which affects their health and well-being. This can lead to teacher burnout, lack of engagement, job dissatisfaction, and poor performance, all of which contribute to high turnover rates.<sup>4</sup>

### Mentoring Program

## Standard #2

Leadership Engagement *Quality*  
*mentor programs require involved,*  
*informed and culturally responsive*  
*leaders.*

### What is Job Stress?

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) defines job stress as "harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker."<sup>6</sup> Job stress can lead to poor health and even injury.<sup>7</sup>

### Causes of Educator Stress

The education system has changed drastically over the last 20 years and with that comes higher expectations of teachers. In today's classroom, teachers are experiencing higher amounts of stress due to the school environment, job requirements, lack of resources that support teaching, and greater social-emotional needs of students.<sup>4</sup>

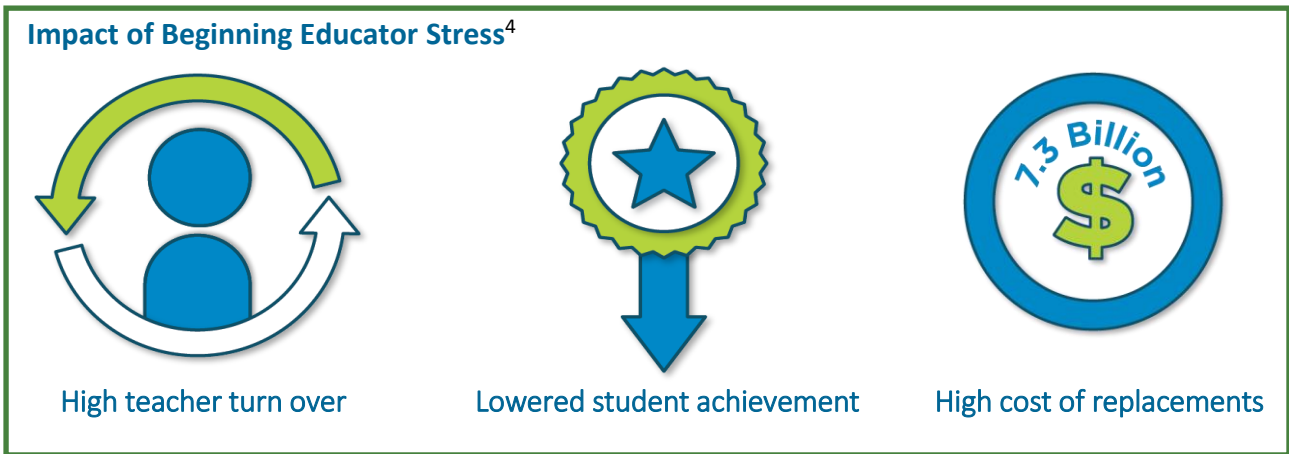
In Oregon, educators are experiencing high levels of stress, ranging from student behavior challenges to lack of administrative support in the school environment. The Oregon Education Association (OEA) interviewed teachers throughout the state to gather information on disrupted learning environments and the impact it has on their role as educators. Teachers

have stated that their job is difficult because they are playing the role of counselor, behavior specialist, and stand-in parent.<sup>8</sup>

Oregon educators have reported high levels of stress that cause significant physical, social and emotional health issues. Since 2013, OEA Choice Trust has conducted listening sessions with educators confirming that national data trends are playing out in Oregon. Educators are experiencing an all-time low in staff morale, taking extended absences due to stress, and struggling with balancing work and home responsibilities.<sup>9</sup>

“If teachers and administrators are stressed, the students feel it. Students need a stabilizing factor in their lives and often times their teachers fill that role.” Oregon Education Association (OEA), Albany, OR Teacher.<sup>7</sup>

Stress affects everyone including students. Teachers who are overwhelmed with the demands of the profession become burned out very quickly. A teacher who is burned out has a higher rate of student behavior incidences. The result of increased student behaviors stems from teachers not being engaged in the classroom or disconnected from students.<sup>10</sup> Teachers who are stressed and burned out often leave the profession seeking a position in another field. This costs school districts time and money to replace a teacher who leaves. Nationally, the estimated cost of teacher turnover for a school district is anywhere from \$15,000-\$20,000 per teacher.<sup>11</sup>



## Support for Mentoring

Districts across the nation are finding innovative and impactful ways to improve outcomes for students by supporting educators. By providing useful tools for identifying educators in need of support, they can mitigate the negative effects of stress on student development.<sup>5</sup> Principals can have a tremendous impact on the atmosphere and culture of a school by providing emotional support for teachers and other staff, as well as implementing organizational changes that facilitate effective instruction, which in turn reduces the intensity of the challenges that teachers face.<sup>12</sup> Mentoring is an example of addressing beginning educator stress by providing support and resources to ensure success and reduce stress.

## The Oregon Mentoring Program Supports Beginning Educators

The Oregon Mentoring Program (OMP) is currently serving approximately 1,200 beginning teachers and 64 beginning administrators in 51 Oregon school districts. The program focuses on individualized job-embedded professional learning that increases educator effectiveness for every beginning teacher and beginning administrator in Oregon for the first two years in their position. OMP focuses on three goals: increase retention of beginning teachers and administrators, improve instructional and leadership practices, and increase student learning and growth. Mentoring experience played an important role in beginning educators' effectiveness. When surveyed, 83% percent of beginning teachers and 92% of beginning administrators attributed their success as a beginning educator to the Oregon Mentoring Program.

### Positive Impact of Mentoring

Ingersoll and Strong (2011) found that mentoring beginning teachers has a positive impact on three sets of outcomes: commitment and retention, teacher classroom instructional practices, and student achievement.<sup>13</sup> Beginning administrators who are mentored are retained at a higher rate, are rated highly effective in their leadership practices, and have a positive impact on student achievement and teacher retention.<sup>14</sup> Research shows beginning educators who participate in a mentoring/induction program are highly satisfied in their position, demonstrate increased skills in leadership and instructional practices, and have higher impact on student achievement.<sup>4</sup>



### Mentors Make a Difference

Beginning teachers and administrators participating in the mentoring program have stated that their mentor impacted them a great deal. The figures below highlight the positive perceptions of beginning teachers and administrators about their mentoring experiences. Beginning educators report that mentors provide them with provided emotional support (Figure 1) and strategies and resources that helped with job-related stress (Figure 2).

**Figure 1. While working with your beginning teacher mentor, to what degree did you receive support in the following areas: Provided emotional support**

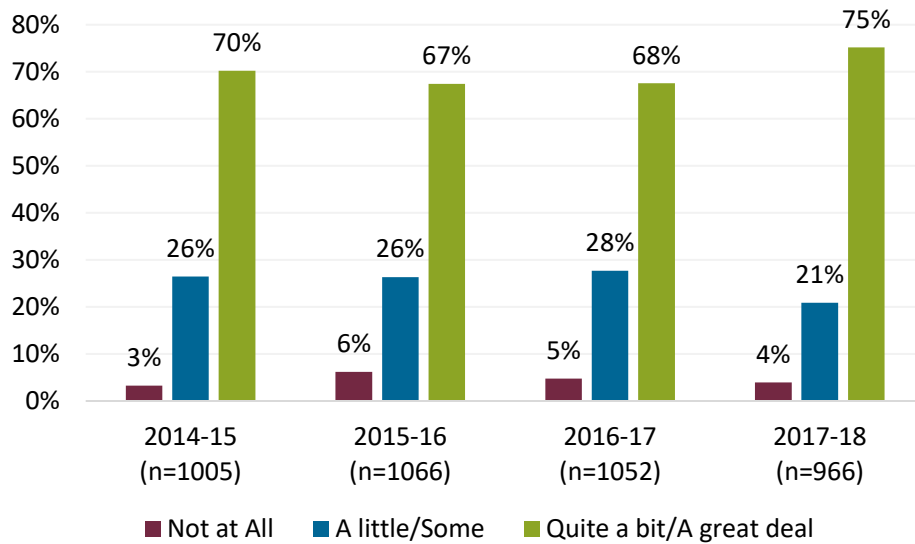
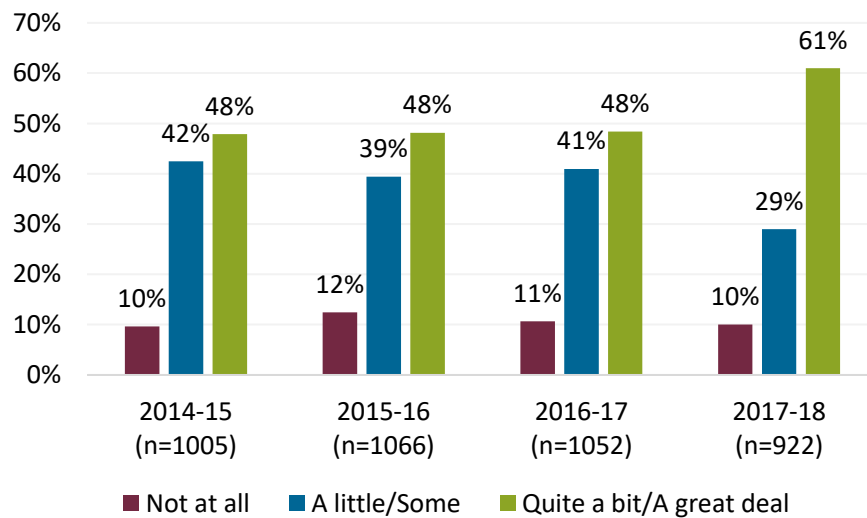


Figure 1 shows the responses of the last four cohorts of mentored teachers. Over this period, 84% or more of beginning teachers received some degree of emotional support from their mentors, with a spike in the last year where the *quite a bit/a great deal* response jumps from 68% to 75%.

**Figure 2. While working with your beginning teacher mentor, to what degree did you receive support in the following areas: Supported me with strategies and resources to help with job related stress**



Similarly, figure 2 shows the same time period and indicates slightly higher percentages indicating 88% or more of beginning teachers received strategies and resources to help with job related stress. Again, there is a spike in the last year, from 48% to 61% indicating more support.

## Quotes from beginning teachers about resources and emotional support

- She has been great at giving me emotional support, modeling teaching practices, getting and showing me resources, and helping me know how to more effectively plan my everyday and monthly plans. She is a big reason why I have not decided to leave the profession even when it has become extremely frustrating in the classroom. (BT, 2018)
- Without my mentor, I am sure that the stress would overwhelm me. She has been there for me through the rough classes, lessons, and data collection. She is the shining beacon that leads me back to education every time I might stray. Without her constant support and help, this year could have broken me. (BT, 2018)
- My mentor and I often discussed some of daily challenges I was facing with students and parents. Additionally, my mentor provided a sounding board for my frustrations, confusions, and helped me to manage the everyday stress of teaching. (BT, 2018)
- Helping me through the stressful and challenging aspects of teaching, and providing feedback and support to let me know I was doing ok at my job. (BT, 2018)
- My mentor helped manage my stress, provided a calming influence, and assisted with helpful instructional techniques to influence student engagement. (BT, 2018)

Beginning administrators also consistently report that their mentors supported them in dealing with challenges (Figure 3) and in supporting professional development for staff (Figure 4).

**Figure 3. While working with your beginning administrator mentor/coach, to what degree did you receive support in dealing with challenges?**

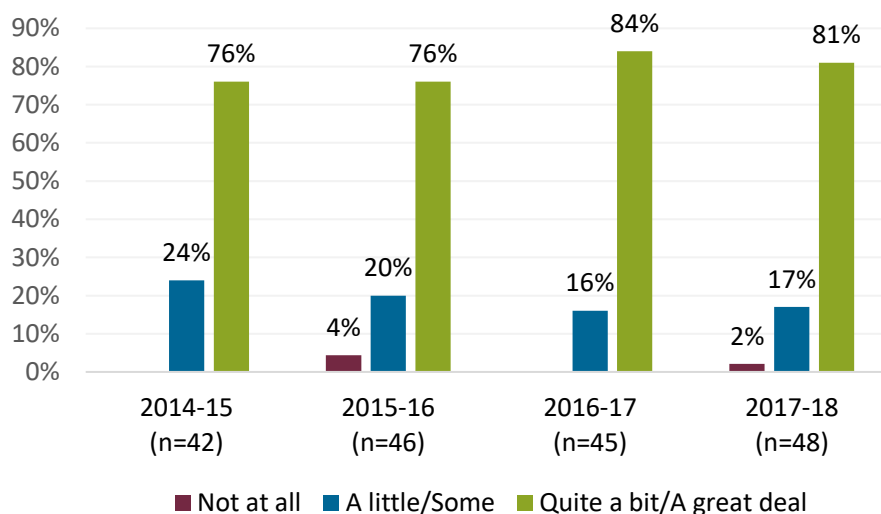
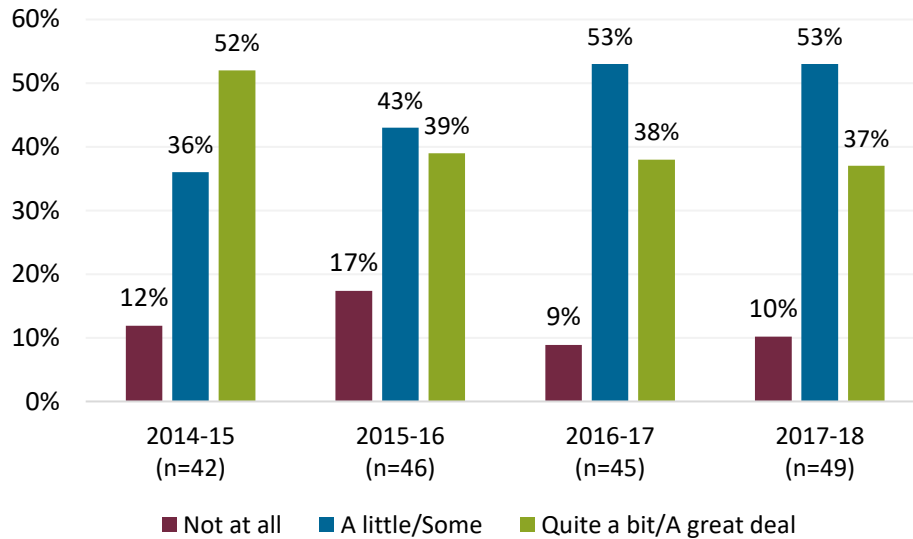


Figure 3 shows over a four-year period that 96% or more of beginning administrators received some degree of mentor support in dealing with challenges, with 76% or more receiving *quite a bit or a great deal*.

**Figure 4. While working with your beginning administrator mentor/coach, to what degree did you receive support in professional development for staff?**



As can be seen in Figure 4, 83% or more of beginning administrators received some degree of mentor support in planning professional development for staff. The last two years show a slight decrease in the percent reporting no support in this area.

### Quotes from beginning administrators about mentor support

- She was an outstanding listener and gave examples and never just gave me an answer. (BA, 2018)
- She forced me to think of things on my own and we investigated them together. (BA, 2018)
- My mentor has helped me with setting school wide goals, navigating challenging political and parent situations, and also staff situations. (BA, 2018)
- My mentor does a great job of providing feedback and helping me to brainstorm solutions to problems. (BA, 2018)
- My mentor has provided coaching and support throughout the school year. She has been an integral to my journey as a first-year administrator. I honestly cannot fathom moving about this role without a mentor. (BA, 2018)

## **Successes from the Field**

Project Directors highlighted examples of how they are working with mentors to provide resources and supports to promote and improve beginning educator success.

### **Mid-Willamette Valley Mentor Consortium**

Central School District, part of the Mid-Willamette Valley Consortium, was selected to participate in the Trauma Informed Pilot Study. District staff participate in professional learning opportunities focused on trauma informed practices and strategies to support staff, students and their families.

Mid-Willamette Valley mentors participated in a book study during Mentor Forums focusing on the book *Fostering Resilient Learners: Strategies for Creating a Trauma-Sensitive Classroom*.

### **Southern Oregon Mentor Consortium**

Mentors reported seeing an increase in anxiety and depression among the communities they serve. As a result, the Southern Oregon Program developed a plan to address the following professional learning needs: ACES/Trauma-Informed Care, Resilience, Compassion Fatigue, and Mental Health.

Mentors and district staff participated in the following trainings:

- **Transforming Trauma: Workshop**  
This workshop featured Laura van Dernoot Lipsky who shared her personal experience and extensive research to help the Southern Oregon region to understand the cumulative toll of being exposed to suffering over time, and gain the skills needed to reconcile it.
- **Transforming Trauma: Community Conversation**  
The follow-up work session provided facilitated discussions among mentors and district staff on ways to keep the movement focused on the cumulative toll of being exposed to suffering over time, and gain the skills needed to work with mentees in the community.
- **Mental Health First Aid**  
Mentors were trained to recognize common mental health issues and identify ways to help colleagues or students in distress.

### **North Coast Mentor Consortium**

Tillamook School District received an OEA Choice Trust five-year grant to provide strategies and resources to support educators with reducing stress in the workplace. Grant funds are being used to implement a teacher wellness program and professional learning opportunities for teachers and administrators focused on trauma informed practices.

Educators play a critical role in shaping the lives of children through facilitation of learning and influencing a child's social-emotional development. By providing beginning teachers and administrators instructional mentoring support, districts can help ensure these professionals have the strategies and resources to manage work place stress, remain in the field, and create quality learning environments for student success. Mentees have stated their mentor plays a significant role in providing emotional support and dealing with challenges of the profession. Beginning teachers and administrators who have participated in the Oregon Mentoring Program consistently provide positive feedback on how the mentor program has helped them to be successful as educators.



## End Notes

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