Resilience as a Contributor to Novice Teacher Success, Commitment, and Retention

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Resilience as a Contributor to Novice Teacher Success, Commitment, and Retention

By Melanie Tait

Novice teachers often struggle in their first year. Some succumb to illness, depression, or burnout, and some even decide to abandon teaching as a career option. The classic stressors identified by new teachers have been remarkably consistent over the years, and their challenges have been well chronicled (Corcoran, 1981; Gordon & Maxey, 2000; Gratch, 1998; Huberman, 1989; McIntyre, 2003; Veenman, 1984). Less has been written, however, about the "human strengths" (Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2003, p. 13) that novice teachers demonstrate when they confront and overcome the stress of first-year teaching.

In this article, I will focus on novice teachers' resilience as one of the assets that many beginners bring to their first teaching position and on the relationship between resilience and two related human strengths, personal efficacy and emotional competence. I will briefly review the literature on resilience, personal efficacy, and emotional intelligence, and these three concepts will be compared and contrasted within the context of novice teacher success and retention. I will use the profile of a novice teacher in Toronto, Ontario, to illustrate how beginning teachers cope with problems and overcome difficulties, remain optimistic about their choice of

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profession, and commit to teaching over the long term. I will discuss possible implications for faculties of education, school boards, and schools. Finally, I will make several suggestions for future research.

Novice Teacher Attrition

Teaching is one of the few professions in which beginners have as much responsibility as their experienced colleagues. New teachers carry full teaching loads and handle just as many other duties (supervision, extra-curricular, paper work, parent interviews, and report cards for example) as their higher paid co-workers. They often have more difficult subject combinations and more challenging students to manage (Gordon & Maxey, 2000; Kosnik & Beck, 2005; McIntyre, 2003). In addition, many novice teachers fear that if they ask for assistance, they will appear incompetent or poorly prepared (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 1998; Gold, 1996; Scherer, 1999).

The shocking attrition rate among new teachers is a persistent and pervasive problem in many jurisdictions. In Ontario, Canada, where the current study was conducted, McIntyre (2003) predicted that, by the second year of teaching, about 18% of new Ontario teachers would be at risk of leaving the profession. Studies conducted in the United States, Australia, and Great Britain confirm similar or higher early teaching attrition rates (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Feiman-Nemser, Carver, Schwille & Yusko, 1999; Howard & Johnson, 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Stoel & Thant, 2002).

According to McIntyre (2003), new teachers at risk of leaving the profession express strong dissatisfaction with their teaching assignments, and frustration with the politics of their profession, the lack of adequate resources, and inadequate mentoring support. These findings echo those in other North American studies, which report that novice teachers' initial optimism can turn to pessimism as the year progresses and the reality of teaching sets in (Brock & Grady, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Gold & Roth, 1999; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1999; Moir, 1999). Novice teacher resilience, bolstered by personal efficacy and emotional competence, may be key to helping beginning teachers become more capable, more confident, and more committed to teaching over the long term.

Resilience, Personal Efficacy, Emotional Intelligence, and Novice Teaching

Resilience, personal efficacy, and emotional intelligence are terms that describe similar dimensions of human behavior. Resilience is a mode of interacting with events in the environment that is activated and nurtured in times of stress. Grotberg (1997) defines resilience as the "human capacity to face, overcome, and even be strengthened by experiences of adversity" (p. 13). Although little is written

specifically about the resilience of beginning teachers (Bobeck, 2002; Howard & Johnson, 2004; Mohr, Wickstorm, Bernshausen, Mathis & Patterson, 2003), the apparent applicability of the conceptual frameworks found in studies of resilient families and resilient adults in other occupations is irresistible.

In the risk and resilience literature (Benard, 2004; Constantine, Benard, & Diaz, 1999; Grotberg, 1997; Masten, 2001; Tusaie & Dyer, 2004), it is agreed that risk factors contribute to psychological distress while protective factors moderate the effects of adversity. Risk factors for novice teachers might include the typical stressors encountered in the first year of teaching, such as the expectations and scope of the job, disparity between teacher preparation and expectations, isolation and lack of support, and an emerging gap between novice teachers' vision of teaching and the realities of the job.

To insulate teachers from the effect of these risk factors, Benard (2003) suggests that they need resources, time, professional development opportunities, materials, caring collegial relationships, high expectations on the part of school leaders, and opportunities for shared decision-making and planning. New teachers enhance their resilience by fostering productive relationships with people who understand the trials and tribulations of teaching, who reinforce the value of what teachers do, and who offer insight into various options available for dealing with a variety of teaching situations (Bobek, 2002).

Resilience and personal efficacy are related concepts. In fact, Benard (2004) lists self-efficacy as one of the characteristics of a resilient person, and similarly, Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) suggest that people with high levels of personal efficacy possess strong resilience. Resilience and personal efficacy differ, however, in the ways they impact action, although high performance results from both. Personal efficacy is a future-directed human strength linked to action. Whereas highly resilient individuals are reactive to stressful situations, highly efficacious individuals are proactive.

Bandura (1986; 1997) tells us that efficacious teachers see difficult tasks as challenges rather than threats, heighten and sustain their efforts in the face of disappointment, attribute failure to insufficient effort, knowledge, or skills, approach threatening situations with confidence, use persuasion rather than authoritarian approaches to classroom management, and direct their efforts towards resolving academic problems. Efficacy beliefs influence teachers' levels of effort, goal setting, persistence, resilience, willingness to try new ideas and strategies, enthusiasm, organization, planning, fairness, and commitment to teaching (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). A teacher's efficacy beliefs appear to be most easily impacted in the early years of teaching experience and somewhat resistant to change once established (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990). "It may be that change in teacher efficacy occurs rapidly in the early years of teaching as teachers crystallize their professional identity; once consolidated this identity may persist into later years" (Ross, 1994, p. 391). Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy (1998) reported that novice

teachers completing their first year of teaching who had a high sense of efficacy found greater satisfaction in teaching, had a more positive reaction to teaching, and experienced less stress.

Bandura (1997) has identified four sources of personal efficacy to clarify how it is developed in the early years of teaching: repeated mastery experiences, such as planning and executing successful lessons; vicarious experience, such as watching a competent model succeed in a teaching situation; social persuasion, such as encouraging feedback from supervisors, colleagues, and pupils; and the emotional states one experiences while teaching, such as satisfaction with a job well done. Knobloch and Whittington (2003) suggest that novice teachers feel more efficacious and confident if they receive positive feedback, guidance, and encouragement from their students, other teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. It has been shown that novices who have this kind of support are more likely to stay in the teaching profession (Coladarci, 1992; Ruhland & Bremer, 2002). If this is true, then it is important to support novice teachers' development of a strong sense of teacher efficacy in the early years.

Resilience is also linked to and predicated upon emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995), which is "an umbrella term that captures a broad collection of individual skills and dispositions, usually referred to as soft skills or inter- and intra-personal skills, that are outside the traditional areas of specific knowledge, general intelligence, and technical or professional skills" (Keirstead, 1999). Emotional intelligence is a set of social and personal competencies that assist people in managing their internal states and their interactions with others. Because teaching is by its very nature a social undertaking, emotional intelligence is an important factor in teacher success. Cherniss (2000) suggests that emotional intelligence "provides the bedrock" for the personal and social competencies that lead to superior performance on the job.

The characteristics of people with high levels of emotional competence, including the ability to manage feelings, handle stress, confront failure with optimism, persist in the face of difficulty, have all been correlated with success in the workplace. Teachers must form trusting and functional relationships with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators in order to succeed. They must lead, influence, communicate with, and manage their students in the social context of the classroom. They must reflect upon what they are learning, cope with stress, handle their emotions, and maintain balance in their lives. Teaching is a career where emotional intelligence is crucial for both teacher and students.

> Teaching is an emotional practice. It arouses and colours feelings in teachers and students. Teaching not only involves instructing students, but also caring for them, forming bonds and relationships with them....It is a job where teachers repeatedly put their selves on the line....[I]t is easy to lose sight of teaching's emotional dimension, of the enthusiasm, passion, care, wisdom, inspiration, and dedication that make many teachers great. (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1999, p.21)

In summary, resilience, personal efficacy, and emotional competence each

contribute to the success of novice teachers in their work, and may in turn lead to greater commitment to teaching as a career. Table 1 summarizes the indicators of resilience, personal efficacy as identified in the literature and illustrates the similarities and connections among the three human strengths.

The Study

In 2003, I conducted a study in Toronto, Ontario, to explore the relationships among resilience, personal efficacy, and emotional competence and their possible impact on first-year teachers' sense of success, confidence, and commitment to the profession. The participants in this study graduated from the MidTown preser-

Table 1
Indicators of Resilience, Personal Efficacy, and Emotional Intelligence

Resilience	Personal Efficacy	Emotional Intelligence
able to show positive adaptation in the face of adversity	sees tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than threats	confronts failure with optimism
able to rebound	able to rebound	able to handle stress
flexible	willing to try different methods	adaptable
able to make & maintain supportive relationships	benefits from social persuasion & support	builds bonds
reflective	reflective	reflective
has problem-solving skills	open to new ideas/methods	negotiates solutions
able to plan	able to plan	shares plans
seeks help	asks for help when needed	seeks feedback & support
able to act independently	self-monitoring/regulating	self-regulating/motivating
has goals	sets challenging goals	sets goals
persistent	perseverant	persistent
takes risks	takes risks	demonstrates initiative
optimistic	predicts capability	optimistic
Grotberg (1997) Reivic &/Shatté (2002) Benard (2004)	Bandura (1997) Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy (2001)	Goleman (1995) Keirstead (1999) Cherniss (2000)

vice option at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education/University of Toronto (OISE/UT) in the spring of 2002. This one-year after-degree program follows a cohort model with an emphasis on collegiality and social support. All its teacher candidates complete their practicum in central Toronto public schools.

A questionnaire about first-year teaching experiences was used to identify themes and patterns quickly and efficiently. The first five questions referred to their choice of career, their perceived level of effectiveness, the appropriateness of their preservice preparation, the sources of assistance available to them, and their level of stress. Respondents were asked to use a 5-point scale to indicate their answer, where 5 meant "very," 4 meant "quite," 3 meant "somewhat," 2 meant "not very," and 1 meant "not at all." The sixth question required them to select five stressors from a list of common first year teaching stressors and rank them. The last question invited participants to make additional comments. In April, I mailed a questionnaire to 25 potential participants who had successfully completed their year, found a teaching position after graduating from the program, and were living and working in the Toronto area. Twenty-two teachers teaching in a variety of schools across the city of Toronto responded, including six males and 16 females. The questionnaire data were analyzed to identify common threads and themes, since significant correlations were not anticipated due to the small sample size.

As Tusaie and Dyer (2004) tell us, "Those who cope successfully and function above the norm in spite of adversity have valuable knowledge to share"(p. 5). With this quote in mind, I wanted to interview teachers who reported a positive and optimistic attitude toward teaching despite having had a stressful beginning. I also wanted to speak with teachers who were representative of the larger sample with respect to gender, grade level taught, type of school, and type of community. Using these criteria, I separated out all of the participants with a rating of "quite" or "very" for their satisfaction with their choice of career and a rating of "quite" or "very" for the stressfulness of their first year. From this group, I selected four teachers, one primary teacher, two junior teachers, and one intermediate teacher. There were one male and three females. They taught at schools in different parts of Toronto with different linguistic and socio-economic characteristics, as did the teachers in the larger sample.

Each member of this sub-group met with me privately at their convenience in early June, when, according to Moir (1999), they were likely to be reviewing their first-year experiences and making plans for the following year. To establish trust and rapport, I shared my own background and my interest in first year teachers, and then explained the three tasks that would comprise our two hours together. There were three tasks to complete during this time: a quiz about stress management, a guided interview, and a personal metaphor of teaching activity.

Each teacher was asked to complete the *Stress Resilience Test* (SRT) (Chrysalis Performance Strategies, 2003). This quiz is designed to measure a person's resilience in stressful situations. It consists of 14 statements, such as "I enjoy time with

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my friends" and "I have the support I need to deal with the challenges I face," to which the participant responds according to a 5-point scale (1-never, 2-rarely, 3-sometimes, 4-frequently, and 5-always). The test poses questions about strategies and approaches to personal care, leisure time, balance between work and home, family and friends, community involvement, and attitudes toward change, meaning, purpose, and personal responsibility. The test is designed to measure "personal power", defined as a form of self-efficacy and identified as the one factor which accurately predicted a healthy response to stress in a study of 21 stress related factors using a database of more than 1500 people from over 40 different North American organizations (Tangri, 2003).

Before we began the guided interview, I asked the participants to read a list of 14 short metaphors of teaching, such as "Teaching is sculpting" and "Teaching is like making a meal." Knowles (1994) used metaphors in his work with novice teachers, believing that their metaphors were "a window" on their thoughts. Several other researchers (Bullough & Gitllin, 2001; Cole & Knowles, 2000; Hunt, 1987; Tobin, 1990) have suggested that beginning teachers' metaphors of teaching illuminate their beliefs, thinking, and development. Chen (2003), who based his work on preservice and inservice teacher education, developed a classification system for metaphors of teaching which was used to analyze and classify the participants' personal metaphors of teaching. While these metaphors provide insight into self-perceptions and frameworks for teaching and learning, it is clear that teachers' metaphors evolve as they accumulate teaching experience, and that those written by the participants are no more than a snapshot of their beliefs and perceptions of teaching at a particular moment in time, the end of their first year in the classroom.

I invited the teachers to think about these examples of teaching metaphor as we went through the interview process and told them hat they would complete a related activity once the interview had been completed. In the guided interview, I asked 19 open-ended questions about their background, preparation, overall impressions of the first year of teaching, personal well-being, support, and future directions. The hour-long guided interview encouraged storytelling and sharing of feelings while allowing the participants to raise and explore issues of interest and value to them as practitioners. When appropriate, I encouraged the participants to elaborate on their answers with prompts like "Could you tell me more about that?" Questions assessed beliefs and feelings rather than actual behaviors or competence. For example, when I asked a question about how effective the participants thought they had been in their first year of teaching, I wasn't interested in their actual level of effectiveness, but rather their own appraisal of their effectiveness, since teachers who believe they are effective, whether or not they truly are by any objective measure, are more likely to develop a sense of efficacy and commitment to teaching as a profession (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Each interview lasted approximately one and one-half hours and was tape-recorded with the participant's permission to be transcribed professionally later.

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Lastly, the participants were asked to review the metaphors they had read at the beginning of the session, and then to read four longer examples of metaphors of teaching. Using the examples as models, they were asked to write a piece of prose linking their vision of teaching to an area of personal interest or expertise through metaphor. They were given the sentence starter "Teaching is …," a selection of different kinds of paper and writing utensils from which to choose, and left alone for approximately 45 minutes to write. After completing this task, they were given an opportunity to read their metaphor aloud and/or have it read aloud to them to be certain that the content of the written piece was complete and pleasing. If changes were in order, the metaphors were given back to the participant so they could be amended. The written metaphors were analyzed and classified using Chen's five classifications (Art-oriented, Business-oriented, Science-oriented, Power-oriented, and Personal Dynamics-oriented). The transcripts were read several times and notations were made in the margins as themes and issues emerged. In addition, any images of resilience, a sense of efficacy, or emotional competence were noted.

Threads common to all four teachers gleaned from the questionnaire, stress resilience test, guided interviews, and personal metaphors of teaching were identified and noted, as were differences. There were a number of similarities among the teachers in this group. All four teachers came to teaching from a series of other careers and jobs. All had had experience working with children prior to going into teaching and connections to a church community. All were concerned about the children with special education or ESL needs in their classes, although their levels of responsibility for them and support available from specialized teachers varied from case to case. All four had concerns related to parents, either because they perceived some parents as not being sufficiently interested in their children's education or, alternatively, as overly involved, even intrusive, in the classroom. All were frustrated with the politics of the work-to-rule campaign waged by the teachers' federation that year and the threat of impending strike action. All four recognized the signs of stress, such as wakefulness due to worrying at night, feeling anxious, and having a sense of increasing frustration. In the interviews, participants told of a wide variety of strategies they used to cope with stress, including seeking help and advice, spending time with friends and family, getting more sleep, eating well, and exercising. All four looked for social support and tried to take care of their health.

One Teacher's Growing Resilience—Mary's Story

The following profile, in which I have used the pseudonym "Mary" to refer to the novice teacher, will illustrate the kinds of issues and themes that emerged from the data. Mary's first-year experience was typical in many ways, and her story demonstrates how resilience can come into play and how it can help a new teacher cope. Mary was a resilient, efficacious, and emotionally competent novice teacher who saw teaching as a dynamic growth process. Her story demonstrates the

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complex relationship between cognitive and emotional factors in novice teaching. Quotes from Mary's guided interview and metaphor activity were included in the development of this profile.

Mary was a teacher in her early thirties who came to teaching after a series of varied work and personal experiences. She was raised in a Mennonite family in a small city near Toronto. Her mother died when Mary was still in high school. After high school, wanting to leave home, she enrolled in a Bible college in Western Canada. When she returned to Ontario, she completed a bachelor of arts degree. She applied to become a teacher in 1996 but was not successful. Since part of Mary's faith commitment was a term of service, she worked for her church for three and one-half years in the United States. During this period, her father also died. It is likely, according to the resilience literature, that her religious background and her relationship with her siblings were protective factors in coping with the loss of her parents (Constantine, Benard, & Diaz, 1999).

Mary returned to Ontario and found a clerical job, which was initially satisfying. However, the idea of being a teacher continued to appeal to Mary. She applied for and got a teaching assistant job in a grade 7 to 13 school, and worked there for a year. In addition to her job as a teaching assistant, Mary had worked with children at summer camps and done some babysitting. Others told her that she had a gift for working with young people. Demonstrating her persistence, another trait of resilience, she successfully reapplied for and was accepted into the preservice education program at OISE/UT.

Many of Mary's beliefs about teachers, teaching, and learning were revealed in the images in her metaphor of teaching and in her interview comments. Mary chose the metaphor of a garden, one of the suggestions on the list presented to the participants. She used the garden metaphor to describe the teaching and learning process with the teacher taking the role of the gardener. In her metaphor, the teacher plants the garden, imagines how she wants it to look, decides what plants or flowers should be planted and where. Again revealing her resilient approach, Mary explains that the gardener does not have control over how the garden actually turns out:

> How they grow or turn out is up to them, with the care of the gardener. She provides them with water, food, and nurturing to meet their full potential, and if Mother Nature isn't supplying the water, the gardener will step in and add to it. There are unexpected elements that can affect the growth of the garden, like weeds, insects, and poor weather. You never really know for sure what seeds you are planting.... Some do better in full sun and others in the shade...there are also those flowers or weeds that get more attention, and some plants get forgotten about or pushed to the side. A successful gardener knows that she needs to try to meet all the needs of each plant and that those needs are different but equally important. She also needs to remember that each plant in its own way is beautiful and unique.

Mary's optimism is perhaps most evident in her personal metaphor of teaching. She sees teaching as an artistic endeavor and views her students as unique and

beautiful. She understands that in teaching, everything is not predictable, and takes a flexible approach, recognizing that students have different learning needs and that learning can take unexpected turns. She sees learning and teaching as dynamic and symbiotic processes:

> They (gardeners) don't get to see the end product instantaneously, but they can see the small changes along the way…. She (the gardener) may take the lead with the garden but she still learns new things from the plants.

Her emotional commitment to teaching comes through in her metaphors. Mary's gardener loves her flowers and values their uniqueness and beauty. The traits of Mary's gardener—persistence, patience, caring, and flexibility—are characteristic of resilient people with high levels of emotional competence.

In sharp contrast to the pleasant garden setting of her metaphor, Mary's teaching assignment was very challenging, rife with novice-teaching risk factors. Mary taught all grade 7 subjects except French and science in an economically challenged community. The bulk of her students were of Somali or Caribbean background; and although most spoke English fairly well, Mary had three students who required specialized ESL instruction, including one student from Latin America who spoke no English at all. Her biggest concern, however, was the academic level of her students. "That was one of the biggest shocks, the slowness of my kids. I have a lot of kids working at a grade 3 to 5 level." Of 25 students, there were 12 working from individual education plans, for either academic or behavioral reasons, who worked with a special education resource teacher on a regular basis.

Like many new teachers, Mary experienced a great degree of dissonance between her vision of teaching and the reality of her actual classroom experiences. She described her initial impressions of teaching as "nothing like I expected," and said she was "shocked" by the low functional levels of her students and their rude behavior. She found that the work she did in her preservice year did not truly prepare her for the realities of her job:

> It didn't prepare me for my first two weeks of how I needed to set up my classroom discipline-wise and a lot of classroom management. I mean scenarios are great for how to deal with it, but to get the overall picture, it was quite a shock…

Dealing with parents' issues and day-to-day paperwork was far more time-consuming and difficult than she had anticipated. She also found classroom management and discipline unexpectedly difficult:

> I've had some pretty rough kids, and just different things of having to deal with the way kids talk to me…having kids talking back to me and arguing with me is something I would never have thought to do when I was a student.

Mary's favorite part of the job was facilitating a good discussion with her students on different topics. She was proud of a fairy tale unit she taught, as well as a math unit on probability. She found the students' lack of interest in history

disappointing because it was her own area of expertise. "I struggled to find fun ways…history is a hard sell with my kids. I find it sad because that's what I majored in and I love it." She also found teaching English and language arts a challenge. One of the school goals was to boost reading comprehension, and the focus was on oral language. As an area of school focus, she found it even more stressful because "it is one of the more open-ended subjects to teach."

Mary dealt with a significant amount of stress in her first year. Her questionnaire responses indicated that her top five stressors, in order from most stressful to least stressful, were classroom management and discipline, insufficient materials and supplies, special education and ESL needs, dealing with parents, and assessment and evaluation. She had trouble sleeping because her mind would race at night as she reviewed the things she had to accomplish the next day. She would also sometimes wake up during the night worried about not having finished something.

Mary's score on the Stress Resilience Test was 46, the highest of the four teachers who took the test, which confirmed that she had found some useful ways of coping with stress. In her interview, she said that when feeling overloaded, she reminded herself of similar times during her university years when she had many things due. "You know what, you've had other things where you had to meet deadlines, and it's gotten finished; or I just plan it out in my mind and say, if I can get this done then and this done then, then I can get this and this." She was skilled at connecting with other people and maintaining supportive relationships with them. Because she moved to Toronto from another city, she didn't have a lot of friends locally but made a point of meeting new people and becoming involved. She felt lucky to have made good friends with whom she could talk and complain about the things that were bothering her. She joined a book club, made a lot of phone calls, and socialized often in the first few months of school. She also maintained contact with friends from the preservice program who "are going through the same thing." She also walked on a stair-stepper regularly and played volleyball with a group.

When asked about social support at the school, Mary expressed disappointment that the mentor assigned to her, who was working half -time as a literacy teacher, had not been more supportive. The work-to-rule campaign impacted Mary's ability to work with her mentor, as it eliminated the possibility of meeting outside of school hours. Mary would have liked a more formal structure with regular meetings. "I just didn't feel comfortable going up to her and saying, 'I'm having trouble with this.'" Her mentor left the school on maternity leave in May, which meant that Mary didn't have any mentorship support at all as she completed her first year. She did seek out and find some support from the head of her department, administration and other colleagues.

She found collaboration with her classmates, and sharing resources, lesson plans, and classroom management techniques helpful, "although it's really hard to think of those until you're in the situation and able to use them and remember them." The psychology courses she had taken as a preservice student helped her

understand her students' developmental stage: "they're very into friends...the social thing especially is part of who they are right now and they get their identity from that."

Mary believed she had been given a difficult assignment with many inherent challenges and minimal formal support. She believed she had students "no one else wanted to teach." She was assigned an awkward classroom that had previously been the home economics room and was configured for that subject, and other teachers had taken many of her supplies and textbooks before she arrived thinking she wouldn't miss them. When asked what advice she would give her principal regarding support for new teachers, she had lots to say:

> New teachers get the difficult kids that no one wants to teach. They get the split classes, they get the portables...when you look at the business community, you'd never think of starting someone new off with that many strikes against them. And they wonder why people quit after five years. It's because you're treated, I don't want to say badly, but you're not supported in a lot of different things.

Her advice for other beginning teachers had to do with stress management and support. She would encourage others to go out with friends or take a class for fun, to find time away from school.

Asked about her plans for her second year, Mary said she wanted to focus on classroom management and structure. She planned to take more time to set up her classroom and to establish rules and routines. She intended to be firm and set high expectations for student behavior. She also wanted to be more consistent about maintaining contact with the parents of her students and to enlist their support as advocates by keeping them informed about what was going on in the class.

To sum up her first year, Mary had mixed feelings about her success and the challenges that undermined her sense of doing a good job: "Yeah, it's been very challenging, very frustrating at times, and it's been rewarding in other ways too. But I hear myself say a lot, 'I'm going to change that for next year' or 'I know what I'll do differently' or 'That didn't work.'" She found the year more difficult than she had anticipated and was not as well supported as she would have hoped. Her resilience was tested by the behavior of her students, and her sense of efficacy was challenged by both classroom management struggles and instructional difficulties, particularly in language arts.

While committed to teaching as a career to a point, Mary was not prepared to say she would remain in the profession forever. "I've heard the saying that you need to give teaching at least five years to know if it's for you. The first year is very hard because everything is new. I do plan on continuing teaching as a career for now." This statement indicates Mary's realistic approach and her willingness to accept new challenges, demonstrating her resilience as a new teacher.

Discussion

Several themes and common threads emerged from examination of the four participant profiles. After reviewing the literature and carefully examining the interview, SRT, and metaphor data, I was able to identify several categories that represent the capacities of the novice teachers who demonstrated high degrees of resilience, personal efficacy, and emotional intelligence. These categories include: demonstrating social competence, taking advantage of opportunities to develop personal efficacy, using problem-solving strategies, ability to rebound after a difficult experience, learning from experience and setting goals for the future, taking care of oneself, and maintaining a sense of optimism. The categories will be used to frame discussion of the data from Mary's interview.

Demonstrating Social Competence

Mary felt her family and friends were there for her when she needed to talk or complain about the things that were bothering her. She enjoyed supportive relationships with her colleagues, made new friends in Toronto, and maintained contact with helpful preservice classmates. Because her relationship with her mentor was not as supportive as she would have liked, she sought assistance from other teachers on the staff and her preservice classmates.

Taking Advantage of Opportunities to Develop Personal Efficacy

Mary's fairy tale and probability units were examples of mastery experiences for her. She had positive feedback from the head of her department, and friends and colleagues had told her that she had a gift for working with children. Her vicarious experiences working with and observing successful teaching in her practicum placements and in her role as a teaching assistant helped her develop her sense of efficacy.

Using Problem-solving Strategies

Mary demonstrated an ability to persevere, visualize solutions, and solve problems. When frustrated with classroom difficulties, Mary mentally revisited similar stressful times that she had survived in her university years. Mary was skilled at asking for help and advice when she needed it. She called students' parents for support with particularly difficult problems and consulted with colleagues for ideas. She would call on classmates from her preservice program for help and ideas. She also went to her colleagues, the principal, and her department head for assistance when necessary.

Ability to Rebound After a Difficult Experience

Mary had survived several traumatic experiences as a young person that no doubt contributed to her high resilience in her job. She encountered numerous trials in her first year of teaching, many of which shocked her sensibilities, taxed

her emotionally, and tested her beliefs about children, learning and teaching. She was, however, able to recover from these challenges and renew her enthusiasm. She summed up the year as both frustrating and rewarding, and was looking toward the next year with anticipation.

Learning from Experience and Setting Goals for the Future
Mary demonstrated her ability to reflect upon her experiences, learn from them, and set new goals. The congruence between her specific teaching challenges and her goals for the next year was significant. Mary identified classroom management and discipline as her top stressors, and her major goal was to focus on establishing rules, consistency, and setting high expectations for student behavior.

Taking Care of Oneself
Mary was quite skilled at reading her own emotions and recognizing that her stress level was increasing, a mark of her intrapersonal intelligence. She took several positive steps to deal with her stress. To cope, she used physical activity as an outlet. She also fostered social connections for support, joined a book club, and phoned her friends often.

Maintaining a Sense of Optimism
Mary's idealistic optimism was clear in her personal metaphor of teaching. Although she found her initial teaching experiences very stressful, she finished the year with a cautiously optimistic but realistic attitude. She knew that she might find out that teaching was not for her, but she was determined to give it five years and her best efforts before making that decision.

Identifying and Fostering Resilience in Aspiring Teachers
Faculties of education, school boards, and individual schools all have a role to play in helping beginning teachers become resilient, efficacious, and committed to teaching as a career. Social and emotional support is extremely important in developing resilience and mediating the negative effects of stress, and as Gold and Roth (1999) assert, good communication skills are the most useful means to relieve stress and address the psychological needs of novice teachers. The highly social and collegial nature of the preservice program from which Mary graduated, especially the emphasis on classmate connections and support, certainly helped her cope with her first year of teaching and may also have helped reinforce her resilience. Preservice programs that emphasize the collegial nature of teaching, provide opportunities to forge personal and professional relationships, and encourage continuing contact through networks and social events after graduation. All contribute to supporting new teachers as learners and as novices in the field.

If early career attrition is less likely for teachers with strong resilience, then

preservice and induction programs should offer resilience-building activities and teach resilience strategies. They should address emotional competencies such as self-assessment, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills in a systematic way. Novice teachers should be encouraged to recognize and talk about their resilient responses to events, both to increase their sense of efficacy and to support their colleagues. Working with scenarios, videos, or actual classroom observations of the kinds of challenging situations teachers encounter, teacher candidates could identify and practice coping strategies, emotional competence, reframing skills, and other resilient behaviors and ways of thinking. To become efficacious and maintain their resilience, new teachers also need assertiveness training so they can advocate for themselves in their new positions, work effectively with administration, colleagues, and parents, and ask for the support and assistance they will need on the job.

Boards of education and individual schools also need to recognize the connections between resilience, teacher development, and retention. New teachers need reasonable teaching assignments in their area of expertise and competence, and efforts should be made to avoid last-minute hiring so that novices know in advance what they will be teaching and can plan and prepare. Excellent mentoring should be the heart of every induction program. Beginners need the regular and timely support that is only practically available from mentors, colleagues, and administration at the school level as a means of increasing their sense of efficacy.

Networking groups for novice teachers and their mentors support their shared work and further improve their professional learning (Mohr, Wickstrom, Bernshausen, Mathis, & Patterson, 2003; Rogers & Babinski, 2002; 1999). School boards should provide additional, focused support for those novices who are struggling, and facilitate access to counseling as appropriate through employee assistance programs.

Suggestions for Further Research

Resilient attitudes and responses to teaching challenges could conceivably be valuable predictors of success in and commitment to a teaching career. This study focused on a small sample of novice teachers who graduated from one preservice program and then taught in one Canadian city. It would be interesting to replicate this study with a larger sample of teachers who studied at other faculties of education with different kinds of preservice programs, and then taught in different settings and jurisdictions. It would also be informative to look at the relationships between resilience, personal efficacy, emotional intelligence, and early career attrition through the lenses of gender and age. With the advent of the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) in 2006, new teachers in Ontario are now receiving focused support consisting of orientation, mentoring and professional development opportunities. It would be useful to examine how this new support program may have impacted resilience, personal efficacy, emotional intelligence, and commitment to the profession amongst new teachers in the province.

Because it is very expensive to recruit, train, and induct a teacher, an argument can be made for trying to select teacher candidates who have the greatest potential for success and long-term commitment. Griffin (1999) suggests that while the profession must continue to recruit prospective teachers who are well educated, competent learners with well-developed oral and written skills, candidates must also demonstrate excellent problem-solving abilities, a cosmopolitan world view, a well-defined social conscience, and a willingness to confront the complexities of teaching, analyze their practice, experiment with different strategies, and reflect on their practice. Many of the characteristics Griffin lists correspond with those of resilient, efficacious, and emotionally competent people. Similarly, Kosnik, Brown and Beck (2003) recommend that preservice programs must be "highly strategic in (their) admissions" (p. 48) in order to select candidates who will be successful in the preservice program and in teaching.

Preservice admissions committees play an important gate-keeping role. It may be that academic success and life experience alone do not provide enough information upon which to base critical admission decisions. To enhance the admissions process, an instrument could be designed and validated that would help identify resilient attitudes and behaviors in applicants.

Conclusion

A person who demonstrates resilience is able to regulate his or her emotions and interact more effectively in social environments. Resilience is nurtured, developed, and mobilized in times of stress. Novice teachers, given the right kinds of social, emotional, and professional support, can work towards developing resilient responses and behaviors, such as finding and maintaining balance in life, seeking and nurturing supportive relationships, persevering to achieve their goals and work through difficult situations, sustaining an optimistic outlook, and rebounding after a setback.

Learning to be a teacher is a very complex undertaking. Resilience, linked to the development of teacher efficacy and underpinned by emotional competence, appears to play an important role in new teacher success. Admissions procedures for preservice programs could include measures of resilience as a possible indicator of teaching success and long-term commitment to the profession. Preservice, mentoring, induction, and in-service programs for new teachers should address concepts of resilience as part of their curriculum.

Note

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