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Factors That Contribute to Resilience of Early Care and Education Teachers

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Walden University
2016

Abstract

Factors That Contribute to Resilience of Early Care and Education Teachers

by

Nefertiti B. Poyner

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

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Abstract

There is a lack of understanding of how teachers in Early Care and Education (ECE) work to overcome occupational stress and burnout. Many investigators have documented the stress and burnout that often result in high levels of attrition in ECE teachers.

The purpose of this study was to determine to what degree a teacher's protective factors help in mitigating the experiences of stress and burnout often associated with working as a teacher in the field of ECE. Guided by Werner's theory of resilience, which highlights the importance of protective factors as a means of overcoming risk factors, the research questions examined strategies that help promote resilience and mitigate stress and burnout among preschool teachers. The methodology was a qualitative, case study research design. Data were collected via in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 16 ECE teachers and analyzed using thematic analysis, which identified 3 categories of protective factors: family supports, workplace supports, and positive individual characteristics. Additionally, the study revealed that teachers did utilize particular protective factor strategies to help mitigate risk, stress, and burnout, such as family and friends serving as a positive support system, faith, prayer, and belief in a higher being. A recommendation is that teachers participate in an eLearning course developed to introduce protective factors teachers can use to increase levels of resilience. Positive social change may result from this study because it advocates for the support, promotion, and attention to the mental health and well-being of teachers in ECE. This eLearning course will promote teacher well-being, which can have a direct positive impact on the care of young children and the effective facilitation of curriculum and instructions within school systems.

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Dedication

This doctoral study is dedicated to my daughter, Madison Poyner. You came into my life just as I was entering the final semesters of completing this dissertation. I dedicate this work to you because you and the millions of children across this world just like you give me reason to better understand adult resilience. As I learned more, I attempted to share more and my efforts are only just beginning. Thank you for your smile, and for giving me a reason to read one more article, and type one more page. I love you.

To my husband, words cannot express how thankful I am for your support. You have been the best cheerleader a wife could ask for. We are in this together and our best is yet to come. With all my love, I thank you.

Mom, throughout my entire life, you have encouraged each and every one of my dreams. With your support I have always felt that I have wings to fly. Your teachings have helped me to know that it is going to be ok and that I can do it. Thank you for being who you are, I love you.

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I would also like to extend a heartfelt thanks to my co-chair, Dr. Heather Caldwell. When I think about your role, the word teamwork comes to mind. Thank you for working in tandem with each of us to help develop and improve this body of work.

Very special thanks are due to the teachers and staff who gave of their time. Thank you for your honest accounts of the joys and struggles that come with teaching. You are an inspiration.

In addition, I would like to thank the Devereux Foundation. May we continue to work towards the mission and vision of the organization.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

This study addressed the problem of stress and burnout in early care and education (ECE). A symptom of this problem may be indicative of the number of teachers who leave the profession each year. While the center has experienced teacher turnover as high as 25%, there are a number of teachers who have remained in their current positions. Despite the number of teachers who decide to leave the program under study each year, 75% of the teachers have remained in their positions for 9 years or more. Of the 75% who remain, the Head Start program director has collected both survey and interview data from parents and staff attesting to the skill level, expertise, and commitment of each teacher. In addition to self-reports, parents, staff, and administration spoke favorably regarding the commitment and dedication of these teachers.

The intent of this study was to examine strategies that may promote resilience and mitigate stress and burnout among preschool teachers in a Head Start Program. I sought to better understand the strategies teachers used in an effort to educate other program staff and administrators on ways to possibly address and prevent teacher stress and burnout, thereby providing a greater chance that children will receive a quality education delivered by adults who are socially and emotionally available to students.

The quality of learning that children receive in preschool programs is largely dependent on the skill level and commitment of the adults who are employed by the center (Boyer 2012; Bullough, Hall-Kenyon & MacKay, 2012; Rusby, Jones, Crowley, & Smolkowski, 2012; Siekkinen et al., 2013). According to Maier-Hofer (2015), high rates of teacher attrition in ECE are of national and international concern. Studies that investigated the reasons why preschool teachers leave the profession each year have found the following to be contributing

factors: low wages, difficulty maintaining a positive classroom climate, poor social standing, and lack of workplace supports (Gomez, Kagan, & Fox, 2015; Mahmood, 2013; Rusby et al., 2012). The risk factors contributing to teacher attrition, coupled with the increased demands placed on teachers to ensure children's school readiness, often lead teachers to feeling stress and burnout (Rusby et al., 2012).

The term burnout, introduced first by Freudenberger (1974), refers to an individual's feeling of emotional and mental exhaustion. Maslach (1976) developed a theoretical model that identifies three dimensions of burnout: "emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment" (p. 401). Maslach proposed that when teachers experience stress and burnout, emotional exhaustion develops, causing a pattern of reduced teacher availability—including physical and emotional availability. Emotional exhaustion can lead to absenteeism, which can jeopardize building the consistent relationship that is necessary for children and adults to form adequate levels of attachment (Curby, Brock, & Hamre, 2013; Friedman-Krauss, Raver, Morris, & Jones, 2014).

While researchers have investigated why teachers leave the profession, few studies have examined why they stay (Maier-Höfer, 2015). In this qualitative case study, I interviewed 16 preschool teachers who taught at a Head Start Program in Northern Virginia in order to understand the strategies teachers use to overcome some of the challenges that often lead to teacher attrition in the ECE profession.

Definition of the Problem

Attrition rates at the Head Start program under study have remained at approximately 25% for the last 7 years. Data spanning from 2007 through 2013 indicated that each year, an estimated 1/4 of the teaching staff resign from their positions within the school year. In 2015, staff of the Head Start Program under study were asked to complete an online, anonymous

Workplace Survey. A section of this survey asked specific questions related to employee engagement and wellness. Survey results indicated that an estimated 87% of those who completed the survey agreed with the statement: "I find my job to be stressful." An estimated 54% reported stress levels as high. Such high incidences of stress may be a contributing factor to the number of staff leaving each year.

Teachers in the Head Start Program under study participate in a number of professional development experiences each school year. The program, however, provided minimal training to address the wellness of the teaching staff, although efforts to improve in this area were a part of current strategic plans. Nationally, teaching in ECE has been described as stressful career (Bullough et al., 2012; Rusby et al., 2012). Without healthy ways to manage work related stress, teachers may choose to leave the profession (Hong, 2012).

Rationale

Brown (2012) suggested that more studies have addressed stress and burnout in teachers than any other profession. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics (2016), ECE teachers typically leave the profession in 5 or less years. Finding quality educators continues to challenge the structure of the ECE system (Hong, 2015). Teacher attrition has been linked to lower student achievement and lower program quality (Boyd, 2013; Cruby et al., 2013). This challenge not only affects ECE but, according to Sadowski (2013), "twenty-five percent of beginning teachers in the US leave teaching before their third year, and almost forty percent leave within the first five years" (p. 4). According to researchers, determining the skills and strategies teachers use to overcome stress and burnout has been identified as a gap in both research and practice (Beltman, Mansfield, & Harris, 2012).

Prolonged exposure to occupational stress may lead to feelings of depersonalization in teachers (Gu & Day, 2013). After surveying over 500 teachers, Jennings (2014) reported that

teachers who experience stress may themselves detach from their environment. Levels of cynicism also rise when a teacher experiences depersonalization (Johnson & Down, 2013). Feelings of detachment and cynicism may negatively impact classroom instruction and opportunities for teachers to build healthy relationships with young children. (Fleming et al., 2013). This can lead to difficulty in promoting a positive learning environment. In addition, Berg-Nielsen, Solheim, Belsky, and Wichstrom (2012) found that teachers who experience depersonalization might also have difficulty providing positive guidance to children who exhibit challenging behaviors. Teacher stress and burnout, which results in attrition, has been identified as detrimental to the development of a positive school culture (Maier-Hofer, 2015). Furthermore, if students, particularly those in the early years, are to grow and thrive, a committed body of teachers who can succeed and persevere within an often challenging learning environment will be necessary (Roffey, 2012).

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

The rationale for this study originated from an observation in a Head Start Program located in Northern Virginia. Data spanning from 2007 to 2013 indicated more instances of decreased employment of teachers than increased. Despite the number of teachers who have decided to leave the program under study each year, 75% of the teachers have remained in their positions for 9 years or more. The rationale for conducting this study was to investigate the strategies teachers used to overcome some of the challenges that often lead to teacher attrition in the ECE profession. Additionally, the intent of this study was to convert theory and research findings into intervention strategies that may help promote resilience and mitigate stress and burnout among preschool teachers in a Head Start Program. Section 3 of this study will describe the project I designed based on the findings of my research. A complete copy of the project is included in Appendix A.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

ECE teachers are subject to a variety of occupational stressors that may lead to severe responses, such as burnout and attrition. When teachers leave ECE programs, classrooms are often left without appropriately skilled teachers to care for children (Gomez et al., 2015). During times of teacher turnover, teachers are often switched from one classroom to another on a temporary basis (Taggart, 2015). The temporary nature of these changes presents challenges for staff and for children and families.

Children thrive in environments where consistent care is provided by primary caregivers (Fitzgerald & Laurian, 2013; Hipson & Seguin, 2015; Raver, 2012). Attachment between caregiver and child creates an environment of safety and security. Boyer (2012) defined attachment as the reciprocal, long-lasting relationship that young children form with other adults and children. Children who experience secure attachment play well with others and cooperate well and, as they grow older, these children perform higher on cognitive and language measures than children who are less attached (Curby et. al., 2013; Siekkinen et al., 2013).

Caregiving environments where children experience a sense of attachment also influence how the child's brain develops. Cortisol for example, is a hormone released as a result of stress in humans. Higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol have been found in children with less secure attachments (Groeneveld, Vermeer, & Linting, 2012). Children who experience secure attachment have decreased levels of cortisol (Groeneveld et al., 2012). According to Boyd (2013), 61% of children under the age of five in the United States are in various types of out of home childcare arrangements. The quality of the childcare arrangement impacts the number of stress responses a child has during the day. High quality environments present less stress for children; as a result, less cortisol is released (Groeneveld et al., 2012). In

comparison, however, poor quality ECE education may present a greater stress response in children, and as a result, not only are higher levels of cortisol released, but opportunities for learning are also jeopardized (Boyd, 2013; Groeneveld et al., 2012).

A quality ECE environment includes the physical environment as well as the adults who support children throughout the day. Positive relationships among staff, parents, and children contribute to a developmentally appropriate ECE learning environment. As with children, attachments are formed between teachers and parents through daily interactions (Berg-Nielsen et al., 2012). Inconsistency in caregiving practices within a program can lead parents to question whether or not their children are being appropriately cared for (Boyer, 2012). For both children and adults, teacher turnover presents a time of uncertainty and change (Berg-Nielsen et al., 2012; Boyer, 2012; Kourkoutas & Giovazolias, 2015).

One way to help teachers overcome stress and burnout may be to provide them with professional development that introduces strategies that support resilience and the building of protective factors (Jennings, 2014; Maier-Höfer, 2015). While professional development alone will not help address all of the experiences that lead to stress and burnout in ECE, it may help build the wellness of teachers and increase teachers' effectiveness, which may ultimately yield positive increases in children's development (Hall-Kenyon et al., 2014). Therefore, the purpose of this research was to determine to what degree a teacher's protective factors help in mitigating the experiences of stress and burnout often associated with working as a teacher in the field of ECE.

Definition of Terms

To enhance the comprehension of this study, definitions of terms that appear throughout the research study and project are as follows:

Challenging Behaviors. Challenging behaviors are defined as, “Any behavior that interferes with children’s learning, development and successful play is harmful to the child, other children or adults, puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure” (Kaiser & Sklar-Raminsky, 2015, p. 15).

Early Care and Education (ECE). The term early care and education (ECE) is defined as the time of learning that takes place in a child’s life from birth through age five. ECE programs include public and private regulated childcare, family childcare programs, Head Start, Early Head Start, and home visiting programs. Services are provided to children with typical development and those with special needs (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 1995).

Head Start. Head Start is a federally funded educational program for children age birth through five years (National Association for the Education of Young Children, NAEYC, 1995).

Protective Factors. Protective factors are occurrences in an individual’s life like that help decrease the likelihood of negative life outcomes (Gu & Day, 2013).

Resilience. Resilience is an individual’s ability to overcome risk, adversity and challenge (Lifton, 1994).

Risk Factors. Risk factors are occurrences in an individual’s life that increase the likelihood of negative life outcomes (Gu & Day, 2013).

Significance of Study

Few qualitative researchers have empowered ECE teachers to share their strategies for overcoming challenges of working within the profession (Bullough et al., 2014). In this project study, I focused on those teachers who have developed the ability to overcome challenges of teaching in ECE. This study is significant because it explored how some

teachers thrive in the face of adversity and have the resiliency to teach that is critical to the care and education of young children (Bullock 2015; Coplan, & Bosacki, 2015). This study has the potential to create positive social change by providing a voice for ECE teachers and to identify and understand the factors that empower teachers to continue to remain in the field of ECE.

Not unlike other forms of education, ECE programs function as a system, wherein one component is dependent on another. When teachers experience burnout that leads to attrition, children, parents, and the program itself are adversely affected (Andrew, 2015). Researchers have indicated a variety of reasons why ECE educators leave the field each year; however, few studies have attempted to identify factors that impacts teacher retention (Guo, Justice, Sawyer, & Tompkins, 2011; Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013; Rusby et al., 2012). The purpose of this research was to identify the strategies teachers use to overcome some of the challenges that often lead to attrition in the ECE profession. More specifically, this research sought to determine to what degree a teacher's protective factors help in mitigating the experiences of stress and burnout often associated with working as a teacher in the field of ECE. While research has investigated why teachers leave the profession, less attention has been paid to why they stay (Mahmood, 2013). Information gained from teacher interviews may aid in retaining more teachers in the field of ECE.

Guiding Research Questions

This qualitative study investigated to what degree a teacher's protective factors help in mitigating the experiences of stress and burnout often associated with working as a teacher in the field of ECE.

This research was guided by two research questions:

1. What enables some early childhood educators to continue to work in the field of ECE despite conditions that lead to high rates of attrition in the field?
2. What are the protective factors that early childhood educators have developed as a part of a resiliency process to sustain their commitment to work in the field of ECE?

Review of the Literature

Introduction

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Werner's (1989) theory of resilience. Resilience is defined as "the human capacity of all individuals to transform and change, no matter what their risks; it is an innate self-righting mechanism" (Rutter, 1987, p. 17). I chose the theory of resilience as the framework for this research study in an effort to determine the strategies teachers use to mitigate the challenges of working in ECE environments that ultimately lead to attrition. Prior research has found that stress and burnout often lead to teacher attrition (Beltman et al., 2015; Gomez et al., 2015; Groeneveld et al., 2012; Mansfield et al., 2012;); however, few studies have investigated why some teachers are able to manage and overcome stressors that lead to increased levels of stress and burnout (Beltman et al., 2015).

This literature review examined current, peer-reviewed sources that drew upon resilience theory as it relates primarily to ECE environments. Resilience, as it pertains to K-12 environments, was also investigated. Several search engines were used to find appropriate articles. The Thoreau: Multiple Database Search served as a primary approach to electronic research. EBSCOhost, ProQuest, ECHOST, Google Scholar, and Education from SAGE electronic databases were also used. I began with the key phrases used in various combinations to identify relevant findings. Search words used included, *early childhood teacher, resilience, teacher motivation, teacher well-being, teacher self-efficacy, job*

satisfaction, stress, burnout, teacher quality, and attrition. This search resulted in eight peer-reviewed articles published within the last 5 years. I then removed the word *early childhood* and replaced it with *preschool teacher*. This search resulted in one peer-reviewed article published within the last 5 years. In my third search I replaced the words *early childhood* and *preschool teacher* with the word *teacher*. This search resulted in 63 articles, which included disciplines of education, nursing, social services, and psychology.

Resilience Theoretical Framework

A focus on resilience serves as a paradigm shift from the problem-based approach most commonly used across disciplines (Gibbs & Miller, 2013; Jones et al., 2013; Masten, 2001; Masten & Wright, 2009). Resilience theory has evolved from its original application of understanding how at-risk populations of children thrive despite adversity to applications across the life span and disciplines (Kristjansson, 2012; Masten, 2001). According to Doney (2012), “Resilience then can be defined as the process of coping with adversity, change, or opportunity in a manner that results in the identification, fortification, and enrichment of resilient qualities or protective factors” (p. 654). The development of protective factors is an integral part of the resilience process (Werner, 1995). Masten and Wright (2009) proposed that resilience places an emphasis on protective factors as a way to decrease the impact of risk factors.

The study of resilience requires diverse models, measures, and strategic analysis (Beltman, 2015; Maulding, Peters, Roberts, Leonard & Sparkman, 2012; Muller, Dodd & Fiala, 2014). Researchers have utilized many approaches in order to better understand resilience as an experience and to justify it as a viable intervention strategy (Griffiths, 2014; Kristjansson, 2012).

Masten (2001) suggested that there have been four waves of resilience research. The first wave sought to describe the phenomenon of good function or outcomes. In this first wave, researchers were concerned with better understanding how to define and measure resilience. In the second wave, researchers worked to better understand the process of resilience. The terms protective, promotive, and preventative emerged as investigators sought to understand how positive development was promoted within the context of risk. The third wave focused on interventions. Researchers examined each of the previous waves and worked to determine if interventions to promote resilience were feasible. The fourth wave looked at resilience in light of advances in technology and overall subject knowledge. Researchers during this wave began to explore the role genetics play in resilience. Brain development was also explored as researchers worked to better understand how stress and resilience impact stress hormones. These four identified waves of resilience research have helped researchers better understand how resilience develops and how the theory may be used in research and practice (Masten, 2001).

Historical Development of Resilience Theory

The theory of resilience was developed through the phenomenological research on the topic of children born into high-risk situations on the island of Kauai, Hawaii. Werner (1995) was one of the primary researchers in the theory of resilience. Investigating the lives of 698 children, her longitudinal work began in 1955. Werner (1995) and a team of pediatricians, psychologists, and public and social health workers examined the risk factors, stressful life events, and protective factors of children at birth through ages one, two, 10, 18, and 32. The risks factors faced by children in the study included poverty, perinatal stress, family discord and divorce, and parental mental illness. While two-thirds of the children who experienced four or more risk factors developed social-emotional challenges such as behavior problems by

age ten, one-third of them were able to overcome the risks, eventually becoming productive, caring adults (Werner, 1995).

Werner (1995) found that protective factors that helped children to overcome adversity fell into three categories: protective factors within the family, protective factors in the community, and protective factors within the individual. Protective factors that buffer children with multiple risk factors are similar to those found to support adults. For example, healthy relationships play a key role in helping both children and adults overcome challenges in life (Hall-Kenyon et al., 2014; LeCornu, 2013; Roffey, 2012; Specht et al., 2015). In order for an individual to be identified as resilient, two requirements are necessary: (a) the individual faces ongoing significant threat, adversity, or risk, and (b) this individual exhibits skills and characteristics that help him or her successfully overcome these risks through positive adaptation. Beltman et al. (2015) suggested that a better understanding of the protective factors teachers in ECE rely on to help overcome risks can help inform preservice and teacher preparation programs as well as ongoing professional development.

Growing bodies of researchers have worked to improve the understanding of high-risk children, and their ability to successfully overcome risk factors (Masten & Wright, 2009). Initial investigation led researchers to the discovery of the phenomena of protective factors that are associated with positive outcomes in the presence of adversity. The next section outlines the risk and protective factors that teachers in ECE encounter and describes how the resilience theory may apply within school system settings.

Risk Factors Teachers in Early Care and Education Face

Research on the risk factors teachers face, as well as strategies for overcoming such risk, is rapidly growing (Brown, 2012; Critchely & Gibbs, 2012; Greenfield, 2015; Johnson et al., 2014; Mansfield, Beltman, & Price, 2014). According to Krisjanson (2012), risk factors are

described as a series of events that increase the likelihood of a negative outcome. Examples of risk factors in adults include, experiencing childhood trauma, isolation, depression, and drug abuse. Many conceptualizations of why teachers leave the field each year exist within the literature (Day, 2014; Kourkoutas & Giovazolias, 2015; Pretsch, Flunger & Schmitt, 2012; Qu, 2014). The risk factors often inherent to the work performed in ECE may be unique when compared to the K-12 population. The next section will outline risk factors that teachers in ECE face.

Compensation as a Risk Factor. Several researchers have identified compensation as a risk factor that ECE teachers face. Gomez et al. (2015) noted that child care wages often fall below poverty guidelines. Gomez et al. (2015) examined ECE wages and found that one-third of teachers in Missouri were not able to sustain their family on wages from ECE work alone and had to rely on public assistance to supplement household expenses. In Pennsylvania, teachers and teacher assistants earn less than half of what other Pennsylvania workers earn who have the same or similar levels of education (Bessie Tart Wilson Initiative for Children, 2015). Low pay is also a deterrent for prospective, qualified teachers who often choose other types of employment offering higher wages (Bullough et al., 2012).

Compensation impacts teacher turnover. In 2013, the average hourly pay for a teacher in childcare was \$9.28 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). According to Boyd (2013), teachers' salaries impact motivation and commitment and can lead to cynicism, lack of motivation, and ultimately, attrition. Policies to increase salaries for teachers in early care and education have received little attention.

Compensation also affects quality of service delivered to children and families. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), ECE programs face a risk of poor quality teaching instruction stemming from low wages paid to

teaching staff. In its position statement, NAEYC suggested, “All early childhood programs should provide staff equitable salaries and benefits commensurate with their qualifications and job responsibilities. Compensation packages (salaries and benefits) should be sufficient to recruit and retain qualified, competent staff” (1995, p. 2). Despite the fact that states are working to improve quality in ECE by increasing education requirements for teachers, teachers in this field are still among the lowest paid professionals (Boyd, 2013).

Difficulty Maintaining Positive Classroom Climate as a Risk Factor. Another factor found to contribute to the stress and burnout of teachers in ECE, as well as K-12, is related to teachers’ efforts to maintain discipline and positive classroom climates (Fitzgerald & Laurian, 2013; Fleming et al., 2013; Mahmood, 2013; Rusby et al., 2012). According to Kaiser and Sklar-Rasminsky (2015), challenging behaviors are defined as any behavior that, “Interferes with children’s learning, development and successful play, is harmful to the child, other children or adults, and/or puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure” (p.37). ECE programming provides children with developmental experiences that stimulate brain growth and development. Friedman et al. (2014) described the influence a of quality preschool classroom in helping young children develop “a teacher’s ability to be emotionally supportive and sensitive in their instruction and interactions is an important influence of children’s social-emotional development” (p. 531).

Researchers have investigated the behaviors reported as most challenging in ECE. According to Raver (2012), the most common challenging behaviors reported by teachers include external behaviors such as biting, physical aggression, defiance, over-activeness, and impulsivity. Berg-Nielsen et al. (2012) and Parker, Mathis, and Kupersmidt (2013) found that 10% to 20% of preschool children are described as engaging in challenging behaviors. When

challenging behaviors are not addressed in preschool, children are at greater risk of social and academic failure in grades K-12 (Parker et al., 2013; Raver, 2012).

Teachers who support children exhibiting these types of behaviors may experience increased stress, frustration, and burnout, which may lead to other challenges. According to Fleming et al. (2013), teachers who experience stress and frustration may, as a result, experience reduced availability and apathy—characterized by reduced interactions between teacher and student, forgetfulness, or extreme fatigue. Additionally, when faced with high levels of stress, Fleming et al. (2013) found that there may be impairment to a teacher's ability to model appropriate behaviors.

While children are enrolled in preschool programs, teachers may serve as one of the most basic, consistent factors contributing to a child's education, second only to parents and family (Bessie Tart Wilson Initiative for Children, 2015; Curby et al., 2013). When the classroom climate is challenged, children may question their feelings of belonging and self-efficacy. Difficulty in managing classroom climate can lead to negative effects on both teachers and children (Siekkined et al., 2013). Such negative effects not only adversely affect learning in individual classrooms, but also entire programs, and the ECE system as an entity (Bullock et al., 2015)

Lack of Workplace Support as a Risk Factor. Lack of workplace support is another challenge identified as a risk factor that may lead to stress, burnout, and attrition. Lack of workplace support includes lack of supervisor support, the nature of the work itself, and co-worker relations (Maulding et al., 2012; Papatraianou & LeCornu, 2014). Bullough et al. (2012) examined the occupational anxiety of preschool teachers. Results indicated that lack of workplace support includes working daily with the following experiences: (a) undefined job descriptions; (b) uncertainty and insecurity stemming from constant change with educational

policies and practices; (c) the perception of preschool teachers as less professional than those employed in K-12 fields; (d) insufficient communication among staff, parents, and administration; (e) the long teaching year; (f) paperwork; and (g) insufficient training and skill level to meet the increased needs of children with learning and behavioral challenges (Bullough et al., 2012).

Protective Factors Contributing to Teacher's Resilience

While there are a number of risk factors that lead to teacher stress, burnout, and attrition, research also points to a number of protective factors that help teachers overcome these risks and meet the challenges of teaching. Greenfield (2015) argued that despite the differences in individuals and the work environment, it is possible to determine the presence of certain situated factors that can positively contribute to the commitment and resilience of teachers. In order to support the most qualified teachers, it is important to better understand the protective factors teachers use in successfully navigating the challenges of working in ECE. Protective factors that contribute to teachers' resilience are explored next.

Self-efficacy. According to Holzberger, Phillip, and Kunter (2013), resilient individuals possess a strong sense of internal beliefs when responding to life events, handling both threatening and nonthreatening circumstances with confidence. Self-efficacy is identified as a protective factor and a prerequisite for teachers' resilience (Dicke et al., 2014). Gebbie, Ceglowski, Taylor, and Miels (2012) suggested that self-efficacy in educators is a powerful trait that is often overlooked, and its impact is also often underestimated. Self-efficacy is most influential in a teacher's early career and can be enhanced when teachers overcome challenges in their teaching (deJong et. al., 2014)

Work and Home Life Balance. Finding balance between work and home life is an important contributor to teacher resilience (Andrew, 2015; Bullough et al., 2012). Boyd

(2013) stated that creating a balance between home and school contributes to physical and emotional well-being away from school, which in turn contributes to increased satisfaction at school—even under adverse circumstances. Researchers have also found that humor can also relieve stress and burnout and contributes to resilience (Fitzgerlad & Laurian, 2013; Gebbie et al, 2012; Iizuka, Barrett, Gillies, Cook & Marinovic, 2014). This protective factor can be supported in and away from school and shared with children as well.

Administrative Support and Collegiality. Administrative support also contributes to teacher resilience. As a part of administrative support, Maier-Hoifer (2015) determined that mentor relationships were particularly helpful in assisting teachers navigate challenging situations and problem solving. Colleagues are an important part of the mentoring process and often play an integral role in creating hope, boosting morale, and helping teachers face challenges (Bullough et al., 2012). According to Brown (2012), “teacher collaboration and teacher influence in decision-making appear to be particularly important in the preschool setting, given that these two variables have been suggested to be related to preschool teachers’ positive attitude, classroom quality and children’s achievement” (p. 56). Kourkoutas and Giovazolias (2015) described the influences and importance of policies and effective organization as a contributor to teacher’s resilience.

Social and Emotional Competence. Teachers, beginning with those in ECE, serve as a source of attachment for children. Levels of attachment are developed in part based upon the social and emotional competence of not only children but also adults (Whitaker, Derth-Wesley, & Gooze, 2015). Teachers who are socially and emotionally competent are aware of and are able to maintain their full range of emotions (Maier-Hofer, 2015; Mansfield et al., 2014). Socially, such individuals tend to be pro-social and know how to create and maintain relationships with others (Bullock et al., 2015). Socially and emotionally competent teachers

do not mask emotions—rather, they demonstrate healthy strategies when responding to less-than-ideal circumstances (Klassen, Perry, & Frenzel, 2012). Although researchers have indicated that social and emotional competence is context-dependent, emotionally consistent classroom environments are positively correlated with children’s academic and social learning, as well as with caregiver well-being (Curby et al., 2013; Fitzgerald & Laurian, 2013).

Dicke et al. (2014) found that teachers’ level of positivity and optimism resulted in observably positive interactions with young children, describing teachers’ behaviors as “in-tuned, supportive and respectful” (p. 523). Interest in a better understanding of the social-emotional health and resilience of teachers is becoming increasingly important as preschool programs work to improve the quality of education children receive (Jones et al., 2013).

Teachers play a central role in promoting the overall well-being of children, however, little attention is often paid to the well-being or resilience of teachers despite the increasing demands they face (Kaspereen, 2012). The vast literature on teacher stress and burnout suggests that the teaching profession is especially vulnerable (Johnson et al., 2014; Jones et al., 2013). A study conducted by Whiticaker, Becker, Herman and Gooze (2012) indicated, “Women working with children in Head Start programs have poorer physical and mental health than do US women who have similar socio-demographic characteristics” (p. 58) . Given these implications, it is important for ECE programs to utilize resources to aid in promoting the well-being and resilience of teachers.

Resilience Building Interventions for Teachers

Teachers in ECE are exposed to stressors within the profession, such as constant change, lack of professional recognition and working with young children who use challenging behaviors. The literature provides two parallel approaches for mitigating workplace challenges, stress management and resilience building (Gu & Day, 2013; Jennings, 2014).

While there may be identifiable overlap with these two approaches, the focus of this research was resilience, not stress management. The intentional focus on resilience was chosen considering the strength-based nature of the approach. Resilience theory focuses on reducing risk factors through the use and development of individual strengths (Mansfield, Beltman, Price & McConney, 2012). Through the use of professional development experiences, ECE programs are ideally suited to promote resilience building for teachers as a means to mitigate stress and reduce burnout.

Taggart (2015) and Gu (2014) found that the study of resilience in the face of occupational stress remains largely understudied. Models of resilience building interventions for students are growing in number (Griffiths, 2014). In general, there are fewer models or specific interventions made available to teachers (Kibe & Boniwell, 2015). The numbers of models applicable to both student and teacher have increased over the last decade, however, (Curby et al., 2013). Considering the emerging interest in the concept of resilience, and despite the individual and work context differences, overall, opportunities exist for schools to develop and implement resilience-building interventions for teachers.

Researchers in the resilience theory have explained that while some resilience characteristics are innate and related to one's personality, an important finding common in the literature is that resilience skills can be learned and increased (Beltman et al., 2015; Doney, 2012; Griffiths, 2014; LeCornu, 2013; Muller, Dodd, Fiala, 2014). LeCornu (2013) suggested that many of the skills related to resiliency are ordinary rather than extraordinary and can be learned by everyone. Griffiths (2014) stated that resilience is a dynamic process as opposed to a stable individual trait. There is a consensus among researchers (Hong, 2012; Mansfield, Beltman Price, McConney, 2012; Mauling, Peters, Roberts, Leonard, & Sparkman, 2012) that resilience develops over time within the context of one's environment and is evident in the

demonstration of how the individual responds to challenging or adverse situations. Protective factors and risk factors also play a critical, connected role in the resilience process. Kibe and Boniwell (2015) asserted that resilient individual's utilize their protective factors to help overcome risk factors.

Teachers in ECE are exposed to chronic occupational stressors such as low compensation, lack of professional recognition, and conflicting roles (Curby, Brock, & Hamre, 2013). Day (2014) reported that resilience in the workplace is not simply about reduction of stress and burnout rather it is an emerging area of interest that focus on the identification of individual strengths, consideration of the environmental context and the severity of adversity. Through the identification of individual strengths, teachers may be may be able to offset adversity experienced both in and outside of the classroom.

Education in the 21st century is changing rapidly. Federal level legislation has created school environments where student academic knowledge and individual teacher performance is marked primarily by students' performance on standardized tests (Taggart, 2015). Violence in schools and difficulty collaborating with parents, challenge both novice and experienced teachers (Alexander, Brijnath, & Mazza, 2013; Berg-Nielsen et. al., 2012; Boyer, 2012). Increase in accountability measures have left teachers with feelings of fear, frustration, and discontentment (Jennings, 2014). In findings from a survey of 205 teachers, Bullough et al. (2012) reported that even the most well-intentioned school reform is at risk of failing when the adults responsible are not practicing behaviors related to resilience, self-efficacy and hope.

In an effort to counteract variables that jeopardize teacher well-being and, in turn, adversely affect the quality of education children receive, the resilience framework has been identified in the research as a viable option for helping teachers learn strategies to increase self-efficacy, mindfulness and problem-solving skills (Bullough, 2012; Singh et al., 2013). In

addition, Siekkinen et al. (2013) found children perform better academically and have better relationships with peers when teachers possess social and emotional competencies. The final section in this literature review will examine the risk factors ECE teachers face and the protective factors they use to overcome such risks.

Critique of Resilience Interventions

According to Gu (2014) researchers have expressed criticism regarding the rigor and validity in the area of resilience research. Critics of resilience theory have suggested that the constructs have little scientific value and lack rigor necessary to establish them as a viable construct (Doney, 2012; Gu & Day, 2013). Singh et al. (2013) proposed that resilience research has uncertain or ambiguous scientific value. Proponents of resilience research point out that much of the work done to investigate the theory of resilience is done using qualitative methods such as life history and narrative research (Taormina, 2015; Johnson et al., 2014). When such research methods are utilized, it may be necessary to measure reliability and validity with a different approach (Critchley & Gibbs, 2012; Lichtman, 2012). Lichtman (2012) suggested that “narrative research should not be judged by the same criteria as other research methods as narrative research methods are based on individual interpretations of complex events, rather than generalizability” (p 89). In order to demonstrate validity and rigor, researchers who use narrative summaries to detail the experiences of resilient individuals should work in a transparent manner, carefully detailing each step within the data collection and analysis process as well as sharing data finding in a clear, concise manner (Hall-Kenyon et al., 2015; Critchley & Gibbs, 2012). Researchers who have studied the construct of resilience express sharp disagreement to critics and seek to establish resilience as a valid construct worthy of critical investigation and evaluation. (Beltman et al., 2015; DiCorcia, Sravish, & Tronick, 2013).

Hong (2012) critically evaluated the construct of resilience and contended that the body of existing resilience research has played an important role in longitudinal life span and life-cycle developmental theories. DiCorcia et al. (2013) proposed the Everyday Stress Resilience Hypothesis stating that although the concept of resilience is most associated with individuals who experience extreme stress, resilience is a process than can be learned and carried out by any individual, regardless of the magnitude of his or her risk. Moving away from resilience as a construct applicable only for those facing a great deal of risk, DiCorcia et al., (2013) stated, “resilience may be thought of as a, process or regulating and coping with everyday life stressors” (p. 11). The more experiences a person had with regulating and coping with occurrences that take place daily, the more prepared he or she may be for greater challenges (Griffiths, 2014). Future research is needed to broaden the understanding of the process that leads to resilience. By focusing on the developmental process, researchers are beginning to describe resilience as an everyday occurrence that may be learned as individuals experience the reparation of stress, challenges and risk, thereby leading to more resilient outcomes (Gu & Day, 2013; Taormina, 2015).

Implications

The purpose of this study was to conduct a rich investigation of how a teacher faces the challenges of working in ECE. As might be expected, it appears that a variety of contextual and situated factors help explain how teachers overcome the challenges of working in ECE classrooms. After a review of the literature, I gained a better understanding of what happens both in and outside of the classroom that helps teachers overcome challenges. Researchers conceptualize resilience as a dynamic construct while also pointing out the normative, adaptive developmental systems and resources of the teacher, their environment and of their family and relationships (Gu & Day, 2013).

The topic and study of ECE teacher resilience is an emergent field of inquiry. Despite the small sample size, which may limit the generalizability of the findings, this research may help identify the strategies teachers use to overcome some of the challenges that often lead to attrition in the ECE profession. My project study will not eliminate the risk factors teachers face in ECE; this is not the goal. What the project study may do is provide teachers with strategies that may buffer the effects of challenges faced in the field. Supporting teacher resilience, so that teachers can in turn support young children's development, is critical to educational planning at the national, state, and local levels.

Summary

The stress teachers experience working within ECE programs is of national concern (Schelvis et al., 2014). Attrition can occur when teachers face repeated incidents of stress and feelings of exhaustion (Fleming et al., 2013). The development of protective factors can help overcome risk factors (Sadowski, 2013). Resilience theory will be used to guide the investigation of how teachers overcome the challenges of working in ECE. In the next section, details of the research approach and methods for selecting participants will be outlined. Methods for collecting and analyzing data will also be detailed.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

In Section 1, I examined the problem of ECE teacher stress, burnout, and attrition the impact these experiences had on a Head Start Program in Northern Virginia. According to study data, in a time spanning 6 years, the program has experienced a turnover rate at an estimated 25%. A review of the scholarly literature provided support that the problem does exist locally and nationally. In an emerging body of resilience research, researchers describe resilience as dynamic, contextual, and personal (Gibbs, & Miller, 2013; Nolan, Taker, & Stagnitti, 2014).

In this section, I connect the research, the problem, and the research questions. Section 1 highlighted the justification for the choice of research. In this section, I will detail the research method chosen and why this method was selected over other approaches. Next, I discuss the research sample, sampling strategy, and criteria for participant selection. I will also detail the process for gaining access to participants, the researcher-participant relationship, and procedures for the ethical protection of the participants' rights. An explanation of the data collection methods, role of the researcher, and the data analysis procedures are also included in this section. Finally, assumptions, limitations, scope and delimitations are outlined while data analysis, the findings and a summary of the research will close Section 2.

Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine to what degree a teacher's protective factors help in mitigating the experiences of stress and burnout often associated with working as a teacher in the field of ECE. Sixteen teachers from a Head Start Program located in Northern Virginia were selected for participation in this research. The research questions were as follows:

1. What enables some early childhood educators to continue to work in the field of ECE despite conditions that lead to high rates of attrition in the field?
2. What are the protective factors that early childhood educators have developed as a part of a resiliency process to sustain their commitment to work in the field of ECE?

Merrriam (2014) explained that the case study approach is appropriate for a researcher who is interested in learning about the lived experiences of an individual. Hancock and Algozzine (2011) suggested, “Case study research is generally more exploratory than confirmatory; that is the case study research normally seeks to identify themes or categories of behaviors and events rather than prove relationships of test hypotheses” (p. 16). The problem of teacher attrition in ECE is multifaceted. Each teacher’s experience with overcoming risk factors related to work in ECE is an individual occurrence. For this research, I was interested in better understanding how teachers in ECE overcome challenges in the profession that are known to lead to attrition. According to Yin (2003), qualitative case study allows for rich descriptions of, and investigation into a participant’s perspective. The case study method was decided upon after also considering ethnographic, narrative, phenomenological, and grounded theory research designs.

According to Hancock and Algozzine (2011), case study research allows for the investigation of multiple perspectives that are not easily measured through quantitative methods. The use of purposive sampling and semi-structured interviews allowed me to investigate each research participant’s thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, and challenges faced regarding working in ECE, as well as the strategies they use to overcome such challenges. According to Creswell (2010), ethnographic studies focus on understanding a culture. I did not chose ethnographic research design because the focus of this study is not on a culture.

Grounded theory is described as the process of collecting and analyzing data and reducing it into possible themes (Merriam, 2014). After themes are determined, more data is collected and the process of developing conceptual categories continues (Glesne, 2011). The in-depth, on-going time commitment necessary for this research approach made it inappropriate for the scope of this study. Therefore, a case study method was used, as it allowed for in-depth analysis and rich description.

Participants

Selection criteria. This study took place at a Head Start program located in Northern Virginia. The Head Start Program under study operates five separate Head Start Centers. The population of interest was ECE teachers, who had taught 5 or more years in their current role. The program director had knowledge of all teachers at the various centers under her leadership. She was able to determine which teachers met the inclusion criterion. One center of the five under her jurisdiction was invited to participate in this study. The other four centers experienced lower levels of turnover than the one identified for participation. The program director provided me, via email, with contact information for 18 teachers at the center under study, including their names and email addresses.

Sampling strategy and sample size. The setting for this study was an ECE center in Northern Virginia. The target site contained 11 classrooms with 22 teachers in total. Eleven teachers served in a lead or primary role, and 11 were assistant teachers. Four additional teachers, identified as substitutes, comprised the remaining teaching staff. Of the current staff employed at the time of the study, 75% had remained consistent over the last nine years.

I sought a minimum of 15 teachers for participation in this research study. According to Creswell (2010), “Because of the need to report details about each individual or site, the larger number of cases can become unwieldy and result in superficial perspectives” (p. 209). When

determining the sample size for qualitative studies, Patton (2001) suggests the exploration of sample size be large enough to allow for the identification of consistent patterns in themes or concepts under investigation. Patton (2001) also suggested, choosing a sample large enough to allow for diversity among the individuals under investigation. Patton (2001) suggested a sample size of 15-30 people, which is “enough to reach saturation” (p. 35). Therefore, 16 participants were selected for this study.

To be eligible to participate in this study, teachers must have been at risk for burnout due to the current nature of their work while at the same time demonstrating strategies for responding to such risks. In their work, Howard and Johnson (2004) used the concept of resilience to investigate why some teachers are successful and others are not when presented with similar stressors that are common in the teaching profession. In order to determine whether the teachers who volunteered to participate met the outlined criterion, a modified version of a screening tool developed by Howard and Johnson (2004), used with permission from the authors, was used to screen the current risk and protective factors of those who volunteered to participate. Subjects who participated were asked to complete the screening tool. In order to meet criterion for participations, teachers who volunteered to participate had to respond “applicable” to 13 out of 14 questions asked on the survey.

For participation, a teacher must have had taught in his or her position for 5 or more years. One individual did not meet criterion because she was a recent college graduate and had only been in the role of teacher for 13 months. The second individual, also a recent graduate, had only 7 months of classroom experience. This brought the total number of participants to 16.

Gaining access to the participants. Before I gained access to the participants and collected data, approval from Walden’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) was required.

Walden's University IRB granted approval on June 16, 2015. (IRB approval, #05-21-15-0270144). On June 16, I notified the Head Start Director via email of my IRB approval. In order to secure approval for research data collection within the Head Start Program identified for participation, I requested a letter of cooperation (Appendix B) from the Head Start Director. I obtained an electronically signed letter of cooperation from the Director on June 17, 2015.

I contacted each participant using his or her work email address on June 17, 2015. This email communication served as a letter of invitation, intent, and consent (see Appendix C) and explained the study details. Subjects were asked to send a return email indicating interest in participating in the study. All 16 teachers agreed to participate. I followed up with a personal phone call to each research subject to provide them the opportunity to ask any questions or present any concerns. While written communication informed participants of the confidential and voluntary nature of this project, this element was reiterated verbally.

I set tentative dates for interviews at a date, time, and location preferable for each research subject. Each interview was held in a room located on the ground floor of the childcare program. Throughout the research process, pseudonyms for programs and names of participating individuals were used for the ethical protection of the involved participants.

Description of participants. The participants were 16 female teachers who ranged in age from 24 to 57 years old. The length of each participant's teaching experience ranged 8 to 27 years. Educational background ranged from associates degree to bachelor's degree in ECE (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Overview

Participant	Age	Teaching Experience	Educational Background
Participant #1	46	20+	AA
Participant #2	34	11	BA
Participant #3	34	13	BS
Participant #4	55	20+	BS
Participant #5	52	20+	AA
Participant #6	43	15	BA
Participant #7	33	9	BA
Participant #8	29	8	BA
Participant #9	37	11	BA
Participant #10	41	14	BA
Participant #11	48	20	BS
Participant #12	33	15	BS
Participant #13	40	20	BS
Participant #14	44	18	BA
Participant #15	42	15	BS
Participant #16	29	9	BA

Researcher-participant relationship. According to Merriam (2009), a qualitative researcher's perspective is developed in the context of her personal, professional, and educational experiences. While it was important to build a relationship with each teacher in order to create a safe place for them to share their experiences with me, I also wanted to ensure

that I remained objective and simply reported findings as they were told to me. After receiving IRB approval, as well as approval from the program, I reached out via email to the list of teachers provided to me by the program director. Included in the email was the purpose of the study, procedures, expectations, risk and benefits. I explained that I was a student conducting doctoral research for degree completion. I further explained the voluntary nature of the study and that participants could withdraw at any time. I concluded the email by assuring participants that their privacy was of utmost important to me; as a result, I would not use their names or any personal information in the research findings. The only information included in the study's findings was the participants' number of years of teaching experience, and highest level of degree completion. For the purpose of this study, I assigned a number (1-16) to each participant.

Ethical Protection of Participants. I followed Bogdan and Biklen's (1998) suggested four-step approach to implementing ethical practices. I first explained to participants that their names and all collected data would be kept confidential, and pseudonyms would be used in place of actual names. Additionally, there would be no compensation for participation. I further explained that they could decide to withdraw their participation at any time. Next, I explained that open-ended interviews would serve as my main source of data collection. Participants were sent a copy of the interview protocol via email one week prior to our scheduled interview so they could familiarize themselves with the questions that were going to be asked. I also explained that findings from my research were going to be summarized in a narrative format and that each participant, along with the program and center director, would receive a copy of the final report.

Finally, I informed participants that no one else would have access to the data collected in the study and that all study materials would be kept for 5 years as required by Walden

University. Written files will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my home and electronic files will be stored on my password-protected home computer.

Data Collection, Instruments, and Procedures

This study followed the case study design. Semi-structured, open-ended interview questions served as the primary source of data collection. The goal of this research was to better understand the lived experiences of teachers who successfully overcome challenges in the ECE classroom. The use of open-ended questions allowed for an in-depth exploration.

According to Creswell (2010), interviews in qualitative research have both pros and cons. Positive aspects of using interviews in data collection include the opportunity to collect rich information that could not directly be observed within the scope of the case. Additionally, and as opposed to observations, interviews gave me more control of the research environment and the type of information collected. The development of the interview protocol was derived from the existing literature on ECE teacher resilience, as well as K-12 resilience in teachers. I chose questions that would best answer my research questions. Each interview question helped me to understand better the strategies that ECE teachers use to overcome challenges of working in the profession.

A disadvantage common in both observations, as well as interviews, relates to deceptive data. According to Creswell (2010), “interview data may be deceptive and provide the perspective the interview wants the researcher to hear” (p. 218). Participants’ discomfort with the interview process can also affect interviews and create a disadvantage; interviewees’ responses may not provide the depth of information desired due to poor articulation, nervousness, or a combination of many other factors (Creswell, 2010; Merriam 2009). I worked to address some of the disadvantages of the interview process by ensuring participant comfort. In order to help create a comfortable environment, I not only ensured that the physical

environment was conducive to interviewing; I also worked to help ensure participants understood the ethical protections that were in place.

Instrumentation. The Devereux Adult Resilience Survey (DARS) was used to collect data related to each teacher's current practices related to resilience. The DARS is an index with 23 items that measures adults' personal strengths. The DARS can be used to help individuals rate their current practices related to resilience. It can also help identify areas where an individual may want to improve and strengthen resilience.

The use of the DARS instrument aided in answering the second research question of this study: What behaviors are important to help adults, identified as resilient, overcome daily stresses, challenges, and struggles in ECE classrooms? Specifically, the DARS helped to determine to what degree the participants used behaviors outlined on the DARS to support their resilience. I asked participants to complete the DARS prior to each interview. The survey results were used to help guide subsequent interview discussions with each teacher. Data collected from the DARS is summarized in table 2 and, included in the next section.

SemiStructured Interviews. Upon IRB approval and participant consent, I began conducting interviews on July 14, 2015 and concluded the process on July 15, 2015. An interview guide based on the literature review was created to structure each interview. In an effort to further investigate the meaning, feeling, and interpretation of experiences, each question was designed to address specific content. I conducted interviews with each participant separately, at the program center in a room on the lower level, free from distractions and interruptions. In order to create an environment conducive for interviewing, I ensured the areas were private, clean, and quiet. Participant interviews averaged 36 minutes in length. During the interview process, I used the following equipment: iPad, digital audio recorder, writing utensils, blank paper, and the interview guide. Each interview was audio-recorded.

Additionally, I took field notes during interviews to supplement audio and to record reactions of research subjects.

Questions, probes, and member checks were used to help co-construct an understanding of risk, protective factors, and resilience of each research subject. The interview guide developed for this study was used during each interview. Probes were used when I needed to ask participants to explain their response in more detail. Member checks were conducted at the end of each interview. To do so, I restated each question and went over data I collected in my written notes. I asked participants to verify the data's accuracy and completeness. No corrections were necessary, and my notes were accepted as written by the participants. A second member check was conducted after audio-recordings were transcribed. Participants received a copy of their transcribed interview via email and were given an opportunity to review and make any corrections. No corrections were necessary; each research subject was in agreement with the transcribed content.

Data collected during actual interviews was collected via the use of a digital recording machine. Pseudonyms were used in place of participants' and programs' actual names. Separate files were created for each participant. Handwritten notes taken during interviews remain in a locked, fireproof file cabinet. Transcribed notes and written data were transferred to my personal computer and saved using Cloud® Computing. This approach allowed for data to be stored without risk of loss due to theft, tampering, or destruction of my personal computer. Data saved using the Cloud® is password protected and accessible by the researcher only from any device with Internet access.

Research log and reflective journal. Reflexivity is the act of a researcher putting aside personal feelings and preconceived ideas related to the research topic (Ahern, 1999). This process is one of reflection and allows the researcher to be more receptive to each

participant's experiences (Chan et al., 2013). Using a modified version of Ahern's (1999) suggestions for reflective bracketing, I kept a reflective journal that recorded the following:

1. Central ideas or questions that I took for granted in undertaking this research.
2. Clarification of my personal value systems and opinions I had regarding the research topic.
3. Feelings that may arise during data collection and analysis. For example, did I find myself anxious, annoyed, or experiencing enjoyment during data collection and analysis?
4. Recognitions and notes of feelings that indicated a lack of neutrality.

As the researcher, I am at the center of the interpretative process. By using a reflective journal, I was able to record a list of my feelings and items with potential for my bias. This journal of reflective notes was taken with me during each interview and referenced throughout the data collection and analysis process

Role of the researcher. I communicated via email with the Program Director to secure and confirm a location on site within the program to hold each interview. Each teacher who participated in this research received an email confirming the date, time and location of each interview. I was allowed to use the room from the hours of 830 AM - 330 PM. All interviews took place within this time frame, and in this one location. Upon IRB approval and participant consent, I began conducting interviews on July 14, 2015 and concluded the process on July 15, 2015. Each interview was audio recorded, and the interviews lasted 30-40 minutes.

I am currently a national trainer for a non-profit behavioral health organization. In this role, I conduct and develop training and resources on the topics of social-emotional health and resilience in children and adults. I have been a trainer for 15 years. I was contracted to provide

training to the Head Start Program under study for the first time in the spring of 2013. I had not worked, nor was I familiar with any members of the program before this date. As the primary investigator, I bring a bias to this research considering I have studied resilience for the last 13 years. I am also a co-author of two resources. *Socially Strong, Emotionally Secure* is an activity-based resource that provides techniques that teachers and parents of preschool-age children can carry out to help promote the resiliency skills of preschool-age children. *Building Your Bounce: Simple Strategies for a Resilient You* is a resource designed for adults, which provides strategies for supporting adult resilience. Additionally, the DARS tool used in the data collection phase of this research study was developed by the organization for which I am currently employed. However, I am not an author of the tool, nor did I play any part in its development.

The knowledge I have gained from my employment experiences has resulted in my development of opinions concerning how resilience applies to the lives of individuals, including teachers. The epoche process introduced by Katz (1987) is particularly applicable, considering the expertise I have in the area of resilience theory. Epoche requires that I remain aware of the need to control for biases and to maintain focus on the information shared from each teacher's perspective (Yin, 2010).

According to Carpenter (2007), "bracketing is a methodological device of inquiry that requires deliberately putting aside one's own belief about the phenomenon under investigation or what one already knows about the subject prior to and throughout the phenomenological investigation" (p. 59). Bracketing is an approach I used in effort to clearly and impartially collect and analyze the data. Chan et al. (2013) suggested bracketing should be used throughout the research process and kept in the forefront of a researcher's thought process.

Data Analysis Results

The purpose of this research was to determine to what degree a teacher's protective factors help in mitigating the experiences of stress and burnout often associated with working as a teacher in the field of ECE. Sixteen teachers agreed to participate in an interview and share their everyday experiences, which involved both risk and resilience. Following data analysis, I gained a better understanding of to what degree a teacher's protective factors help in mitigating the experiences of stress and burnout often associated with working as a teacher in the field of ECE. The teachers' detailed accounts, along with a synthesis of the interview data, allowed me to better understand the experiences of teachers.

The goal in the analysis phase of my research was to produce thick, rich descriptions, as suggested by Hancock and Algozzine (2011). Simon (2011) explained the process of data analysis as emergent, dynamic, and reoccurring. The data analysis process became more complex as my study progressed and I began to interact with the data through analysis. Throughout the process, I worked to mine the data in effort to uncover answers to my research questions.

After all 16 interviews were conducted, I began the data coding and analysis process by hand. The first step was to work with the data to organize it. To do this, I transcribed the interviews verbatim, entering the data into a Microsoft Word document. When analyzing the transcripts, I expected themes to emerge grounded in the context and theoretical framework of the study. Hancock and Algozzine (2011) suggested an approach to interpreting data that begins with transcription of the data. Next, categorical aggression is used to organize data into themes or categories.

I began the process of categorical aggression by reading and re-reading through the interview transcripts, looking for key words and phrases. According to researchers, protective

factors fall into one of three categories: individual protective factors, family protective factors, and community protective factors (Masten & Wright, 2009; Taormina, 2015). I highlighted key words in the transcripts and placed them in a separate Word document. Words and phrases were moved around until themes emerged. Transcribed data was categorized into the following priori codes: individual protective factors, (including, but not limited to, self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation); community and school protective factors (including, but not limited to, positive supervision and support and access to mental health care services); and family as a protective factor (including, but not limited to, connections with caring adults, such as a spouse, or with children).

Teachers, who had been identified as resilient, through the criterion selection process, were interviewed in order to investigate the strategies they use to overcome risk factors often related with teaching in ECE. Consistent with the resilience theory framework (Werner, 1994), findings from this study indicated that teachers who are resilient do attribute some part of their success to certain identified behaviors or supports. These factors, identified as protective factors in the resilience framework, fall into three categorical themes: protective factors within the family, protective factors in the community or environment, and protective factors within the individual (Werner, 1994). Three emergent themes developed during the analysis of interview data: (a) family support, (b) workplace support, and (c) individual characteristics. Once emergent themes were exposed, I was able to organize data and provide specific examples to answer each research question.

Summary of Findings Associated with Research Question 1. The first research question focused on understanding what enables some early childhood educators to sustain their commitment to work in the field of ECE, despite conditions known to lead to high rates of attrition in the field. Based on the analyzed data, I discovered there are many factors that

help sustain an educator's commitment to teaching. A sense of vocation, dedication and love for children was a commonality heard across interviews. The participants began their interviews by describing how they entered the ECE profession. The participants described the challenges or risk that they face as well as strategies or protective factors they use to overcome such challenges. Each participant described the important role family and friends play in helping to mitigate stress and burnout. Participants also identified the significance of workplace support as a contributing factor to their resilience and help in mitigating the experiences of stress and burnout. Emergent themes in response to research question #1 are outlined in the next section.

Family Support

Spouses. Teachers in ECE may encounter a range of challenges in their work. How teachers navigate these challenges often sets the tone for their commitment, longevity and the relationships formed with parents and children. The majority of the participants in this study indicated that family as a protective factor that played a critical role in their continued success and resilience. When asked to further explain how family helps support her role as a teacher, Participant #10 stated, "My husband is great. He listens to me rant about my day and he never tries to tell me what to do—he just listens. This helps me process what I am going through and to face another day." Participants mentioned how family and spending time with family helps contribute to their overall well-being, which helps them to feel content with life, have fun, smile, and laugh. Participant #15, a 42-year-old grandmother shared, "It's not just my husband—I now have so much fun with my grandchildren. They make me smile and when I come into my classroom, I want to create those same smiles with the children I teach." Participants #9 and #16, who were also parents, concurred that family is often also who they

look to for encouragement and confidence offering examples of how their own children encourage them to be good teachers.

Spouses played a significant role in supporting the teachers who participated in this research. Participant #1 described the depth of support that is needed to develop the capacity to teach in early care and education environments and explained the important role her husband plays in her ability to overcome challenges she faces in the classroom. Participant #11 explained, “I know that I would not have made it without the support of my husband. His income helps offset our household expenses. My salary is small, so he helps me be able to do what I love and we do not go broke.” Participant #14 elaborated on the value of the support she receives from her husband describing it as understanding and caring. A mother of 1, participant #14 also spoke to the financial contribution her husband’s income provides for the family. One of the risk factors contributing to the stress teachers in early care and education experience stem from the low compensation (Johnson et al., 2014). Fifteen of the 16 participants spoke of the importance of the financial contributions their spouses or partner offer, each stating emphatically that they would not be able to teach in early care and education without the financial support of their spouse or partner.

Siblings and children. Relationships with siblings and children were also identified as protective factors for teachers. Participant #6 stated, “My two girls live with me and they are my battery charger. Being a teacher can drain your battery, so my girls help restart me.” Participant #3 shared, “My daughter is a teacher in the public school; she teaches the sixth grade. Despite the differences in the ages we teach, we find it enjoyable and helpful even to share stories and ideas.” Participant #4 added, “My sister is not even in education and she offers me the best advice—more about how to deal with parents and my colleagues, which I find helpful. Sometimes you need someone to talk to so that you don’t hold on to negative

experiences; my relationship with my sister certainly helps with this.” Participants shared experiences that demonstrate how relationships within the family are a critical factor associated with ECE teacher resiliency and retention.

Friends and extended family. When teachers are not in the classroom, time spent with family and friends helps serves as a protective factor helping to overcome some of the challenges they face in the classroom. Participant #13 stated,

This may sound bad, but I live for the weekend. That’s because I let everything that may be been not so good go on the weekend. I have dinner; go to the movies and laugh, mostly with my family. And when I start again to work on Monday I am smiling and ready for just about anything.

Participant #8 similarly explained,

My family is my rock. They know I love what I do, even if the pay is low and it can be stressful. But they save things for me that I might be able to use in my class, and my time with them is just so much fun, it helps me to be a better person for my students and colleagues.

Participant #7 stated,

My connection to my family helps me bring my best attitude to the classroom. It helps me in other areas too but it really helps me be better in the classroom. I feel happy and I hope that happiness spreads to the children I teach.

Many of the interviewed teachers shared that they work with intention to overcome challenges they face within the classroom by taking time to take care of themselves so they are in a better position to care for children. All 16 participants were mothers and 5 were grandmothers. Expecting that children will vary as they progress through developmental

stages, each teacher shared a desire to strengthen the workforce through higher compensation and improved workplace support to help teachers in their efforts.

Workplace Supports

Colleagues. Out of the 16 participants, 14 stated that their colleagues were their greatest source of professional support. Support and working in partnership help teachers overcome challenges that occur in the classroom. Participant #6 shared, “In my room, my teacher assistant and me work very close together. We share information about each child and the family, too. Because we are on the same page, we make things easier for ourselves. In this job you don’t get paid a lot, so anything you can do to make things easier helps.” Likewise, participant #9 stated, “My colleagues are the first people that I look for if I don’t know about something—maybe it’s with a child, materials, ideas lesson plan, or whatever. I look to them and they are usually very willing to help.” Participant #5 shared, “I have been teaching for a long time and things start to get ‘old.’ My colleagues help bring a new perspective or new approach; it is really nice to be able to go to them. I have heard others, not in this program, talk about how they don’t have support from their co-workers; I am glad it’s not like that here.” Participant #14 explained her challenges of working with difficult children and how her colleagues offer support:

My colleagues are the best. No one person knows it all. I was having a real hard time with three children in my classroom and I thought maybe there is a different way. I said to my colleagues, hey I’m having a problem with these three children, can you give me some solutions, some suggestions and almost immediately, they started giving me ideas. They are so helpful I don’t know what I would do without them—maybe quit [smile].

Individual Characteristics

Belief in a higher being. Out of 16 participants, 15 expressed a belief in God, faith, and prayer as a protective factor that helped them overcome challenging situations in the classroom. Participant #12 shared:

I was raised in a religious home and taught the importance of prayer. While it is not acceptable to do it in school, I can pray to myself. I pray in my car before I enter the building. When I am faced with a situation throughout the day I pray and ask God to help me.

Participant #1 stated, "I believe in prayer. I go to church. It is the way I recharge myself as I prepare for another week." Participant #4 similarly explained, "There are so many times during the day when I just close my eyes and pray. I'll say a prayer in my head for God to give me the strength." Participant #5 spoke about a particularly difficult time when she was going through a divorce:

My faith helps me smile even when things are difficult. For instance, I was going through a divorce. No one at this program knew. I continued to deal with the challenging behaviors in my classroom, the paperwork and that year I did not have a consistent assistant in the classroom. But I just smiled through it. Then, I'd go home, pray and deal with whatever was happening in my personal life. I believe it is important to keep your personal and work life separate.

Creativity. A second protective factor within the individual that was shared by 9 of the 16 participants interviewed was creativity. Teachers explained how creativity helped them to overcome challenges within the classroom. Participant #15 stated,

It may sound silly, but I have to be creative with how I use my salary. I don't make a great deal here and if it weren't for my husband I don't know if I could have continued

to work here as long as I have. But I have learned how to be creative spender [smile].

This creativity spills over into the classroom through the activities I do with the children.

Participant #10 explained, “When I say creativity, I mean I am always looking for how to do something different. Let’s say I have a child that I am struggling with. I’m always thinking of creative ways, another angle and maybe it will click.” Participant #7 stated, “I have learned that a classroom with a creative teacher is one of the best ways to help the day go by smoother for the children and the adults.”

Participant #6 stated:

There are so many things that happen during the day that are out of my control. I find the best strategy for me is to seek my high being first. Before I act, I pray. And ask for guidance on how am I going to deal with this? With me, as a teacher, I wear my heart on my sleeve, and I lead with my heart. I do and, in some cases it's not always best, but for me, I ask God to help me in every situation.

Participant #3 likewise shared, “My colleagues know this, but if you don’t know me you might wonder why I am always smiling—but it’s God. Just God. His strength helps me make it through each day.”

Teaching as a vocation. Each of the teachers interviewed expressed a desire to teach that goes beyond helping young children learn to read and write. Teachers’ spoke of their passion, and, strong commitment to children and families. During the interviews, the participants were asked what they believe to be the most fulfilling part of their job. Participant #11 stated, “Children are honest and vulnerable, they need us and I am happy to be needed and to provide the love and care they may not get at home.” Participant #9, a teacher who is the oldest daughter in a family of seven explained, “I think I have been a teacher all my life: I feel

called to do this work and am not sure what I would be doing if I weren't teaching young children. I have no desire to teach children younger than three or older than five [smiles]".

"I teach from my heart," Participant #13 also explained:

Every day I remember that the children I teach are little people trying to find their way in the world. My job is to be their road map, or part of the road map. Their family is the other part of the road map. I love when parents come back and tell me how good their child is doing in kindergarten and how I helped make that happen. I cry every time.

Participant #4, a teacher with over 20 years of experience, explained, "Teachers have to remember that the decision to teach is a choice, so while things aren't perfect in Head Start, there is really no perfect place to work—but the children deserve our best." Participant #5, also with 20 years of experience, provided the following example of what keeps her motivated in the field:

A child moved away to Arizona, and the mother was like, "Oh my God. What am I gonna do?" Because that child was, like, in my pocket all the time. And, I always give little words of encouragement, wisdom, to the kids. And, when they always fussing or fighting in the classroom, I always tell them "A friend loves at all times." And, so, when they went to go visit for another child-care place—and this child was getting ready to go to Kindergarten, so it wasn't long that they were gonna be there—the mother had to stop and really listen to the child, because the child told her. When they went to visit the class, the child said, "No. That's not for me." And mom said, "Why?" She said, "There's no love there." And the mom ... She called me from Arizona, said, "You know, I'm having a really hard time, because she said 'There's no love there. There's no love there.'" There's no love there. And that brought tears to my eyes,

because they remember that. Because I always tell them "I love you" because they don't hear it. Some don't hear it. And I said, "If you never hear it, you hear it here."

Summary of Findings Associated with Research Question 2. The second research question asked participants to share the behaviors that help adults overcome stress and challenges. Several questions from the interview guide were used to determine what behaviors are important for helping adults, identified as resilient, overcome daily stresses, challenges, and struggles in the ECE classroom. Data collected from completion of the DARS also helped to identify additional behaviors that contribute to participants' resilience. A summary of the data collected from the DARS is outlined in Table 2.

Self-efficacy. One question asked, "What advice would you give a teacher who was thinking of applying to teach at this school?" Participant #5 replied, "You have to be strong. You can't let little things get in the way of you doing a good job." Participants #2 and #9 shared the importance of believing in one's abilities Participant #2, elaborated, "This work can make you feel as if you unimportant. Some people look at preschool teachers as babysitters. I say that the work we do is some of the most important work there is. You have to really believe this and not consider yourself a babysitter but a teacher of young children's growing minds."

Participant #6 offered responses which echoed participant #5 and shared, "I think I am a good teacher - I didn't always but now because of my training and the years I have worked in the field, I really think I am a good teacher. I can always learn more but I give it my best each and every day." Participants #8 explained how working with children who use challenging behaviors has helped build her confidence. "I had a child this year who I really just could not figure out. But we never stopped trying. I worked with my director, we worked with the

family and in the end - although it took some time - we are beginning to see improvements in the child's behavior. This situation helped to build my confidence and lets me know that I can be a part of the solution to make things better." The participants shared that what they do to overcome stress is not an easy task. Each indicated that they are passionate and work hard to ensure the children who are enrolled in their Head Start program are given every chance to succeed. Furthermore, these educators look for the positive in their learning programs and do not focus on the negative experiences. All of the participants agreed that working to remain positive was key to overcoming risks and building their well-being.

Effective communicator. Effective communication was found to be a contributing factor in helping participants overcome challenges in their work. Participants #12 explained, "Communication is really important in this work. Now, even when you communicate, you may not get what you want but it is important to be able to say it—get it off your chest and move on." When asked to further explain, she offered this example:

I close at the end of the day and sometimes other children come in my room when their teacher leaves for the day. That's fine, but sometimes I am not aware of something that may have happened in another classroom, and parents will ask me because I am the only teacher there. One day a little girl could not find an item she brought for show and tell. The parent asked me where it was, I didn't know, and the parent became frustrated. The next day, I asked the teacher about the toy and she explained to me that the toy was in the office for safekeeping. If someone told me, I would have been able to tell the parent. That's just one example. Now, at the end of the day, teachers have to debrief with me before they leave, sharing any occurrences that I may need to convey to parents. It took a while, but having teachers debrief with me started taking place after I spoke to administration about my challenges in the afternoon.

The teachers openly discussed the importance of communication in order to help avoid problems within the program. Participants #4 explained, “A great deal of challenges within a program can start when everyone is not on the same page. Effective communication starts from the top. If communication is clear up top, then we may have better results, but if not things can get real bad, real quick.” Several of the participants shared how effective communication also brings the teachers and others within the program closer together. The importance of a collaborative and trusting relationship was described as key to helping the program run more effectively.

Results of the DARS Survey. The DARS is a 23-item survey that outlines behaviors that contribute to adult resilience. Participants were asked to complete the DARS in order to determine the behaviors each teacher currently used to build her resilience. As outlined in table 2, data collected from the completion of the DARS indicated teachers utilize a number of practices which contribute to individual adult resilience. Examples of such behaviors include, trying different ways to solve a problem, asking for help and being open to new ideas. During the interviews, teachers were not asked to elaborate on any of the responses collected on the DARS. An analysis of the interview data, coupled with an analysis of the completed DARS data does however, offer narrative examples of how teachers practice behaviors which contribute to adult resilience. Consider for example, participant #7 who explained, “I love to cook. I would cook for a living if I could. Cooking is my hobby and it helps me to take a break from everything else and just do something that I enjoy.” Additionally, participant #6 shared the importance of having a mentor, “My mentor has been extremely helpful in helping me overcome some of the challenges I face in the classroom. She is an open and honest listener who tells me when I am wrong as well as when I am right. I value her so much that even though she has moved away, we still talk once a week.” Throughout the interviews with

participants, the topic of mentors repeatedly surfaced demonstrating the importance of this practice in supporting adult resilience.

Table 2

DARS Survey Data

Survey Item	Yes	Sometimes	Not Yet
I have good friends who support me.	16	0	0
I have a mentor or someone who shows me the way.	15	0	1
I provide support to others.	16	0	0
I am empathetic to others.	16	0	0
I trust my close friends.	16	0	0
My role as a caregiver is important.	16	0	0
I have personal strengths.	16	0	0
I am creative.	16	0	0
I have strong beliefs.	16	0	0
I am hopeful about the future.	16	0	0
I am lovable.	16	0	0
I communicate effectively with those around me.	14	1	1
I try many different ways to solve a problem.	16	0	0
I have a hobby that I engage in.	14	0	2
I seek out new knowledge.	16	0	0
I am open to new ideas.	16	0	0
I laugh often.	16	0	0
I am able to say no.	15	1	0
I can ask for help.	15	1	0
I express my emotions.	16	0	0
I set limits for myself.	11	3	1
I am flexible.	12	4	0
I can calm myself down.	16	0	0

Discrepant cases. According to Yin (2010) words and phrases that do not emerge as themes during data analysis can be considered discrepant cases. Discrepant data can provide additional perspectives related to the topic under investigation (Yin, 2010). The resilience process is dynamic and multifaceted (Roffey, 2012). It is also an individual experience. The themes uncovered in this research were broad and represented teachers' views on strategies for overcoming the challenges often associated with working in ECE classrooms and programs. After a careful analysis of the data with the identified themes, I can report that there was no discrepant data.

Research accuracy and credibility

Dependability. Creswell (2012) explained that dependability of qualitative research means the researcher has provided enough detail in the research design to ensure that work serves as a model or “prototype” for future researchers to repeat. Additionally, dependability in qualitative research means the researcher has provided an in-depth coverage allowing the reader to follow the extent to which proper research practices have been followed. Specifically, to aide in the dependability of qualitative research, Creswell (2012) suggested that the researcher describe the planning and execution of the research design and its implementation. In this project study, I have explained the use of case study research, justified my reasoning for choosing such an approach and have provided documentation of the process of data collection, analysis and described how the findings emerged from the data in detail.

Creswell (2012) also explained that the dependability of qualitative research is measured by the “operational detail of data gathering and a reflective appraisal of the project” (p.72). I have explained the details of the data collection and analysis process carried out in this research. It was my responsibility to present the findings in an accurate, objective, and

systematic manner so the reader can understand the narratives through the lens of the participants (Merriam, 2009).

Credibility. The purpose of this project study was to determine to what degree a teacher's protective factors help in mitigating the experiences of stress and burnout often associated with working as a teacher in the field of ECE. Every effort was made to accurately present the participants' perception. I attempted to build a trustworthy relationship with each participant thereby creating an opportunity for each teacher to share his or her experiences. I attempted to understand how the participants think, feel and the actions that enabled them to find success within a difficult and challenging work environment. I have outlined the duration of the interviews and explained the process of how we developed a trustful and working relationship. I have also explained how I used bracketing to set aside all preconceived notions, my personal experiences and perspectives.

Additionally, as a novice researcher, member checking helped to ensure participants' thoughts were recorded accurately. As soon as I transcribed the interviews, each participant received a summary of the transcription of the interview to review for accuracy, to clarify and to offer specific corrections if necessary. No revisions were necessary, and the participants approved the interview transcript.

The organization of this study's findings was grounded in two research questions that shaped the framework for this study. Teachers were interviewed in order to determine to what degree a teacher's protective factors help in mitigating the experiences of stress and burnout often associated with working as a teacher in the field of ECE. An analysis of the data collected through individual interviews resulted in a pattern of behaviors that were similar between participants, and supported the development of the study's findings. I found that teachers rely a great deal on one another for support and that family and friends also act as

support systems. Results from data analysis also suggest prayer and spirituality are strategies that helps teachers overcome challenges.

Each of the participants shared insights into their everyday experiences that help them overcome stress and burnout within their Head Start Program. They revealed that protective factors categorized within the family were instrumental in helping mitigate stress. They also shared the important role spouses and extended family play. Protective factors found to be categorized as within the individual demonstrated the importance of self-efficacy. Categorized as a protective factor within the individual, faith and prayer were also found to be a contributing factor to the resilience of the teachers participating in this study.

The project that was created as a result of this research is an online, self-paced, eCourse designed to introduce teachers to strategies that promote adult resilience. The course contains 6 individual modules. Module 1 will introduce participants to the theory of resilience and its applicability to adult wellness. Modules 1-4 will introduce 4 particular protective factors: relationships, internal beliefs, initiative, and self-control. Each module will contain subject specific pre-recorded webinars, both written and creative journaling workbook activities, and relevant recommended readings. The eCourse will be delivered via digital download to the Head Start Program Directors along with a presentation of the project background and recommendations for use of the course in as on-going professional development.

Conclusion

This qualitative case study was designed to determine to what degree a teacher's protective factors help in mitigating the experiences of stress and burnout often associated with working as a teacher in the field of ECE. Data were collected through the use of semi-structured interviews and the completion of the DARS. The 16 participants in this study

expressed their lived experiences about the strategies they use to overcome the challenges of teaching in ECE. They openly shared their feelings and provided descriptive examples. The data showed teachers, identified as resilient, utilize several strategies to help mitigate risk, stress, and burnout. Family and friends serve as a positive support system. Faith, prayer, and belief in a higher being also served as protective factors for participants. For these individuals, teaching was more of a vocation than an occupation.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

Teachers in ECE may be able to mitigate feelings of stress and burnout associated with teaching when they are afforded opportunities to practice skills that promote adult resilience. The project that I designed, *The Road to Resilience*, consists of six web-based learning modules that can be completed individually or in a group, as well as with or without a facilitator. The eCourse is a professional development experience recommended as a result of data collected in this research study. The goal of the eCourse is to introduce teachers in ECE to strategies that may promote adult resilience and reduce stress, burnout, and attrition. Each learning module consists of pre-recorded webinars, recommended readings relevant to the topic, a journaling activity, and an inspirational poster for download. Participants are encouraged to proceed through the course modules sequentially. At the end of each module, participants are provided with an opportunity to ask questions, make recommendations, and post comments. Appendix A contains an outline of each of the six modules, power-point slides used to create the recorded webinars, trainer notes, links to recommended readings, and a sample of module handouts.

Rationale

Over the last 20 years, the resilience theory has evolved from its original application of understanding how at-risk populations of children thrive despite adversity to its current application across the lifespan and disciplines (Castro et al., 2010). The development of protective factors is an integral part of the resilience process. Resilience places an emphasis on protective factors as a way to decrease the impact of risk factors. Skodol (2010) suggested that the reliance on protective factors mitigates stressful situations, often leading individuals to higher levels of contentment than would be the case if the protective factors were not present.

Researchers indicated that each year, job stress among teachers in ECE is estimated to be over 40% (Bullough et al., 2012). According to Gu (2014) and Singh et al. (2013) stress and burnout suggests that individuals in the ECE teaching profession are especially vulnerable to stress and burnout. Additionally, Curby et al. (2013) suggested a link between teacher well-being and supportive teacher-student relationships, effective classroom management, curriculum instruction, and successful social and emotional program implementation. Despite this established link, little attention has been paid to the well-being, or resilience, of teachers who increasingly face greater demands.

The goal of this 6-week webinar series is to help adults learn and practice new ways of increasing levels of resilience through their everyday experiences. By focusing on increasing skills related to resilience, my goal is to provide participants with strategies to help address feelings of stress, burnout, and exhaustion. An online format was chosen for this project in order to provide participants with flexibility in participation. An online format was also chosen since many of the teachers who were a part of the study indicated that they use the Internet as a resource for professional development as well as for nurturing relationships. Creative experiences have been included in each model to provide learners with opportunities to express themselves creatively. Creative expression was identified as an individual strength by 12 of the 16 teachers who participated in the study.

Review of the Literature

The following review of the literature is related to the design and implementation of an online learning course aimed to introduce ECE teachers to strategies that may promote adult wellness and resilience, therefore reducing stress, burnout, and attrition. I focused my research on the most recent and relevant studies (within the last 5 - 6 years) related to Bandura's (1977) social learning theory and ways in which to translate this theory into successful models for

online learning. In addition to referencing a few sources that were used in the initial literature review, I also utilized a number of new sources identified by further searches based on their relevance, validity, and ability to support the project's theoretical foundation.

I utilized the five step literature review process proposed by Creswell (2012). This process began with identifying the key terms I would utilize to search the literature. For the nature of my research, the words chosen addressed three particular components of my research: (a) professional development, (b) online learning, and (c) teacher well-being. The databases I searched in this literature review included Pro Quest Central, ERIC, EBSCO host, Google Scholar, and Educational Research Complete. The search terms used included *early care and education teachers, preschool teachers, daycare teachers, Head Start Teachers, stress, burnout, attrition, wellness, well-being, resilience, mindfulness, professional development, and online learning*. After identifying my search terms, I located literature relevant to my research topic. The third step in the literature review process was to evaluate and select the literature most relevant to my research topic. Next, I organized the literature by the last name of the primary author. I took running notes of key concepts, and in my final step I wrote a review of findings that are outlined in this section. The next section will briefly describe the current ECE workforce and current professional development practices within the field.

The Early Childhood Workforce. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016), the ECE workforce is estimated at 2.3 million. The field is composed of mostly female employees ranging in age from their early 30's to late 40's. Care for children can be provided in center-based, school-based, or home-based care. Center based care accounts for 24% of all child care (U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2016). The field of ECE is considered a profession by some and a service by others (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016). According to

the U.S. Department of Labor (2016) ECE teachers, along with those who care for children in private homes, are classified as *service* occupations while kindergarten and elementary teachers are considered *workers in a professional occupation*. It is not uncommon for teachers in ECE to begin working in the field without the required skill level to successfully meet the needs of children and families (Gomez et al., 2015; Maier-Hofer, 2015).

Standards to increase the knowledge level of ECE teachers have increased over the last decade (Mahmood, 2013). According to the National Head Start Association (2016), in 2007, a new national requirement for teachers within Head Start was put into place, requiring 50% of the lead teachers to have a bachelor's degree by the end of September 2013. While research abounds with evidence supporting the correlation between teacher knowledge level and student outcomes, it is not clear if obtaining a bachelors' degree will be the key element to improve curriculum and instruction within classrooms (Mansfield, 2012). Compared to those with similar qualifications, teachers within ECE are paid low wages, this which continues to present challenges of hiring and retaining qualified staff (Mahmood, 2013; Mansfield, 2012).

Professional Development within the Early Childhood Workforce. Professional development is the process of learning and keeping up-to-date in one's area of expertise (Vu et al., 2014). In ECE, professional development consists of experiences that take place in and outside of the program. Regardless of the location, professional development in ECE is designed to provide teachers with opportunities to advance their understanding of particular subject matter (Dunkake & Schuchart, 2015). The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2016) defines professional development as taking place in two separate but related experiences.

Preservice, is a component of professional development and is defined as an educational experience a teacher receives as part of initial preparation (NAEYC, 2016). In-

service, a second component of professional development, is the on-going learning experiences teachers receive that are designed to improve knowledge, skill, behavior, and attitudes or values of the ECE workforce (NAEYC, 2016). In line with this, NAEYC stressed the important role of professional development, and referred to the process as required and necessary (NAEYC, 2016).

Early Childhood Educators as Adult Learners. The growing body of research documenting the tremendous period of growth and development that takes place in early childhood has led to a push to advance the education of ECE teachers. Professional development plays an integral role in providing teachers with the skills necessary to have a positive impact on children's learning (Dunkake & Schuchart, 2015). Minimum requirements for ECE teachers vary state to state. Head Start Programs across the country currently follow the Head Start Performance Standards administered by the Administration for Children and Families Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (Administration for Children and Families Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, 2016). This set of standards outline the minimum requirements teacher need to qualify for employment within Head Start as well as to detail the ongoing professional development requirements necessary.

The characteristics of adult learners in ECE are similar to adult learners in other fields of study (Shaha, Glassett, Copas & Huddleston, 2016). Collins and Liang (2015) found that adult learners appreciate self-directed, self-paced learning experiences, practical and purposeful work, and the creation of a learning community where the process of transfer of knowledge can be shared. Also, Tseng and Kuo (2014) pointed out the importance of helping adult learners connect current knowledge with past experiences and skills already obtained.

As requirements to increase the knowledge level of ECE teachers grows, providing barrier-free access to education and training has become of optimal importance. Traditional

methods of professional development consist of formal education, credentialing, specialized on-the-job in-service training, coaching, and consultation (Dunkake & Schuchart, 2015; Gomez et al., 2015). Marquez et al. (2016) support the idea that online learning may be a practical alternative for high-quality professional development.

Theoretical Framework

The design of this project was based on the theoretical framework of and literature related to Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory. This theory has applicability to any age group, including adults (Baran & Correia, 2014; Winton, Snyder & Goffin, 2015). To further connect the literature on social learning theory to the actual project, I included an in-depth look at the four main tenets of social learning theoretical underpinnings that influenced the project. By including a discussion of Bandura's social learning theory as part of this literature review, I hope to strengthen the rationale for using social learning theory as the theoretical foundation for the project.

Bandura's social learning theory was developed before the advances in technology that have led to the development of online learning (Winton et al., 2015). Researchers argue, however, that the underpinnings of Bandura's work have relevance as applied to the realm of online learning (Baran & Correia, 2014; Parker & Herrington, 2013; Weigel et al., 2012). To help demonstrate how Bandura's work applies to the project in this study, I focused on the following four elements of social cognitive theory that are the most appropriate for this project: (a) attention, (b) retention, (c) reproduction, and (d) motivation. These tenets are applicable to the elements that may promote the successful implementation of online learning (Weigel et al., 2012).

Attentional processes. Attention is one of Bandura's (1977) four major tenets of social learning theory. According to Bandura, people learn by observing the behaviors of

others (Bandura, 1977). An important element of observations is attentional focus.

Attentional focus is what is required in order for an individual to move from being a passive observer to having an actual understanding of what they are observing (Stone-MacDonald & Douglas, 2014). A person does not learn only through observing (Bandura, 1977). Intake of stimuli and cognitive processing create an accurate perception of what is being observed (Rao & Kemper, 2016; Tseng & Kao, 2014; Vermunt, 2014; Vu et al., 2014; Weigel et al., 2012).

Siekkinen et al. (2013) found that teachers in ECE are not often afforded the opportunity to participate in ongoing peer observation of teachers. Teacher preparation in ECE is often not sufficient enough to fully equip teachers with the knowledge base needed to implement high quality education for young children (Winton, Snyder & Goffin, 2015). In addition to teachers not being afforded opportunities to observe excellence in other teachers, Andrew (2015) pointed out that teachers in ECE report high levels of stress and feel particularly anxious about carrying out new initiatives without being given adequate training.

The online format chosen for the facilitation of this project will not afford teachers with the opportunity to conduct observations. In an effort to build upon the important tenet of attentional processes, careful attention will be paid to the narration and activities used during the development of the eCourse. For example, starting my career as a preschool teacher, I have gained a rich history of experiences. I will utilize rich narration to detail my experiences. I will also use appropriate visuals to accompany my narration. My goal is for the learner to acquire knowledge through my use of open, honest accounts of practical ways to increase levels of adult resilience.

Retention. After an individual has observed the behavior of another, a second component necessary for learning is that of retention. According to Bandura, an individual does not learn by just observing; rather, as a person observes, they begin to form patterns and

are able to form memory through the development of these patterns also known as, symbolism. (Bandura, 1977). Working memory varies from person to person. An individual's attentional preference dictates what goes in to working memory (Bandura, 1977). Coupled with this, verbal coding of observed behaviors may assist learners in remembering what was observed both in the short and long term (Collins & Liang, 2015; Douglas, McNaughton & Light, 2013; Prestridge & Tondeur, 2015). Bandura stated, "Cognitive processes that regulate behavior are said to be primarily verbal and less visual" (p. 7). This is not to indicate that individuals learn primarily through hearing. Instead, researchers proposed that individuals are more likely to retain information when given an opportunity to observe and make visual codes in their memory, also known as symbolism (Collins & Liang, 2015; Kemper, Lynn, & Mahan, 2015). The creation of symbolism allows a learner to maintain a wealth of information in an easily stored form.

Advances in technology offer new ways to help learners retain information (Kaspereen, 2012; Macia & Garcia, 2016; Marklund, 2015; Miller, 2014; Stone-MacDonald & Douglas, 2014). Individuals who design online learning are responsible for creating experiences in which learners see patterns related to how concepts are linked (Donohue & Fox, 2012; Kyzar et al., 2014). Bates, Phalen and Moran (2016) proposed that adults bring prior experiences and knowledge to education. In an environment conducive to adult learning, the learner is able to expand upon and refine prior knowledge by connecting it to new learning (Marklund, 2015; Smith & Sivo, 2011). The process of connecting new information to existing knowledge assists in retention and helps make the content relevant to the life of the adult learner (Kaspereen, 2012).

Consideration of retention was carefully planned for in the creation of the Road to Resilience eCourse. Chia-Pin, Chin-Chung and Meliem (2014) found that chunking material

into small segments is a viable approach used in an online learning environment. *The Road to Resilience eCourse* consists of six separate learning modules that build upon one another. In addition to offering the material in small segments, opportunities to conduct art and journaling activities are available in each module. Each activity was designed to provide learners with opportunities to turn verbal coding into visual information or symbolism. For example, in Module 1, learners are introduced to the term resilience. After formal definitions of the term resilience are offered, learners are encouraged to create a resilience poster using only photos or images, demonstrating what resilience means to them. Learners are then encouraged to post their resilience posters to a social media site and explain what each symbol of resilience means to them. This experience presents an opportunity for symbolic transformation and cognitive organization, which may facilitate retention (Banudara, 1967; Shaha et al., 2016).

Motivation. A learner can observe, retain and reproduce modeled behavior; however, practices that lead to long-term behavior change may not be long withstanding if the learner lacks motivation (Bandura, 1977; Bates et al., 2016; Kzyar et al., 2014). Baran and Correia (2014) claimed that while motivation will vary from learner to learner, successful adult instruction would work to identify individual rationales for participation. Teachers in ECE experienced high levels of stress and burnout (Boyd, 2013; Bullock et al., 2015). The occurrences of such experiences may lead to poor quality childcare, high levels of teacher absenteeism and in some cases attrition (Hong, 2012; Maier-Höfer, 2015). *The Road to Resilience eCourse* is designed to introduce teachers to resilience building skills that may mitigate stress and burnout. The course content may prove to be a motivation for participation. Long-term behavior change may result as teachers identify strategies that increase their resilience. Course participation alone will not lead learners to increased skill level in resilience. Bandura's work stated, "In any given instance, lack of matching behavior following

exposure to modeling influences may result from either failure to observe the relevant activities, inadequate coding of modeled events for memory representation, retention decrements, or inadequate conditions of reinforcement” (p.8). In order to increase motivation, *The Road to Resilience eCourse* will utilize multiple learning modalities, to include, written and creative activities throughout. The course will also use social media outlets to allow participants to observe what others are learning and taking away from the course design and activities.

Self-efficacy is a component of motivation (Bandura, 1977; deJong et al., 2014). Self-efficacy can be defined as a belief in one’s capabilities (Chin-Pin et al., 2014). The social cognitive theory proposed that efficacious action and the personal benefits it brings become powerful incentives for modeling (Bandura, 1977). Increasing the resiliency of ECE teachers is not the only task required in order to address the attrition, stress and burnout of teachers. There is a plethora of national policy efforts that require examination and modification (Griffiths, 2014; Schelvis, Zwetsloot, Bos & Wiezer, 2014). If a teacher in ECE is able to learn skills to help mitigate stress and burnout however, program quality may be positively impacted and teachers may be better able to exhibit teaching practices identified as effective in educating and caring for young children (Maier-Hofer, 2015).

The seminal works of traditional theorists, such as Bandura, continue to influence current teaching and learning trends in today’s education field (Baran & Correia, 2014; Kyzar et al., 2014). Despite the vast amount of modern learning theories that have emerged, works of traditional theorists provide a blueprint for the new direction of online learning (Baran & Correia, 2014). In the next section I conclude the literature review section by providing a description of the ECE workforce, and professional development trends within the field. I also

describe the ECE educator as an adult learner and present a synopsis of the strengths and challenges of online learning.

Online Teacher Professional Development. Emmett (2015) suggested that teachers who engage in professional development are interested in gaining additional knowledge that will enhance their ability to do their work. Online professional development (OPD) is gaining in popularity as districts and programs work to accommodate the varying needs of teachers, busy schedules, and limited budgets for professional development (Corcoran & Tormey, 2013). Access to technology has made OPD much easier to access and more cost effective for ECE programs (Stone-MacDonald & Douglass, 2014). Out of the 16 teachers participating in this research, 13 have been or are currently enrolled in an OPD experience of some type. The ease and comfort in using technology as an outlet for learning made the development of an online learning course a suitable option.

Parker, Maor, and Herrington (2013) contended that OPD can be considered a viable alternative to in-class professional development. According to Winton et al. (2015), OPD can help address the varying needs and challenges of current professional development systems. Quality OPD that is appropriately designed and based upon adult learning principles creates an active learning environment for learners—one that promotes interaction and opportunities for reflection (Weigel et al., 2012). Existing research on OPD highlights the ability for learners to have wider access to early learning experts from around the United States and beyond (Powell, Diamond, & Cockburn, 2010). Existing researchers who study online professional development highlight the ability for learners to experience experts from both local and national levels as one of the many advantages of online learning. Researchers also support the belief that online professional development can help improve the access, availability, and cost related to providing high-quality professional development. By making professional

development easier to access, teachers may be better able to obtain the skills needed to create classroom environments conducive for learning (Marklund, 2015; Parker, Maor, & Herrington, 2013).

While there are numerous studies documenting the stress, burnout, and attrition of teachers in the K-12 environment (Specht et al., 2015), a paucity of research has addressed these same factors in teachers who work in ECE. Additionally, web-based professional development within the K-12 education structure is a growing trend and documented in the current research. However, the use of web-based professional development in ECE is an emerging trend and, as a result, there were few research studies documenting the effectiveness or non-effectiveness of its use. According to Baran and Correia (2014), “Distance learning is a relative newcomer to the early childhood professional development field” (p. 3). An analysis of the available literature related to adult wellness and OPD provided support for the implementation of an online course designed to promote adult resilience.

Douglas et al. (2013) conducted a study to explain the effectiveness of OPD for paraeducators in supporting the communication abilities of young children with autism. According to the study, paraeducators working under the supervision of head or lead teachers serve as a primary support to children with special needs in ECE settings. However, they typically have limited training in the appropriate techniques to use with children who do not communicate verbally. According to Douglas et al.’s (2013) study:

Three paraeducators were enrolled in OPD designed to introduce communication interaction strategies. After a period of six weeks, participants in the OPD were observed for use of appropriate communications with young children. At week seven, results indicated a significant increase in appropriate communication opportunities and responses performed by paraeducators with young children during play. In addition,

children increased the number of communication acts they performed after paraeducators completed training. (p.241)

Overall findings from the study suggested that online instruction may provide effective, efficient, and targeted information for groups with specific needs, as in the case of paraeducators (Douglas et al., 2013).

For some, online learning presents a multitude of challenges, and therefore, is a method of professional development that is approached with trepidation (Olsen, Donaldson, & Hudson, 2010). Weiser et al. (2012) conducted a study involving 816 ECE professionals to investigate the thoughts of these professionals about Internet use OPD. Despite the growing use of the Internet, 35% of the participants reported not being comfortable using the Internet and used it less often than others participating in the study. When examining the mean ratio on a 4-point scale, using the Internet for online training classes and modules was given a value of 3.69. Resources to support learners who are less comfortable with internet use may help in retaining and supporting online learning efforts (Macia & Garcia, 2016).

The content presented in this eCourse also influenced the choice of an online learning format. When individuals begin to examine the risks and challenges of their lives, strong feelings may be evoked (Salter-Jones, 2012). During the interview process conducted for this research, I took note of facial expressions, changes in tone of voice, and body language when participants were asked to discuss the risks they face in their work and how they overcome such circumstances. Participants offered rich detail regarding these experiences, and the one-to-one setting created an environment conducive for sharing. The same level of sharing may not have occurred if participants were in a group setting. *The Road to Resilience* eCourse asks participants to be very reflective as they examine the risks and protective factors they have. The online nature of the course is designed to give participants a safe place to fully explore

their experiences and feelings. This same exploration could prove to be difficult for an individual participant in professional development with others present. Vu et al. (2014) pointed out that students participating in online learning may be presented with more opportunities to be reflective in the absence of the immediate back and forth that often takes place in a traditional classroom.

For new as well as experienced online learners, interacting with technology and the feeling of isolated learning can hinder the OPD experiences. Parker et al. (2013) suggested that the principles of both online and traditional forms of professional development are very similar. According to the researchers, professional development has a positive impact on adult learning when the content is focused and coherent and when the learner is actively involved (Parker et al., 2013; Vu et al., 2014; Weigel et al., 2012). The design of *The Road to Resilience* eCourse will provide participants with opportunities to reflect and problem-solve using their real life experiences. With this approach, participants will be able to immediately assimilate the content presented. Interactivity within the course is also planned for in the design of the module handouts, recorded webinars, and journaling activities.

Creating a sense of community is important in designing OPD (Parker et al., 2013; Vu et al., 2014; Weigel et al., 2012). In the absence of face-to-face interactions, instructors use technology to create a sense of community. *The Road to Resilience* eCourse will use social media outlets as a means to create a sense of community. Learners will be encouraged to share, chat, and post selected assignments to a private Facebook group page set up specifically for this course. As the administrator of the private group page, I am responsible for granting approval and dismissing individuals from the group should the need arise. I also assume responsibility for monitoring the online behavior of all group members.

Researchers Olsen et al. (2012) agreed that providing reflective feedback to the learner is another component important to the effectiveness of distance learning. Collins and Liang (2015) described the influences of feedback and feasibility in traditional methods of professional development. According to Collins and Liang (2015),

Traditional, face-to-face professional development (PD) sometimes lacks follow-through and feedback on the implementation of the content. In addition, mandatory, school-based PD workshops that teachers may or may not find relevant to their needs compound teachers' already busy schedules and time constraints. Finally, the capacity or resources required to provide such efficacious in-service training might not even exist locally, particularly for isolated teachers in rural, high-needs areas. (p. 592)

During the implementation of *The Road to Resilience* eCourse, participants will receive feedback via email and private chat discussions. Participants are also encouraged to provide feedback throughout their course experience.

A growing number of courses traditionally held in classroom settings are now being offered as distance learning options (Kemper et al., 2015; Vermunt, 2014). The Child Development Associate (CDA), for example, is a credential offered through the Council for Professional Recognition. Since its inception, obtaining a CDA involves a multi-level process that guides early care professionals as they work toward becoming qualified teachers of young children. A component of this process includes the completion of 120 hours of instruction. Traditionally, the completion of the 120 hours has taken place in a traditional classroom facilitated by a trained CDA instructor. In recent years, however, the implementation of eCDA has developed and continued to grow with interest. With this approach, learners are prepared for CDA credentialing by completing their 120 hours and other course required assignments online. The eCourse features facilitator-led virtual cohort groups, application activities, and

discussion forums. This blended-learning approach provides a flexible self-paced learning option for early childhood educators (Gomez et al., 2015).

Challenges in Building Effective Distance Learning Programs. The process of delivering content via an online format presents both opportunity and challenge. The Center for the Childcare Workforce studied Early Childhood Distant Learning Programs. In this work, 5 challenges were reported addressing the ability level of students. Effective online learning classes will consider and plan for approaches to address each challenge.

The first challenge often experienced by adult learners participating in online learning stems from lack of basic skills. Adult learners come to new learning experiences with a plethora of experience and previous knowledge. This knowledge may not be sufficient however to navigate the skills necessary to successfully participate in an online learning experience. Shaha et al. (2016) found that student engagement in the online classroom is significantly diminished when the learner lacks the basic skills necessary to navigate the online experience. According to Parker et al. (2013) the adult distant learner will need both academic skill (college level reading, math and writing) well as technological skills (knowledge on how to conduct online research, upload and download files) in order to successfully meet the objectives of the online course. To address the challenge of lack of skill level, Winton et al. (2015) suggested that a minimum set of prerequisite requirements be put into place. This provision makes it clear to the adult online learner what is expected. As an additional means to support the online adult learner, Weigel et al. (2012) suggested the need for concurrent skill development which includes skill and content development taking place within the delivery of the course.

A second reported challenge is lack of self-esteem of the online adult learner. Online learning requires the learner to be self-motivated and determined. When the self-esteem of the

learner is negatively impacted, this can lead to a cascade of challenges that may also result in a failure to complete the course (Stone-Macdonald, & Douglas, 2014). Chia-Pin et al. (2014) summarize adult learning using the following indicators.

1. Motivation comes before learning.
2. Learners should feel content has immediate applicability to their current experiences.
3. Learning is stimulated through the five senses.
4. The learning must be interesting.
5. The learners can easily transfer learning to life.

To remedy the challenge of low self-esteem of the learner, as well as to address adult learning principles, ECE online learning programs should be reflective of relevant experiences to the learner. Content should also be administered in a meaningful and engaging manner so that the adult online learner can easily transfer knowledge into practice. Vu et al. (2014) suggested that the self-esteem of a learner is increased when the course content values the adult learner's existing knowledge and the work life and experiences the student brings.

Online learning can provide a convenient alternative to the more traditional methods of in-class professional development, however, the challenge of balancing work and family may present a challenge for some adult online learners (Dean, Zano & Turbill, 2015). Parker et al. (2013) found that delivering content to adult online learners in modules helps to reduce the overwhelming feeling that may take place when the adult learner is asked to complete the content in large "chunks". Another consideration offered by Vu et al. (2014) and Winton et al. (2015) is to ensure the content is delivered using publicly accessible web pages allowing the adult online learner to access the material in a variety of places without barriers to success.

For some adults participating in online adult learning, English may not be their primary language (Kyzar et al., 2014; Tseng, & Kuo, 2014). This presents a possible challenge to the

delivery of effective online learning. To address this, every effort should be made to provide English Language Learners (ELL) with translated audio and written materials. As highlighted by Chia-Pin et al. (2014) learning is stimulated through the five senses; as a result, in addition to providing translated materials, online professional developers should also consider training options that utilize a variety of different modalities.

Providing learners with access to technical support presents an additional challenge to building effective online learning. Baran and Correia (2014) proposed that the adult online learner is self-sufficient and self-motivated. When the adult learner experiences technological difficulties, his or her self-esteem may become jeopardized and feelings of inadequacy may be felt (Bates et al., 2015; Collins, Liang, 2015; Kyzar et al., 2014; Marklund, 2015). Advances in technology have made it possible for online adult learners to take advantage of technical assistance from a distance via phone or internet. As a result, it is important for the developers of the online learning to intentionally include provisions for adult learners to access technical support should the need arise.

Project Description and Goals

Based on the results of the data gathered in semi structured interviews from 16 ECE teachers, the project focused on the need for professional development designed to introduce teachers to strategies which promote adult resilience. The adult resilience eCourse will consist of six online eCourses. All stakeholders (program administrators, teachers and support staff) are important to the quality of care teachers in ECE provide. As a result, while the content of the eCourse has been designed with teachers as the primary stakeholder, each person within the Head Start Program could benefit from participating in the content provided within the course.

Each module will consist of recorded webinars varying in length from 15 to 20 minutes. Participants will also be asked to complete creative and written journaling activities. Journaling activities are designed to allow participants opportunities to express their individual creativity. According to Macia and Garcia (2016) “The best practices in online professional development are those based on the school cultures, collaborating teams, encouraging reflection, creativity and innovation” (p. 299). Building upon the data collected during interviews with teachers, creativity is an intentional design in the eCourse format. A brief description of each module is outlined in the next section.

Module 1. The eCourse design will begin with Module 1 – Understanding Resilience in Adults. Module 1 will introduce participants to the theory of resilience. This module will also set the stage for understanding the impact adult wellness can have on children and families.

Module 2. Understanding Risk and Protective Factors will introduce participants to key terms including risk and protective factors. The four remaining modules will introduce participants to the following protective factors: relationships, internal beliefs, initiative, and self-control. The webinar series will conclude with a summary and evaluation module.

Module 3: Relationships as a Protective Factor. The journey through life can be difficult for teachers both in and outside of the classroom. Mentors and mentoring relationships can help teachers to reflect, problem solve and build upon their unique strengths. Mentoring will be highlighted in webinar #3. Participants will be introduced to four key elements of developing and maintaining mentor based relationships. Specific recommendations will be offered in how to search for and initiate a mentor-based relationship.

Module 4: Internal Beliefs as a Protective Factor. In order to help teachers navigate the challenges that come with teaching in ECE, they first must believe in their abilities. Module 4 will help participants learn the importance of believing in themselves. In addition to the term internal beliefs, this module will also explore the importance of teacher self-efficacy. Activities and readings will be offered that help to help participants think about and identify their personal strengths.

Module 5: Initiative as a Protective Factor. Taking initiative in life is not always about saying yes; sometimes a teacher may have to say “no”. Stress and burnout may result when a teacher takes on more than he or she is successfully able to handle. This module will introduce participants to healthy ways to say “no” to people, experiences, and situations that may become an unnecessary hindrance.

Module 6: Self-control as a Protective Factor. A teacher may not be able to change many things about the physical environment of the classroom. However, creating spaces within the classroom or program where a teacher can take a break and rejuvenate may help in the promotion of adult resilience. This module will offer suggestions of self-calming techniques, as well as offer specific suggestions on how to create environments that support the protective factor of self-control.

Implementation

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

Potential resources needed for this project are minimal. Participants will need access to a computer or mobile device with internet access. It is suggested that participants also have access to a printer to make copies of module handouts and materials. Budgetary funds will be needed to purchase paper for handouts and ink for the printer. Whether teachers participate within groups or individually, it is recommended that an individual within the program be

appointed as the technical assistant liaison. This person is responsible for assisting teachers in logging onto the OPD, navigating any challenges learners face while participating and communicating with this researcher should the need arise.

Possible Barriers

The online nature of this project could present a potential barrier. Despite the growing trend and acceptance of the Internet, a study conducted by Parker and Herrington (2013) found 35% of the participants reported not being comfortable with using the Internet. Online learning provides a convenient opportunity for learning; however, it also requires a higher level of motivation than participation in a traditional classroom setting (Olsen et al., 2010). Learners must also have technological skills that are beyond basic. Participation in this course will require participants to view videos, download and upload documents, and participate in online discussions. To address these barriers, participants will be invited to complete a Student Self-Assessment, which will help identify their individual comfort level in participating in an online learning environment. Data collected from the surveys, as well as strategies for overcoming any potential barriers, will be outlined and presented to the administrative staff.

The length of this project is a possible additional barrier. Participants may begin the course; however, due to family and work obligations and other factors, they may not be able to complete all six lessons. To address this, a certificate of participation will be available to participants who complete all six modules. To demonstrate knowledge, and to be awarded a certificate of participation, participants will be required to complete a knowledge assessment and satisfaction survey during Module 6. Many professionals in ECE are required to complete a certain number of professional development hours per year (Baran & Correia, 2014). Offering an incentive of awarding a certificate of participation may help encourage completion of all six modules.

Proposal for Implantation and Timetable

The online nature of this course allows for introduction at any time within the school calendar. Each module is designed to be completed within seven days; however, completion time will vary according to the amount of time spent on each task within a module. Table 3 below outlines the schedule of modules.

Table 3

Schedule of Modules

Module	Title	Time
1	Introduction to Resilience	1 – ½ hours
2	Protective Factors Matter: A Look at Relationships	1 – ½ hours
3	Protective Factors Matter: A Look at Internal Beliefs	1 – ½ hours
4	Protective Factors Matter: A Look at Initiative	1 – ½ hours
5	Protective Factors Matter: A Look at Self-Control	1 – ½ hours
6	Protective Factors Matter: Where Do I Go from Here	1 – ½ hours

Roles and Responsibilities of Staff and Others

It was my responsibility to create all aspects of the six modules in the course. For participants, participation in this project requires: (a) a desire to improve or maintain individual well-being and resilience, (b) time and commitment to make intentional changes where necessary, (c) access to a computer with internet access, and (d) access to a printer (optional). To help participants troubleshoot and navigate their way through each lesson, it will be important to identify one or two individuals within the early childhood program that could act as technical assistant liaison. The role of this person would be to disseminate information to the teaching staff regarding how to begin the course, troubleshoot navigation problems experienced while participating in the course, and reach out to me in cases where problems continue to persist. The technical assistant liaison could be an administrator, teacher, or another individual with a willingness to assist.

Project Evaluation

The evaluations for this project are formative and summative. Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010) defined formative evaluations as the data collected as a project or program is taking place. Formative data can help inform the future direction of a project and is often helpful in the development of a new project or program. Summative data is described as a type of evaluation done at the end of a program or project. This type of data is used to help decide the merit of a program or project and whether it should be utilized as outlined, with modifications, or not at all (Lodico et al., 2010).

Formative evaluation is appropriate for this project, as at the end of each module, participants will be invited to answer four questions designed to evaluate the content presented. The four questions will be presented using the plus/delta approach (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). The plus/delta approach is a relatively simple way to illicit feedback. With this approach, two plus questions will be asked along with two delta questions. Plus questions will create an opportunity for learners to reflect on areas of the course that have worked well. Delta questions will help identify areas where participants suggest a change in the course delivery. Gathering formative data throughout the first five lessons will allow this researcher to make ongoing changes to enhance learning.

According to Lodico et al. (2010), “Data for summative evaluation are collected to measure outcomes and to determine how those outcomes relate to the overall judgment of the program” (p.320). This summative evaluation, referred to as a satisfactory survey for the purpose of my project, will serve as a final evaluation of the learners’ experiences. The summative evaluation will consist of four Likert scale questions that measure satisfaction with the overall course. In addition, to measure whether or not the identified learning objective has been met, participants will be asked to complete 12 Likert scale questions. Finally, to measure

any behavioral changes in attitude, participants will be asked to respond to one open-response question. Participants will be introduced to the formative evaluation during the sixth module in the course design. By making the evaluation an actual part of the course, it is my hope that participants will be more inclined to participate and provide feedback. Data collected from the summative evaluations will be shared with the center director, assistant director, and education specialist—the primary stakeholders.

Project Implications

Job stress among teachers in ECE continues to be a concern on the national level (Beltman et al., 2015). Job stress leads to higher rates of absenteeism and can have a negative effect on adult-child relationships. Implementation of resiliency based programming for teachers has been shown to be an effective method for helping teachers overcome the stress and burnout associated with teaching (Doney, 2012). The insight gathered from participant interviews revealed that there are particular behaviors practiced by those identified as resilient teachers. This project aims to provide participants with strategies to promote adult resilience and reduce stress and burnout often associated with teaching in ECE.

Local Community

The Road to Resilience eCourse derived from this research is intended to be used individually. The online format of the course allows for flexibility in participation. In addition to flexibility, the online nature allows individuals and groups to participate collectively even if they are not located in the proximity of one another. By participating in this eCourse, teachers will learn strategies to enhance his or her individual resilience and decrease feelings of stress and burnout. When consideration and planning are given to the adults who teach young children, they are better able to implement curriculum goals and to provide caring education.

This eCourse has the potential to be used not only by the local Head Start Program but also by other ECE programs. Stress and burnout have been shown to increase absenteeism and attrition, as well as to have a negative impact on adult-child relationships in ECE classrooms (Critchley, & Gibbs, 2012; Papatraianou, & LeCornu, 2014; Salter-Jones, 2012). Resiliency has been identified as an approach to reduce stress and increase adult wellness. The content introduced in the eCourse includes knowledge useful for teachers, administrators, community leaders, and other researchers searching for strategies that promote social-emotional health and wellness for adults who educate young children. Data collected from interviews with teachers support the idea that teachers need and want more training that addresses the stress and burnout they experience. While training to address curriculum content to use directly with children is welcomed, teachers also expressed an interest in professional development that helps develop their social-emotional health and development.

Far-Reaching Communities

Across the country, federal and state mandates regarding teacher qualifications and standards for children are changing, and increased emphasis is being placed on standardized practice, academic outcomes, and accountability (Jones et al., 2013). While the changes affecting ECE are designed to have a direct positive effect on educational outcomes, little attention is being paid to the well-being of the educators responsible for a great deal of the implementation of such practices and changes. Coupled with the changes are the challenges teachers face in working with children who use challenging behaviors, working in environments with minimal support, and minimal salary compensation. The need for professional development designed to support adult resilience in teachers is growing as a means to help teachers overcome the stress, burnout, and attrition often inherent to teaching.

According to Mansfield et al. (2012), teaching has been characterized as a profession that is “emotionally taxing and potentially frustrating” (p. 358). Numerous studies have examined teacher stress, burnout, and attrition in grades K-12. Factors leading to stress and burnout in teachers grades K-12 are similar to those found in ECE teachers (Curby et al., 2013). The need for professional development to address adult wellness has the potential to benefit entire school systems. In order to reduce stress and increase retention, teachers need opportunities to reflect professionally and learn strategies to build upon their individual strengths. When teachers are not able to cope with the consistent changes and increased demands they face, they will not provide the quality teaching and learning experience expected of them (Day, 2014). Well-being for teachers is essential to quality teaching and learning.

Conclusion

The Road to Resilience eCourse was created in response to the collected data documenting the protective factors of 16 teachers employed in a Head Start Program. The goal of the eCourse is to provide teachers with strategies to promote adult resilience. This goal is an important step in helping teachers overcome the stress and burnout often associated with teaching in ECE programs. The eCourse is composed of six one-and-a-half hour modules: Introduction to Resilience, Relationships, Internal Beliefs, Initiative, Self-control, and Moving Forward. The ECE teachers who take part in the course will provide feedback to evaluate their learning and satisfaction with the course design and delivery. The social change implications include helping teachers to become more resilient, so that they are able to face the challenges of working in the ECE professional environment. Additionally, intentional efforts to address the well-being of teachers may prove to have a positive effect on improving education for children (Curby et al., 2013). By using the strategies introduced during the eCourse, teachers will be equipped with strategies they may use to overcome stress and burnout, and as a result,

they may be better able to provide caring and responsive education to young children and their families. In Section 4, I will detail the strengths of the project, share recommendations for addressing limitations, and provide an analysis of myself as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine to what degree a teachers' protective factors help them in mitigating the experiences of stress and burnout often associated with working as a teacher in the field of ECE. A qualitative, case-study research design was used to examine strategies that may help promote resilience and mitigate stress and burnout among 16 preschool teachers in a Head Start Program located in Northern Virginia.

Individual semi-structured interviews with the participants followed by data analysis revealed a pattern of strategies or protective factors teachers use to help overcome the risks of stress and mitigate burnout. The result of this project study is a professional development course entitled *The Road to Resilience eCourse*. This online professional development course was designed to support and promote the resilience of teachers by enabling participants to (a) describe the significance of promoting adult resilience and how this impacts children's resilience, (b) examine his or her current level of resilience, and (c) formulate a plan for promoting his or her personal strengths related to resiliency.

This section includes my reflection on this project and offers some conclusions. The discussion of the project will include the strengths and recommendations to address limitations. In addition to the reflection, I will provide an analysis of myself as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. This section will conclude with the project's potential impact on social change, its implications, its applications, and directions for future research.

Project Strengths

A major strength of this project is the flexibility the online format provides. As technology progresses, online learning has gained popularity and increased in its functionality (Olsen et al., 2010). *The Road to Resilience eCourse* was specifically created in a manner that

allows teachers to complete the work at their pace and convenience. Teachers can choose when they participate in the course; as a result, they may be more likely to devote their full attention to completing the course (Donohue & Fox, 2012). Participants can take the class at their own pace and return to the materials as often as they like. Upon completion of the course, participants will have extended access to course material for another 4 weeks. During the extended period, the class comments, discussion, and activity links will not be available. Participants will be able to continue to view the participation of other students by using hashtags established during the live version of the course. Prerecorded webinars and interviews with experts will be viewable on demand at any time.

As a resource designed to enhance emotional wellness in adults, strength of *The Road to Resilience* eCourse lies in the psychological concepts drawn from the theory of resilience. The theory of resilience was used to develop the content for each of the six web-based learning modules. Each module is designed to help teachers identify their work-related stressors and select adequate or meaningful protective factors that conjure resiliency. By focusing on increasing skills related to resilience, the project's goal is to provide teachers with strategies to help address feelings of stress, burnout, and exhaustion.

Project Limitations

One limitation of *The Road to Resilience* eCourse is that it cannot eradicate all of the stressors teachers in ECE may encounter. There are social and institutional variables and factors involved in the teaching profession that can lead to emotional exhaustion or burnout among teachers in ECE (Hall-Kenyon, Bullough, MacKay, & Marshall, 2014; Clark, 2007). Remediation to address this limitation may include increased self-efficacy in teachers who participate in *The Road to Resilience* eCourse. As participants work to increase their resilience, an increase in self-efficacy may also occur (Hall-Kenyon et al., 2014; Sheldon & King, 2001;

Taormin; 2015). Bandura (1977) described self-efficacy as “the extent to which individuals believe they can organize and execute actions necessary to bring about a desired outcome” (p. 14). The content introduced in *The Road to Resilience* eCourse has the potential to impact teacher development beyond the classroom. Skills such as initiative, optimism, and self-confidence are introduced. Possession of these skills may not only give teachers the empowerment needed to mitigate the challenges that come with teaching, but also act as the catalyst needed to address other factors contributing to stress in their lives.

Motivation to complete the course may be another limitation of this project. *The Road to Resilience* eCourse will only be effective if a teacher proactively engages in the course content. A teacher who is experiencing stress and burnout may see participation in an eCourse as another task with little to no applicability to their work. To remedy this, teachers are encouraged to participate in the eCourse as a group. For a teacher who lacks the motivation to participate in the eCourse, participating with colleagues or caring relatives or associates could help provide the motivation to stay on the trajectory to complete the entire course.

Another limitation that might be associated with this study is response bias. Creswell (2012) describes response bias as an occurrence that may take place when research is conducted using a small number of participants. For this study, 16 teachers were interviewed. This is a small number of participants, and with this comes the potential for the responses to not accurately reflect the views of all teachers in ECE. Additionally, Creswell (2012) advocated that with a larger number of participants, data analysis may have yielded different results than results generated from a small sample size.

Because this was a case study, the results are not generalizable to the larger population. The project presented in this research has the limitation of being a useful tool limited to the Head Start program where the study was conducted. To address this, further studies could be

conducted that increase the sample size of Head Start teachers who participate in the study. As additional research is gathered, it may be determined that the eCourse outlined in this research has applicability within other ECE settings. If the content is found to be applicable across settings, the eCourse could be used not only at the local level, but within all Head Start programs, as well as other ECE programs.

Recommendations for Alternate Ways of Addressing the Problem

I selected the online format for the project to assist ECE teachers in learning strategies to increase adult resilience and combat feelings of stress and burnout. An alternative approach might have been a live delivery of the content. Each of the six modules contained in this project contains PowerPoint presentations along with notes regarding facilitation. The PowerPoint presentations were used in the facilitation of each recorded webinar. In place of webinars, a facilitator could deliver the PowerPoint within a group setting. Handouts and activities contained in each of the modules could also be carried out within a group setting.

A second approach that may have been used to address the content outlined in the project would have been to require teachers to attend monthly meetings that addressed the areas outlined in the course content. The format of these meetings could be mini-workshops or informal brown-bag lunch sessions held during the time children nap and are under the supervision of alternative, identified teaching staff. These sessions would be mandatory for all teachers and supported and lead by program administrators.

While other alternatives may have been options for creating a project, *The Road to Resilience* eCourse was considered the most viable choice as the online format provides a convenient, self-paced learning environment designed to fit into the busy schedule of teachers in ECE. Content presented in the course, and lessons learned from completed activities, can be

used as a source of reference and encouragement for participants even after the course has concluded.

Scholarship

Before beginning my doctoral studies, I had only minimal experience in conducting research. The opportunity to create this project study allowed me to develop research skills that I did not already possess. During the research process, I found that I began to enjoy reading content related to my research questions. As the amount of literature I collected began to grow, I found that organizing and making sense of the literature was a project in and of itself. Throughout the process, I understood that my goal was to reach data saturation. I began to feel that I was reaching saturation when articles were citing a reference that I had read or had in my list to read.

Furthermore, I learned that I enjoy conducting qualitative research. I found it enjoyable to sit with teachers and learn from them. I felt as if I could talk to each one of them for hours. The time spent conducting interviews was rewarding. At the conclusion of my interviews, I looked forward to analyzing the data. I did not expect to get so excited about the analytical process. The qualitative nature of my study however, brought about an earnest eagerness that helped me to continue the process of completing this dissertation, even when things became a bit overwhelming.

Project Development and Evaluation

Developing a project required many hours of research and consideration of the effectiveness of the project that was to be developed. After I transcribed each of my interviews and analyzed the data, I asked myself a series of reflective questions as I worked to determine what project approach I would use to address my research question. I read and re-read my analyzed data in an attempt to determine how the data might guide me in deciding on a project.

After a great deal of consideration and attention to interview responses, it was clear that professional development would be an appropriate approach to introducing teachers to strategies that promote adult resilience and combat feelings of stress and burnout. I desired a platform, however, that allowed the learner to be in greater control of his or her learning. As I researched types of professional learning and professional development programs, it seemed that OPD would best meet the needs of the teachers at the program under study.

Leadership and Change

Creswell (2012) proposed that research helps us better understand problems or issues and potential solutions. The problem this project attempted to address is stress and burnout experienced by teachers who work in ECE environments. While working on this project, I thought about myself as a leader and a change agent who, through research, might be able to develop a deeper understanding of not only what causes stress and burnout in ECE teachers, but more importantly, strategies for overcoming such feelings. Development of this project helped me to think about new ideas that may help teachers be more successful in what they do in the classroom. During the development of this project, I learned that as a leader, I must model eagerness and enthusiasm. After my interviews were completed and teachers learned about this project, they were anxious to hear about my final findings. The eagerness the teachers demonstrated served as a source of encouragement for me to bring my project to fruition.

The practice of conducting research has always seemed difficult to me. As a result, I began my research efforts with trepidation. Through my studies and the completion of this research, however, I now see the process as one of adding knowledge to an existing body of information. In completing this research study and project, I identified a problem at a local level and put steps in motion to create a successful solution for the problem. While the findings

of this study are not generalizable, the content can add to the current research on what strategies teachers in ECE use to combat stress and burnout; in turn, this information can be used by policy makers to help inform laws and legislation on topics related to teacher well-being.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

As I consider the aspect of this study from the position of a scholar, I realize that the process of listening can be an important step in understanding the experiences of an individual. During each of my interviews, I asked a question and then I listened, without interruption, to the individual's response. The process of simply listening was not an easy task for me. My personality lends itself to that of a conversationalist. Many times during my interviews, a participant would offer an answer to a question, and while I used probes when appropriate, it was important that I did not interject any of my own personal opinions. When I felt myself wanting to interject, I would make notes in my journal. Above all else, I listened. I constantly used self-talk to remind myself the importance of the story that was being told by each teacher and how these stories may help shape the way teachers are supported in ECE classrooms.

Although alternative approaches could have been used to collect data, the interview process of asking thoughtful questions and listening carefully worked well in answering the research questions for this project. This experience has opened my eyes to the fact that teachers in ECE experience some of the same challenges that often lead to stress and burnout. I also learned that they each utilize similar strategies to help overcome such stress and burnout.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

As a self-practitioner, I have learned that relationships and asking reflective questions have helped me grow not only as a teacher and trainer but also as a researcher. The data analysis process was a tremendous moment of growth for me. During the interview process, I

simply asked a question and recorded the participant's response. When I began transcribing the recordings, participants' experiences became more transparent. During the research and analytical phases of this project, I spent several hours a day reflecting on the data. In my current role as a national trainer, I have intentionally added moments of reflection where I quiet myself and simply allow participants to review and think about the content that has been introduced.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

As a project developer, I have learned the importance of organization in all aspects of development. The eCourse developed for this project contained many components. Also, before any particular component was considered final, there were several draft versions. During the development process, it was important to differentiate draft documents from final files. To help with this process, I used an online filing system and carefully labeled each document and folder that I created.

The project development process also helped me to learn how to apply creative methods in creating the online component of this project. It was important to me that the course be engaging to the learner. The desire to design a course that was engaging led me to investigate resources that would build upon my creativity and design approaches that support adult learning principles in an online environment. At times during the development, my creative energy would become low. When this happened, I stepped away from creating and read more on the topic. I found this approach to be very beneficial. When I would begin the task of development again, I found myself more knowledgeable about what to do. Knowledge, coupled with my creativity, set the stage for the development of the entire *The Road to Resilience* eCourse.

Project's Potential Impact on Social Change

Jennings (2014) stated that teachers in ECE may not be not be aware of the role their own behaviors, cultures, and temperaments play their interactions with children. Teachers may also not be aware of the role their risks and protective factors play in building relationships with children, managing classroom culture, and working with families and colleagues. This research study and project introduced teachers to the theory of resilience in an effort to provide a rich exploration of the risks they have faced and the protective factors that have helped them to succeed in the past and present.

The problem of teacher stress and burnout in ECE is complex. One single strategy will not address each of the stressors impacting teachers in the classroom. Teachers who are overwhelmed emotionally may need help. Without help, the stress and burnout can worsen, leading to higher levels of absenteeism and classroom practices that may not be effectively meeting the needs of young children. When young children are not provided with appropriate practices in preschool, they may begin kindergarten without the skills necessary to succeed. Thereby the problem of stress and burnout in ECE becomes a community wide concern.

In an attempt to reverse this trend and to help empower teachers in ECE, *The Road to Resilience eCourse*, produced by this project study, can potentially make a significantly positive impact by assisting teachers within the Head Start program understudy. With an understanding of the skills related to resilience, teachers may practice behaviors that contribute to their own well-being. In turn, teachers may be better able to effectively meet the needs of young children. This project also has the potential to impact individuals beyond the Head Start Program understudy. The skills related to resilience are not specific to gender, race, ethnicity, or occupation. As a result, the project has the potential for use within organizations and communities outside of ECE.

Implications, Applications, and Future Research

Conducting research and reviewing the literature for this study revealed that the role teachers play in the classroom has the potential to reach through and beyond the implementation of curriculum and program planning. Teachers are in a direct position to impact the development, self-worth, pride, and attachment of young children. Through interactions with both students and their families, teachers are in a unique position to strengthen children's overall development. As teachers are introduced to strategies to help implement curriculum goals, it is also important to consider the implementation of professional development that is designed to introduce strategies that promote adult wellness. The responses from the teachers who participated in this study indicated that there is a need for professional development topics that can help teachers learn strategies for adult wellness, self-efficacy, and resilience.

The development of this project has positive implications for the community research partner. Implementing *The Road to Resilience* eCourse may provide an ongoing approach to helping teachers think about and build their resilience. Additionally, teachers who participate in the course may find that they have a renewed sense of energy and enthusiasm that positively impacts their teaching. Future research might attend more broadly to preschool teachers' well-being and resilience and the impact these factors have on teaching practices.

Conclusion

The quality of learning children receive in preschool programs is largely dependent on the skill level and commitment of the adults who are employed by the center. Despite the low wage salary, the often long hours and working with children who use challenging behaviors, ECE teachers are expected to exhibit the highest standard of quality education. Without measures to ensure that the social-emotional needs and resilience of ECE teachers is planned

for, many teachers will fail not only themselves, but also the children in their classrooms. Scholars have suggested that the teaching profession is especially vulnerable to stress and burnout. Additionally, researchers have suggested a link between teacher well-being and supportive teacher-student relationships and effective classroom management. Given these implications, it is important for ECE programs to utilize resources that promote the well-being and resilience of teachers.

Teachers in ECE participate in numerous professional development experiences designed to have a direct impact on children's development. This eCourse also has the potential to directly impact children by positively impacting the adults who provide the instruction. A teacher who is experiencing stress and burnout may find it difficult to provide the developmentally-appropriate learning experiences children need. The skills related to resiliency that this course introduces will help teachers overcome factors that are known to contribute to teacher stress and burnout. Taking time to learn and incorporate strategies to manage stress is essential in order for educators to teach effectively and to help children develop and learn.

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Appendix A: The Project

The Road to Resilience eCourse
MODULE 1
Webinar 1.1 - Understanding Resilience in Adults

Learning Objectives	Content/Activities	Mode of delivery
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants will define the term resilience 	Children are the living message we send to a time we will not see	Reflective journaling writing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants will construct a definition of resilience meaningful to him or her 	What “resilience” means to me.	Fill in the blanks Creative journaling activity

The Road to Resilience eCourse
MODULE 1
Webinar 1.1 - Understanding Resilience in Adults

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Building Resilience

<https://hbr.org/2011/04/building-resilience>

The Road to Resilience

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience.aspx>

A Question of Resilience - New York Times, April 30, 2006

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/30/magazine/30abuse.html?pagewanted=all>

TIMELINE

TASK	TIME ALLOCATION
Webinar	25 Minutes
Journaling Activity #1	10 Minutes
Journaling Activity #2	15 Minutes
Read Recommended Readings	20 Minutes
	TOTAL 70 minutes

The Road to Resilience eCourse
MODULE 1
WEBINAR 1.1
Participant Handouts

The Road to Resilience eCourse
MODULE 1
Webinar 1.1 - Understanding Resilience in Adults

Learning Objectives

- Participants will define the term resilience
- Participants will construct a definition of resilience meaningful to him or her

Children are The Living Message We Send to a Time We Will Not See
What does this quote mean to you?

Creative Journaling Activity

What Resilience Means to Me

What You Will Need:

- Creative art materials

What to Do:

1. Take a moment to think about the word “resilience” and “being resilient”.
2. When you think about these terms, what comes to mind?
Using words, images or a combination of both, use the appropriate page in your
3. handout to decorate a page explaining what resilience means to you.
Allow your creativity and life experiences to guide you in decorating this page.

Using words, photos or a combination of both,
think about what resilience means to you.
Decorate this page using your creative art materials
responding to the statement...

What Resilience Means to Me.




The Road to Resilience eCourse

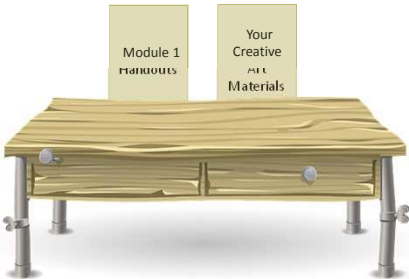
Module 1.1

Webinar #1 – Understanding Resilience in Adults

BUILDING YOUR BOUNCE :
with
Nefertiti
B. Poyner, M.Ed.




During this webinar...
What You Will Need:



Module 1: Webinar #1

Coming Up...

- Why Resilience, Why Now
- What Resilience Means to Me
- Journaling Activity: Children are The Living Message
- Journaling Activity: What Resilience Means to Me

Learning Objectives:


- Participants will define the term resilience
- Participants will construct a definition of resilience meaningful to him or her

Important Icons to Look Out For

		
What page are we on?	Writing or reflecting?	REFLECT How did it go?
		
Should I do this now?	Do I have to, I am not creative?	





Children are the living message we send to a time we will not see.
Anonymous



Children are the living message we send to a time we will not see.
Anonymous

What does this quote mean to you?

Page 2 




TIME FOR REFLECTION

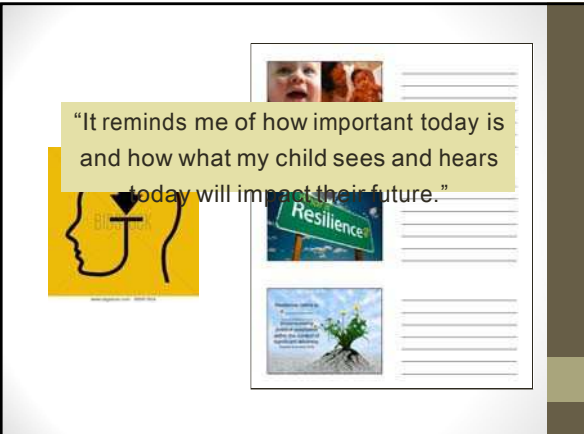
PAUSE
It's your chance to reflect on your progress.

You are encouraged to pause the webinar recording now to allow yourself time to complete this activity.


Resilience

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from adversity and emerge stronger than before. It is the ability to adapt to change and overcome challenges. Resilience is not a trait, it is a skill that can be learned and practiced.

Page 2 




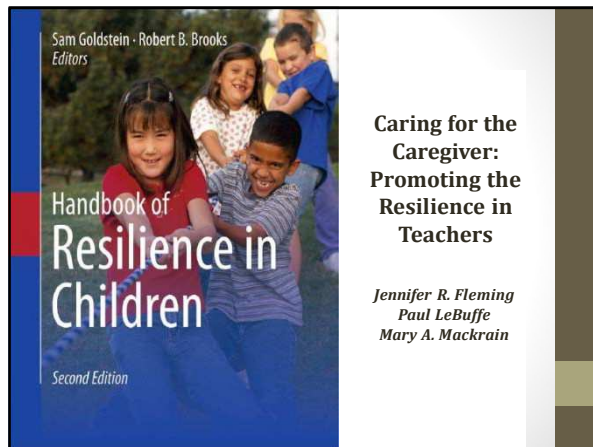
"It reminds me of how important today is and how what my child sees and hears today will impact their future."

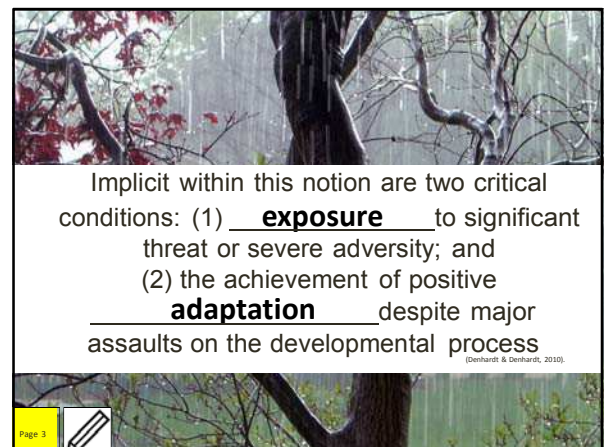




"Positive investments in our children today lead to positive outcomes for our world tomorrow."







Journaling Activity: What Resilience Means to Me

- Take a moment to think about the word "resilience" and "being resilient".
- When you think about these terms, what comes to mind?
- Using words, images or a combination of both, use the appropriate page in your handout to decorate a page explaining what resilience means to you.
- Allow your creativity and life experiences to guide you in decorating this page.

Page 4

TIME FOR REFLECTION

PAUSE

It's time to take a moment and reflect.

You are encouraged to pause the virtual recording, how to allow yourself time to complete this activity.

Use words, photos or a combination of both, to discuss what resilience means to you. Decorate this page using your creative and artistic Response to the statement...

What Resilience Means to Me.

Building Your Success Mind Resilience eCourse

Page 5



The Road to Resilience
MODULE 2
Webinar 2.1 - The Importance of Relationships

Learning Objectives	Content/Activities	Mode of delivery
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Participants will explain the elements of developing and maintaining mentor based relationships.	Café Conversation Will You Mentor Me?	Journaling Activity

The Road to Resilience eCourse
Module 2
Webinar 2.1 - Relationships as a Protective Factor

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Seven Habits of Good Communication

<http://www.reinventingrelationships.com/support-files/communication.pdf>

Making the Most of Mentors: A Guide for Mentees

<http://dgsomdiversity.ucla.edu/workfiles/lectures/Making%20the%20Most%20of%20Mentors.pdf>

TIMELINE

TASK	TIME ALLOCATION
Webinar 2.1	25 Minutes
Journaling Activity	10 Minutes
Read Recommended Readings	20 Minutes
	TOTAL 55 minutes

The Road to Resilience eCourse
MODULE 2
Webinar 2.1
Participant Handouts

The Road to Resilience eCourse
Module 2
Webinar 2.1 - Relationships as a Protective Factor

Learning Objectives

- Participants will explain the elements of developing and maintaining mentor-based relationships

If you are trusted and people will allow you to share their inner garden...what better gift?

What does this quote mean to you?

Journaling Activity: Why is it Important to Have a Mentor?**What You Will Need:**

- Creative art materials

What to Do:

1. Write the words M-E-N-T-O-R in the space below.
2. Decorate the page using your creative materials.
3. After you have decorated the page, write down your response to the question – why is it important to have a mentor?

Decorate this page using your creative art materials
responding to the question...

Why is it Important to Have a Mentor?

Journaling Activity: Coffee Club**What You Will Need:**

- Pen or pencil

What to Do:

1. Use the space below to think about who and what you may want in a mentor.

Imagine....

You are going to a coffee shop to meet with a new mentor.

Yourself walking into the coffee shop and sitting down at an empty table.

You hear the door open and set eyes on your new mentor.

What do you see?

Imagine....

The person sits down and you start talking.

This other person is listening to you talk, you have their full attention.

What are you talking about?

Journaling Activity: Coffee Club (continued)**Imagine....**

The meeting ends with a hug and some laughter as you make plans to meet again.

What are your hopes for the next meeting?

The Road to Resilience eCourse
MODULE 2
Webinar 2.1
Power-Point



Road to Resilience eCourse

Module 2

Webinar #1 – Relationships as a Protective Factor

During this webinar...

What You Will Need:

Module 2 Handouts

Module 2:

Relationships as a Protective Factor

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will explain the elements of developing and maintaining mentor-based relationships

Coming Up...

- Journaling Activity: Café Conversation
- Journaling Activity: Will You Mentor Me?

If you are trusted and people will allow you to share their inner garden...what better gift?

What does this quote mean to you?

TIME FOR REFLECTION

PAUSE

by Jeff Bringer

You are encouraged to pause the webinar recording now to allow yourself time to complete this activity.

Resilience Adult Resilience Survey (RARS) - Worksheet 2 - Worksheet 2B

Relationships as a Protective Factor

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Participants will explain the elements of developing and maintaining mentor-based relationships

Journaling Tip:

- Journaling Activity: Café Conversation
- Journaling Activity: Will You Mentor Me?

If you are trusted and people will allow you to share their inner garden...what better gift?
What does this quote mean to you?




Let's Revisit Your Completed DARS

Relationships			
Items	Yes	Sometimes	Not Yet
1. I have good friends who support me.			
2. I have a mentor or someone who shows me the way.			
3. I provide support to others.			
4. I am empathetic to others.			
5. I trust my close friends.			

Journaling Activity:

What are the benefits of having a mentor?



What You Will Need:

- Creative art materials

What to Do:

- Please refer to page ___ in your handouts.
- On this page, write the words M-E-N-T-O-R in the space provided.
- If you wish, decorate the page using your creative materials.
- After you have decorated the page, write down your response to the question – why is it important to have a mentor?

TIME FOR REFLECTION

PAUSE

You are encouraged to pause the session recording tool to allow yourself time to complete this activity.

Journaling Activity: Why is it Important to Have a Mentor?

What You Will Need:

- Creative art supplies

What to Do:

1. Write the words M-E-N-T-O-R in the space below.
2. Decorate the page using your creative materials.
3. After you have decorated the page, write down your response to the question – why is it important to have a mentor?

Decorate this page using your creative art materials according to the question.

Why is it Important to Have a Mentor?

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF HAVING A MENTOR?

- Positive role model
- A source of guidance and perspective
- A safe space to try out ideas
- An opportunity for personal reflective space
- A source of stretch and challenge
- Access to networks and other learning sources

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF HAVING A MENTOR?

- More responsibility for own learning and training
- Increased self esteem
- Increased motivation and achievement
- Personal growth and development
- Enhance existing skills & learn new skills

Journaling Activity: *Coffee Club?*



What You Will Need:

- Handout, page

What to Do:

- Please refer to page ___ in your handouts.
- Follow directions outlined on the page.



TIME FOR REFLECTION

PAUSE

You are encouraged to pause the machine recording now to allow yourself time to complete this activity.

BUILDING YOUR SOURCE ADULT RESIDENCE ACCOUNT: MODULE 1 - WEBPAGE #1

Journaling Activity: Coffee Club

What You Will Need:

- Books

What to Do:

Use the space below to think about who and what you may want to mentor.

Imagine...

You are going to a coffee shop to meet with a new mentor. Record anything you see, hear, or think down in an empty table. You have the door open and get up on your new mentor. What do you see?

Imagine...

The person sits down and you start talking. This other person is listening to you talk, you have their full attention. What are you talking about?



TIME FOR REFLECTION

PAUSE

You are encouraged to pause the machine recording now to allow yourself time to complete this activity.

BUILDING YOUR SOURCE ADULT RESIDENCE ACCOUNT: MODULE 1 - WEBPAGE #1

Journaling Activity: Coffee Club

What You Will Need:

- Books

What to Do:

Use the space below to think about who and what you may want to mentor.

Imagine...

You are going to a coffee shop to meet with a new mentor. Record anything you see, hear, or think down in an empty table. You have the door open and get up on your new mentor. What do you see?

Imagine...

The person sits down and you start talking. This other person is listening to you talk, you have their full attention. What are you talking about?

© Dimensions Center for Feedback: Children

BUILDING YOUR RESILIENCE ADULT RESILIENCE COURSE: MODULE 3 - WEBINAR 31

Example...
The next week with a hug and smile together as you make plans to meet again.
What are your hopes for the next meeting?

TIME FOR REFLECTION
PAUSE
You are encouraged to pause the webinar recording now to allow yourself time to complete this activity.

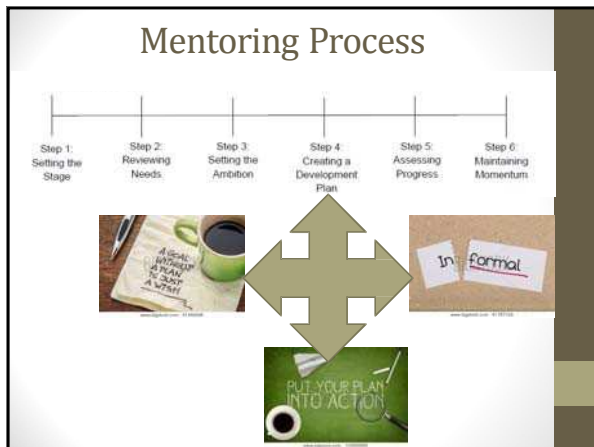
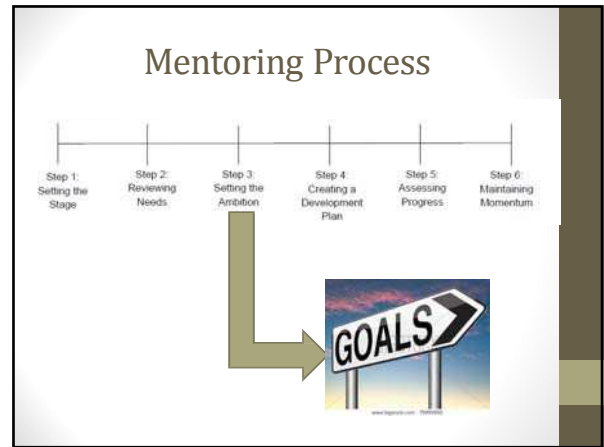
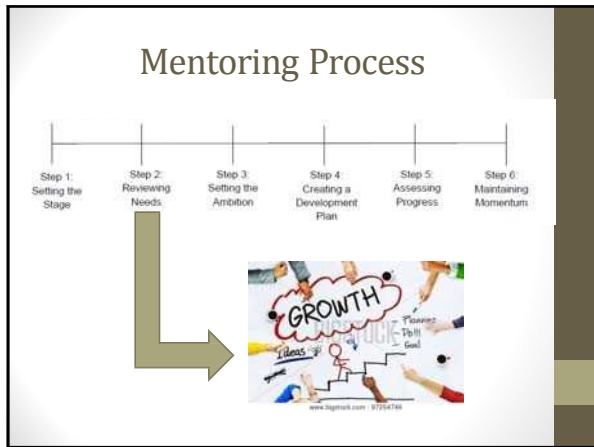
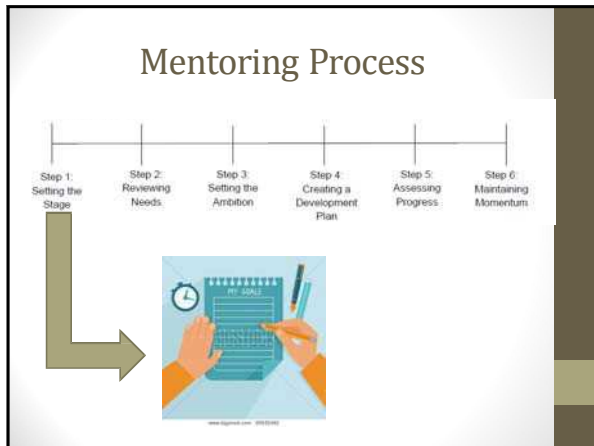
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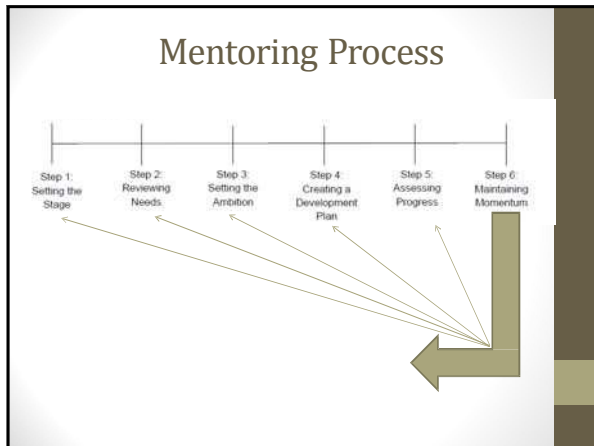


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Choosing a Mentor
Look beyond the obvious

Choosing a Mentor
Put the word out.





Mentoring Resources

TO BE MENTORED

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip: _____

Phone: _____

How did you hear about this mentoring program? (Check all that apply)

Through a friend or family member

Through a community organization

Through a newspaper or magazine

Through a television or radio advertisement

Through a website

Other: _____

What are your career goals? (Check all that apply)

To advance in my current field

To start my own business

To change careers

To gain more experience

To learn new skills

To explore new opportunities

Other: _____

What are your educational goals? (Check all that apply)

To complete my current education

To attend graduate school

To attend professional school

To attend a trade school

To attend a community college

To attend a technical school

Other: _____

What are your personal goals? (Check all that apply)

To improve my financial situation

To improve my health

To improve my social life

To improve my family life

To improve my overall quality of life

Other: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

MENTOR AND MENTEE AGREEMENT

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip: _____

Phone: _____

How did you hear about this mentoring program? (Check all that apply)

Through a friend or family member

Through a community organization

Through a newspaper or magazine

Through a television or radio advertisement

Through a website

Other: _____

What are your career goals? (Check all that apply)

To advance in my current field

To start my own business

To change careers

To gain more experience

To learn new skills

To explore new opportunities

Other: _____

What are your educational goals? (Check all that apply)

To complete my current education

To attend graduate school

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To attend a community college

To attend a technical school

Other: _____

What are your personal goals? (Check all that apply)

To improve my financial situation

To improve my health

To improve my social life

To improve my family life

To improve my overall quality of life

Other: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

r



Relationships

Items	Yes	Sometimes	Not Yes
1. I have good friends who support me.			
2. I have a mentor or someone who shows me the way.			
3. I provide support to others.			
4. I am empathetic to others.			
5. I trust my close friends.			



The Road to Resilience eCourse
MODULE 3
Webinar 3.1 - Internal Beliefs as a Protective factor

Learning Objectives	Content/Activities	Mode of delivery
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Participants will identify his/her personal strengths.	I Like Me	Journaling Activity

The Road to Resilience eCourse
MODULE 3
Webinar 3.1 - Internal Beliefs as a Protective factor

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Accepting Yourself

http://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/docs/SE_Module%206_July%2005.pdf

Building Self-esteem a Self-Help Guide

<https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA-3715/SMA-3715.pdf>

TIMELINE

TASK	TIME ALLOCATION
Webinar 3.1	25 Minutes
Journaling Activity	30 Minutes
Recommended Readings	15 Minutes
	TOTAL 70 Minutes

The Road to Resilience eCourse
MODULE 3
Webinar 3.1
Participant Handouts

The Road to Resilience eCourse
MODULE 3
Webinar 3.1 - Internal Beliefs as a Protective Factor

Learning Objectives

Participants will identify his/her most important personal strengths.

Self-esteem is the immune system of the mind and of the spirit
What does this quote mean to you?

Journaling Activity: I Like Me

What You Will Need:

- Creative art materials
- Recent photo of yourself (one where you think you look really good!)

What to Do:

1. Place a recent photo of yourself in the space provided below.
2. Try your best to choose a photo of yourself where you feel you look your best!
If you don't have a printed photo, use a photo you may have on your cell phone or computer.

Place a recent photo of yourself in the space below.
Decorate this page using your creative art materials.

Journaling Activity: I Like Me (continued)

What 10 words would you use to describe the person you see in the photo?

Do I tell the person in the photo nice things about themselves every day? Why or why not?

Make a list of the top 20 things that make the person in the photo smile.

The two moments I'll never forget in my life are... Describe them in great detail, and what makes them so unforgettable.
(Use additional pages as necessary)

What are the strengths of the person in the photo?

The Road to Resilience eCourse
MODULE 3
WEBINAR 3.1
Power-Point



Road to Resilience eCourse

Module 3

Webinar #1 – Internal Beliefs as a Protective Factor

During this webinar...
What You Will Need:

Module 3 Handouts

The image shows a wooden table with a handout titled 'Resilience Adult Resilience Survey (RAAS)' placed on it. The handout includes a survey form with various questions and a table for recording answers.

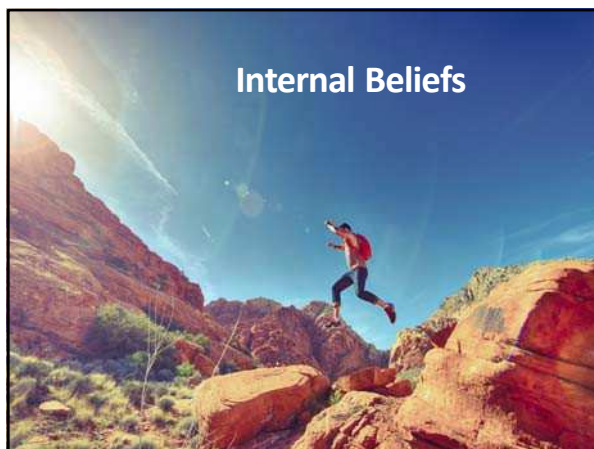
Module 3:
Internal Beliefs as a Protective Factor

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will explain the elements of developing and maintaining mentor-based relationships

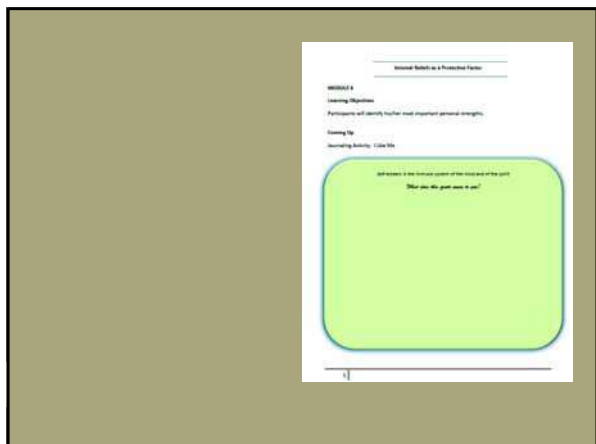
Coming Up...

- Journaling Activity: I Like Me



Self-esteem is the immune system of the mind and of the spirit?

What does this quote mean to you?



Let's Revisit Your Completed DARS

Internal Beliefs			
Items	Yes	Sometimes	Not Yet
1. My role as a caregiver is important.			
2. I have personal strengths.			
3. I am creative.			
4. I have strong beliefs.			
5. I am hopeful about the future.			
6. I am lovable.			



Top 20 Reasons why we should consistently remember to consider our strengths.

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Journaling Activity: **I Like Me**

1. Place a recent photo of yourself in the space provided on page 2 of your handouts.
2. Try your best to choose a photo of yourself where you feel you look your best!
3. If you don't have a printed photo, use a photo you may have on your cell phone or computer.



Journaling Activity: **I Like Me**

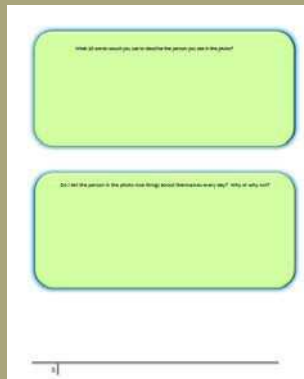
4. As you continue to look at yourself and the page you have decorated, take some time to answer the following questions.

What 10 words would you use to describe the person you see in the photo?

Journaling Activity: **I Like Me**

4. As you continue to look at yourself and the page you have decorated, take some time to answer the following questions.

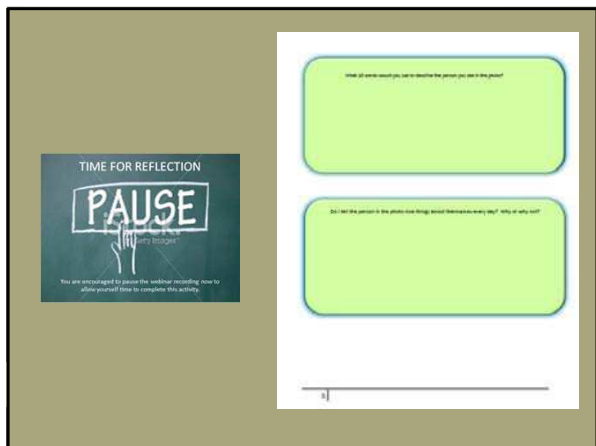
Do I tell the person in the photo nice things about themselves everyday? Why or why not?



Journaling Activity: **I Like Me**

4. As you continue to look at yourself and the page you have decorated, take some time to answer the following questions.

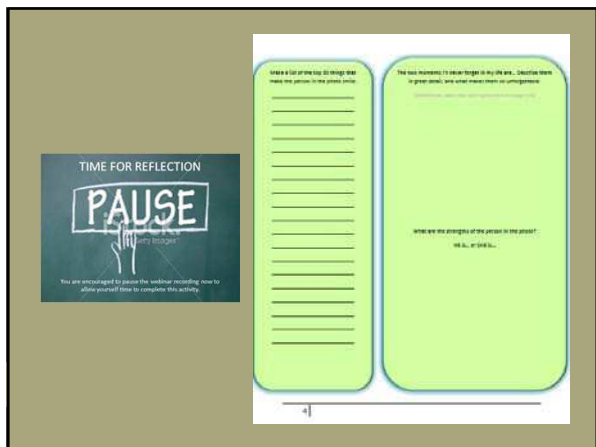
Make a list of the top 30 things that make the person in the photo smile.



Journaling Activity: I Like Me

4. As you continue to look at yourself and the page you have decorated, take some time to answer the following questions.

The two moments I'll never forget in my life are... Describe them in great detail, and what makes them so unforgettable.



Journaling Activity: I Like Me

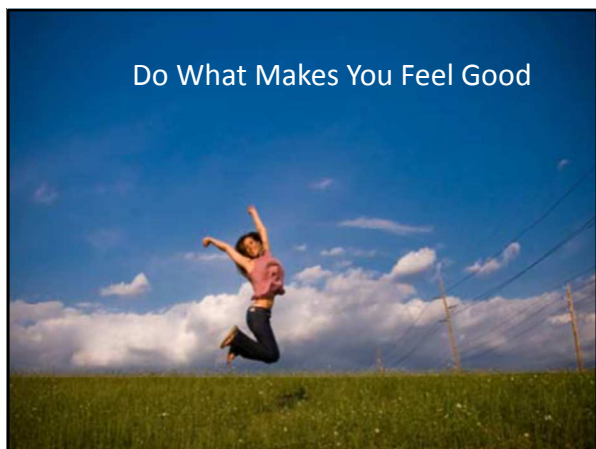
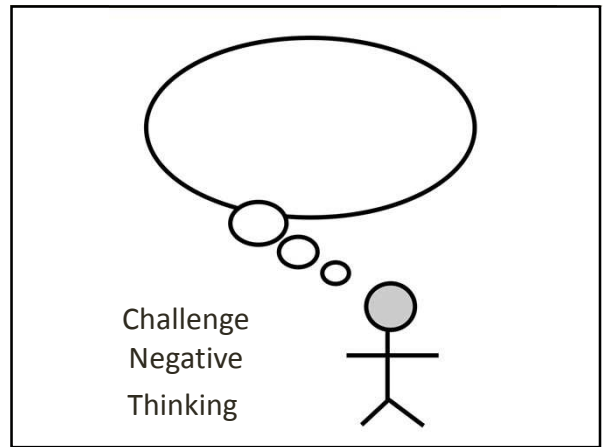
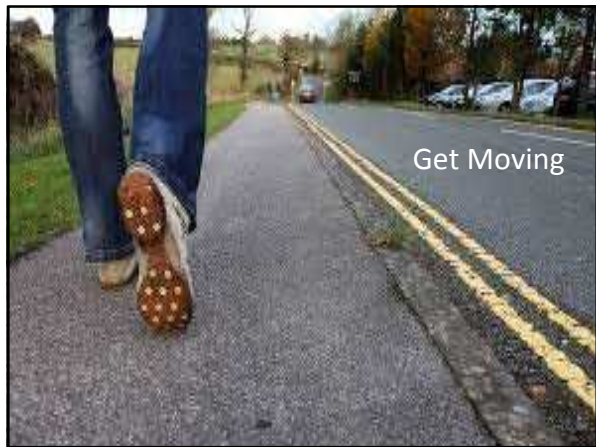
4. As you continue to look at yourself and the page you have decorated, take some time to answer the following questions.

What are the strengths of the person in the photo?



RESORUCE

6 Ideas to find your personal strengths.





Remember to Continue
Your Journey

Items	Internal Beliefs		
	Yes	Sometimes	Not Yet
1. My role as a caregiver is important.			
2. I have personal strengths.			
3. I am creative.			
4. I have strong beliefs.			
5. I am hopeful about the future.			
6. I am lovable.			



The Road to Resilience eCourse
MODULE 4
Webinar 4.1 - Initiative as a Protective Factor

Learning Objectives	Content/Activities	Mode of delivery
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Participants will explore healthy ways to say “no” to people, experiences, and situations that do not bring joy to their life.	Say “Yes” No! Poster	Journaling Activity

The Road to Resilience eCourse
MODULE 4
Webinar 4.1 - Initiative as a Protective Factor

RECOMMENDED READINGS**Action for Happiness**

http://www.actionforhappiness.org/media/80216/happiness_action_pack.pdf

TIMELINE

TASK	TIME ALLOCATION
Webinar 4.1	25 Minutes
Journaling Activity #1	15 Minutes
Journaling Activity #2	15 Minutes
Recommended Reading	15 Minutes
	TOTAL 70 Minutes

The Road to Resilience eCourse
MODULE 4
WEBINAR 4.1
Participant Handouts

The Road to Resilience eCourse
MODULE 4
Webina 4.1 - Initiative as a Protective Factor
Initiative as a Protective Factor

Learning Objectives

Participants will explore healthy ways to say “no” to people, experiences, and situations that do not bring joy to their life.

You will either step forward into growth or you will step back into safety.

What does this quote mean to you?

Journaling Activity: No! Poster

What You Will Need:

- Pen or Pencil
- Create Art Materials
- Computer with Internet Access
- Printer
- Magazines you can cut pictures from

What to Do:

1. Learning to say no – when applicable - is a process.
2. A good first step in this process is to create a list of the people, things, situations that you want to say no to.
3. For this journaling activity we will use the power of photos and words to help you.
4. Use the space provided to create a list of the requests, habits, ideas, items, activities and people you'd like to say no to.
5. Next to each item on your list, provide an explanation (to yourself – you don't owe anyone else an explanation if you don't want to) of why you choose to say now.
6. Next, let's turn the words into a powerful poster to remind you to say no so that you may be able to make room for more yes's!
7. Work to find a photo to represent each of the words or words you listed on your "no" list.
8. A great strategy to use is Google Images (www.googleimages.com). Simply search your "no" word. The search engine should offer several results. Choose a photo, and print it. You can also search magazines for appropriate pictures.
9. Next, let's turn the words into a powerful poster to remind you to say no so that you may be able to make room for more yes's!
10. Work to find a photo to represent each of the words or words you listed on your "no" list.
11. A great strategy to use is Google Images. Simply search your "no" word. The search engine should offer several results. Choose a photo, and print it.
12. As a next step, you may also wish to create a photo collage of your "yes's". This to remind you of what you want in life!



The Road to Resilience eCourse
MODULE 4
WEBINA 4.1
Power-Point



Road to Resilience eCourse

Module 4

Webinar #1 – Initiative as a Protective Factor

During this webinar...
What You Will Need:

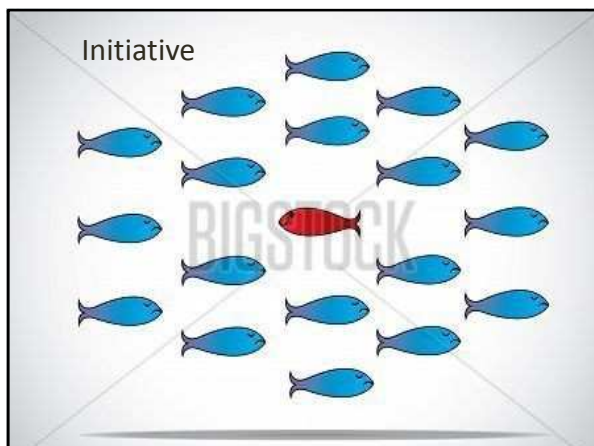
Module 4 Handouts

Module 4:

Initiative as a Protective Factor

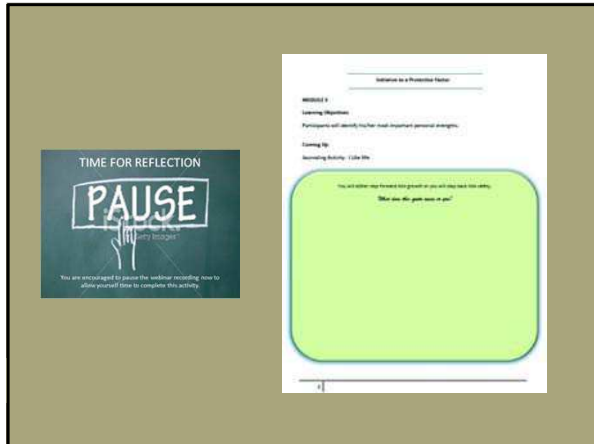
Learning Objectives:

Coming Up...



You will either step forward into growth
or you will step back into safety.

What does this quote mean to you?



Let's Revisit Your Completed DARS

Initiative			
Items	Yes	Sometimes	Not Yet
1. I communicate effectively with those around me.			
2. I try many different ways to solve a problem.			
3. I have a hobby that I engage in.			
4. I seek out new knowledge.			
5. I am open to new ideas.			
6. I laugh often.			
7. I am able to say no.			
8. I can ask for help.			



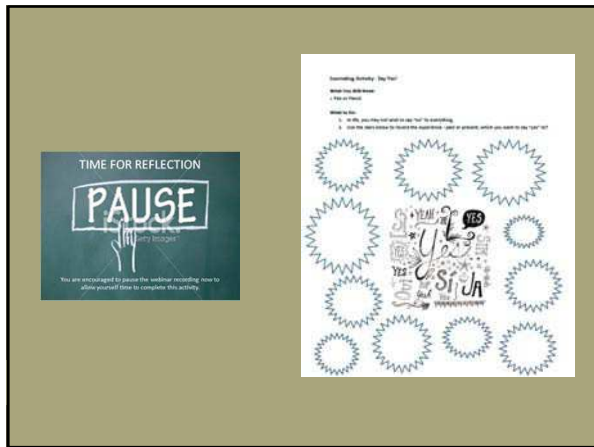
For some, telling another person “no” can be difficult. Why do you think some people find it difficult to tell others “no”.





Journaling Activity: **Say Yes!**

1. In life, you may not wish to say “no” to everything. More than likely, there are experiences that add value to your life, as a result, for these experiences, you want to say “yes”.
2. What experiences past or present, do you want to say “yes” to?
3. Reference page in your handouts and take a few moments to “say yes”.





Journaling Activity: **NO! Poster**

1. Learning to say no – when applicable - is a process.
2. A good first step in this process is to create a list of the people, things, situations that you want to say no to.
3. For this journaling activity we will use the power of photos and words to help us.

Journaling Activity: **NO! Poster**

4. On page in your handout, space has been provided for your to create a list of the requests, habits, ideas, items, activities and people you'd like to say no to.
5. Next to each item on your list, provide an explanation (to yourself – you don't owe anyone else an explanation if you don't want to) of why you choose to say now.

Journaling Activity: **NO! Poster**

6. Next, let's turn the words into a powerful poster to remind you to say no so that you may be able to make room for more yes's!
7. Work to find a photo to represent each of the words or words you listed on your "no" list.
8. A great strategy to use is Google Images. Simply search your "no" word. The search engine should offer several results. Choose a photo, and print it.

Journaling Activity: **NO! Poster**

9. Collect a photo for each item on your "no" list.
10. Once you have a photo, arrange your photos into a collage on page in your handout. Decorate the page with your creative materials.
11. Post your completed page where you can see it often. Take a picture of it and make copies. Place copies in the various space you spend your time...the bathroom, your car, etc.

The Road to Resilience eCourse
MODULE 5
Webinar 5.1 - Self-Control as a Protective Factor

Learning Objectives	Content/Activities	Mode of delivery
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Participants will describe ways to create environments that support self-calming.	Time Out Collage	Journaling Activity

The Road to Resilience eCourse
MODULE 5
Webinar 5.1 - Self-Control as a Protective Factor

RECOMMENDED READINGS

<https://paidtoexist.com/10-ways-to-relax-your-workspace/>

<http://www.mnn.com/money/green-workplace/blogs/5-ways-to-calm-your-office-space-zen-at-work>

TIMELINE

TASK	TIME ALLOCATION
Webinar 5.1	25 Minutes
Journaling Activity	30 Minutes
Recommended Readings	15 Minutes
	TOTAL 70 Minutes

The Road to Resilience eCourse
MODULE 5
WEBINA 5.1
Participant Handouts

The Road to Resilience eCourse
MODULE 5
Webinar 5.1 - Self-Control as a Protective Factor

MODULE 5

Learning Objectives

Participants will describe ways to create environments that support self-calming.

The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in
moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands
at times of challenge and controversy.

What does this quote mean to you?

Journaling Activity: Time Out Collage

What You Will Need:

- Creative art materials
- Access to a computer with internet access
- Printer
- Magazines

What to Do:

1. Think of a place where you can go to curl up and feel safe – a place you feel the urge to go to when things get tough.
2. What types of things are in this space that makes it so special for you?
3. If you are not able to get to this place as often as you like, can you bring elements of the location to your current environment?
4. Using a magazine or a Google Image search, search for images that bring your joy, help you to smile or relax.
5. Arrange and glue the photos in the space provided in your handouts. Decorate the page using your creative materials.
6. Take a photo of what you have created and make copies so that you can reflect on this space as often as the need arises.
7. You may even consider framing your photo and placing it on your desk, or in your work or environment.
8. When you need to calm yourself, focus on the images in the photo, meditate, practice deep breathing and/or listen to music as you reflect and work to calm yourself.

Time out Collage

The Road to Resilience eCourse
MODULE 5
WEBINAR 5.1
Power-Point



Road to Resilience eCourse

Module 5

Webinar #1 – Self-Control as a Protective Factor

During this webinar...
What You Will Need:

Module 5 Handouts

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Module 5: Self-Control as a Protective Factor

Learning Objectives:
Participants will describe ways to create environments that support self-calming.


Coming Up...
Journaling Activity: Time Out Collage



The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

What does this quote mean to you?

TIME FOR REFLECTION



You are encouraged to pause the webinar recording now to allow yourself time to complete this activity.

Self-Control as a Protective Factor

MODULE 5

Learning Objectives
Participants will describe ways to create environments that support self-planting.

Coming Up
Journaling Activity: Time Out Collage

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and adversity."

"What else has gone wrong in your life?"

Let's Revisit Your Completed DARS

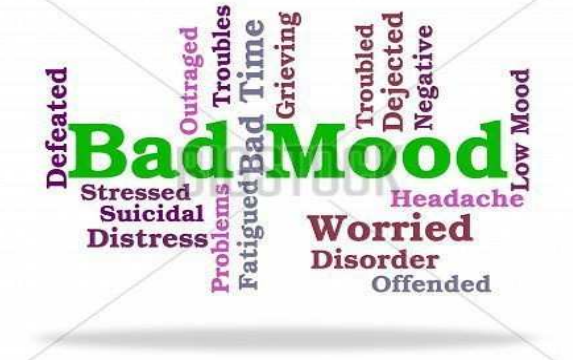
Self-Control

Items	Yes	Sometimes	Not Yet
1. I express my emotions.			
2. I set limits for myself.			
3. I am flexible.			
4. I can calm myself down.			

What Would You Do?







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Journaling Activity: **Time out Collage**

1. Think of a place where you can go to curl up and feel safe – a place you feel the urge to go to when things get tough.
2. What types of things are in this space that makes it so special for you?
3. If you are not able to get to this place as often as you like, can you bring elements of the location to your current environment.

Journaling Activity: Time out Collage

4. Using a magazine or a Google Image search, search for images that bring your joy, help you to smile or relax.
5. Arrange the photos on page in your handouts.
6. Take a photo of what you have created and make copies so that you can reflect on this space as often as the need arises.

Journaling Activity: Time Out Collage

What You Will Need:

- Computer or tablet
- Access to a magazine with internet access
- Scissors
- Glue
- Magazine

What to Do:

1. Think of a quiet space where you can get out of the room when you need to get away from things for a while.
2. Spend some time thinking about what you want to do when you are in your quiet space.
3. Print out the page and glue it to the page or folder in your file. Use any images you want to use in your quiet space.
4. Using a highlighter or marker, write:
5. Write down the things you want to do when you are in your quiet space.
6. Think of a quiet space where you can get away from things for a while.
7. Spend some time thinking about what you want to do when you are in your quiet space.
8. Print out the page and glue it to the page or folder in your file.

TIME OUT COLLAGE

The Road to Resilience...

Self-Control			
Items	Yes	Sometimes	Not Yet
1. I express my emotions.			
2. I set limits for myself.			
3. I am flexible.			
4. I can calm myself down.			



The Road to Resilience eCourse
MODULE 6
WEBINA 6.1
Power-Point Only
Handouts Not Required for Module 6

Appendix B: Letter of Cooperation from a Research Partner

Letter of Cooperation from a Research Partner



June 11, 2015

Dear Nefertiti B. Poyner,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled *Factors That Contribute to Resilience of Early Care and Education Teachers* within the Fairfax County Office for Children – Head Start Centers. As part of this study, I authorize you to use the contact information I have provided to contact teachers who meet the criterion for your proposed study. I understand you are seeking a minimum of fifteen teachers to participate. By offering you a list of possible participants, I will be unaware of who agrees to consent to participation. It is my understanding that interviews will serve as your main source of data collection. Additionally, teachers will be asked to complete the Devereux Adult Resilience Survey (DARS) via an electronic survey link. Participating teachers will have an opportunity to review transcripts collected from their individual interviews to ensure accuracy. At the conclusion of your study, I understand that a summary of findings will be made available to the [REDACTED]. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

I understand that our organization's responsibilities include: providing a list of teachers who meet the criterion for participation. I reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.



Appendix C: Invitation Email to Teachers

Dear Colleague,

My name is Nefertiti B. Poyner and I am a graduate student at Walden University. I am conducting a study on the experiences and challenges of teachers in early care and education and strategies for overcoming such experiences and challenges. I have obtained the support of your Program Director to collect data for my research project entitled Factors That Contribute to Resilience of Early Care and Education Teachers (IRB Approval Number 05-21-15-027144). Teachers who are successfully responding to the challenges of teaching in early care and education are invited to be a part of this study and your name has been suggested.

My research will include teacher interviews, which will last for 30-45 minutes and will be conducted during teacher lunch breaks, before school, after school, or during the weekend, depending on the preference of the teacher. In addition to interviews, participants will also be asked to complete the Devereux Adult Resilience Survey (DARS). Participation in the study is completely voluntary and participants can leave the study at any time. Participants will grant permission to audiotape the interview. Additionally, the identity of those participating in the study will be kept confidential throughout the entire process.

Please let me know if you have any questions. I am only a phone call or email away. My phone number is 610.291.8205 and my email address Nefertiti.bruce@waldenu.edu. I am excited to be able to research and tell the story of teachers who face the challenge each and every day!

Think about your interest in participating. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have or to volunteer to participate. If you interested in participating, I ask that you review the “informed consent” document attached to this email and follow the directions included in the document. I will follow up with you in 7 days. Thank you in advance for your time.

Warmest Regards,

Nefertiti B. Poyner

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Name: _____

Month and Year of Birth: _____

Years of Teaching Experience: _____

Number of Years in Current Teaching Position: _____

Highest Level of Education Completed: _____

Yearly Salary Range:

15,000 – 20,000 yearly 20,000 – 25,000 25,000 – 30,000 30,000 – 35,000 35,000 – 40,000

Other:

Does your current employer provide health insurance? YES NO

Other: _____

1. Please give me a brief summary of your teaching career?
2. Describe the culture of your school environment? In other words, describe the background of the children and families the program serves.
3. What does a “good day” look like for you at work?
4. What are some of the day-to-day stresses that you face teaching in this school?
5. Can you tell me about a few of the most stressful incidents you have experienced teaching here? How did you handle them?
6. Since you have been teaching here, is there anything that you feel particularly proud of?
7. Do you have any regrets about any of the things that have happened here?
8. What are your main sources of support within the program?
9. What are your main sources of support outside of the program?

10. Please tell me a little bit about the composition of your family. Do you have children of our own? Does this help make teaching more manageable or more difficult?
11. What advice would you give a teacher who was thinking of applying to teach at this school?
12. What do you consider to be the most challenging aspects of teaching in early care and education?
13. What strategies do you use to overcome the most challenging aspects of teaching in early care and education?
14. What are the most fulfilling parts of your job?
15. What talents, skills, special competencies, and unique contributions do you bring to the classroom?
16. Do you have an opportunity every day to do what you do best? If so how? If no, why do you feel you do not?
17. What keeps you from being as effective as you would like to be in your position?
18. If you had the power to change anything about your job, what would you change?"
19. What do you like to do when you are not teaching, for example how do you spend your evenings, your weekends?