FOSTERING A HEALTHY AND COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITY OF
CONNECTION OF STAFF IN TIMES OF CHANGE

By

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my family, particularly my husband, Darcy, who is my biggest cheerleader and encourager. Thank you, beloved, for seeing things in me that I could not see. I thank my children, Rachel and Andy, who I wanted to show that hard work does pay off, vulnerability can be learned at any age, and we need to constantly learn and grow. I would also like to give a thank you to my friend and colleague, Grania Bridal, who inspired me and sometime pushed me to be more and extend myself. Finally, I would like to thank my new friends who were made in class, my advisors and professors, and the countless people who have written, researched and theorized, all who enriched my life, thoughts and the way I view the world. I am better because of the time I have spent with you. Thank you.
Abstract

The new BC curriculum has moved in the right direction by recognizing that developing an individual’s education is multidimensional by the introduction of the Core Competencies. This does not just have to apply to students but can also be applied to adults. Anton Antonovsky's (1979) concept of Salutogenesis, which looks at the study of the origins of health and assets for health, rather than the origins of disease and risk factors, can be used in our workplace to promote the development of personal coping resources to help address stressors. In my work, I investigate literature in a wide variety of fields to encourage resilience, empowerment, connection and belonging to develop a healthy and cohesive cohort of all staff within a school to turn conflict, change and an uncertain environment into an opportunity for authentic positive educational transformation and the empowerment of all staff. Just as we are developing our students’ core competencies, the development of a compassionate and connected staff and the individual development of personal coping resources can counter the negative impacts stressors have on staff and student learning. This project presents a professional development presentation which outlines the rationale for a shift in personal health development and the steps for the creation of a compassionate community of connection through the uniting efforts of an empathetic leader. A self-assessment tool is also developed to aid in the discussion.

Keywords: personal coping resources, compassion, community development

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Chapter 1

Personal Interest

When I decided to start my master’s degree, after months of self-doubt regarding my capacities for such intellectual pursuits and my already stretched organizational and emotional skills as a mother and full-time teacher, I told myself that my focus was to be planning for possibilities in the future, desiring to be a better leader and teacher, and if truth be told, it was driven by my vulnerable reflections that I have had on instances where there was a failure or lack of connection with people around me. I have observed several examples of disconnection and a lack of feeling of belonging in my life. In my own childhood I experienced disconnect from school to overcome an undiagnosed learning difference and struggles in my personal life. My own children have also battled with mental health issues and the obstacles of disengagement from school. I have learned personally that a sense of connection and belonging are the foundation of a meaningful and healthy life and I apply this in my professional career. Many of the students I have taught over my years of teaching were not engaged, due to home life situations, learning differences or mental health, and I worked to create a connection with them. It made a difference in our lives and in their learning. It seems that I have more patience for young people than I do for the other adults I have worked with.

I have worked with many different schools and staff. I have always been an involved staff member and recognized early the need to have bonds with my colleagues in a profession which can be very isolating and challenging. I have been frustrated in the past with staff members who are disenchanted or lack passion for what goes on within our school and classrooms. Since starting my Master’s, I have started to ask why there is so much disconnect. As a more senior teacher, I see teachers new to the profession without mentorship or support become
overwhelmed, and I see teachers who have been educators for many years become apathetic or burn out. Since starting my Master’s, I have been drawn into the role in administration, where my goal is still for the connection of students with each other and staff, but I have come to realize that connection and a sense of belonging between staff members supports the students and our school culture, especially in times of conflict and change.

**Significance of the Topic**

The new BC curriculum has moved in the right direction to recognize that developing an individual’s education is multidimensional. The distinction of core content and core competencies helps to promote truly healthy learning that not only educates students on facts but also recognizes the need to address critical and creative thinking skills that enriches perspective-taking of self and others, as well as supports students to personalize the communication of their learning in other parts of their lives. Even though all of these aspects are a positive movement in the right direction, any time there is a new implementation of curricular or educational change, there is stress on teachers, as any large changes within the educational system would be expected to have. For some educators, it can increase the disconnect and isolation which they already feel as they try to address the work entailed in teaching. To add to these other changes, our district has also agreed to participate in a pilot project in reporting on the assessment of learning of our students which eliminates letter grades and percentages in favour of comment-based feedback. For some teachers who have been teaching for many years, this is highly stressful.

The negative impacts of staff disengagement can be seen in increased stress levels which can lead to illness and absenteeism, burnout and attrition from the teaching profession and negative impacts on student learning. In addition, there are personal consequences of increased
instances of declining mental health as seen in cases of apathy, depression and anxiety amongst staff.

While we are recognizing that our students need help in developing resiliency and ‘grit’, our staff also need support in doing this. They require a strong resource team to lean on when faced with uncertainty and new territory. Our district is certainly moving in the right direction which values inquiry, collaboration, mindfulness and the maintenance of relationships, yet there will always be room for improvement.

There is much literature surrounding the value of fostering connection between teacher and student, student and student, and student and place, but how much literature in education focuses on fostering of the culture of connection and belonging amongst staff members in education? More work and research needs to be done. To compare the research within the education world I will be inquiring into a variety of organizational groups such as those found in nursing, integrational groups of diverse cultural backgrounds, business and the service industry, and psychiatry and mental health services. I will investigate the commonalities and differences behind their theories of connection and belonging within their organizations. These universal concepts link in examination of the connection that happens not just between student and teacher, but amongst all humans and the systems around them. I propose that a focus on connection and belonging is essential to develop a culture of health for all individuals involved within a staff. The impact of proactive leadership is also paramount, encouraging a positive attitude of transformational leadership and teamwork.

**Research Path and Strategies**

With the information obtained through literature review and research, my goal is to synthesize and develop an appreciative critique of gaps that can provide a practical application in
a school and a growing district in times of change. My phenomenological view, which is one of someone who is transitioning from the role of an experienced classroom teacher into one of a new administrator, will be supplemented by the work by authors in the fields of nursing, integrational groups of diverse cultural backgrounds, business and the service industry, psychiatry and mental health services and education. I will focus on a common purpose to taking steps towards actions to make it a reality for the next phases of change. The common purpose of connection and belonging must be supported and frequently revisited for maintenance of its efficiency and authenticity, allowing for adjustments where necessary to make the best impact. Co-creation of solutions to conflicts or challenges will allow the staff to develop caring relationships, different perspectives, reflection and introspection on the meaningfulness of work and core values, and a sense of stewardship within the team. Teacher experience and altruistic passion must be valued, recognized and stimulated. The resulting collaboration and application of my inquiry will encourage resilience, empowerment, connection and belonging to develop a healthy and cohesive cohort of all staff within a school who can turn conflict, change and an uncertain environment into an opportunity for authentic positive educational transformation and the empowerment all staff, not just those in a school or district administrative role.

Chapter 2

What is a healthy community?

How do we know when we are healthy and able to participate effectively in our lives and with others? Health and well-being are unique to everyone, yet in order to know if an organization is healthy, we must be able to identify what is healthy and unhealthy, and also develop strategies to address stressors or conflicts to shift unhealthy obstacles towards healthy opportunities to grow and transform. There has been much research into the promotion of staff
health within organizations such as in nursing, psychiatry, and the business sectors, yet little has
been done to look at the conditions that truly create health within school staffs. I am appreciative
of the work done so far in our districts in recognizing the value of mindfulness and growth
mindset (Dweck, 2006), yet we must all recognize that there is ill-health within our staffs. This
can be seen in the rates of absenteeism, burnout, cynicism (i.e. job dissatisfaction, apathy,
unproductive behaviour), mental overload and stress (i.e. rising cases of depression, anxiety), and
attrition. How can this be addressed to create healthy and compassionately connected school
communities in times of uncertainty, stress and change?

**Defining Salutogenesis and Sense of Coherence**

Based on the work of Aaron Antonovsky (1979) and his questioning of what makes
people healthy, and what are the origins of health, Mittelmark & Bauer (2017) use the
salutogenic model of health and define the term **sense of coherence**. Sense of coherence is an
individual’s personal engagement with Generalized Resistance Resources (GRRs) and specific
coping resources to react to internal and external environments, in particular the stressors within
them. The development of the sense of coherence (SOC), which Antonovsky believes to begin in
infancy and be formed by early adulthood, is shaped by life experiences, with culture having a
large influence. SOC plays a key role in the shaping of perceptions around health and well-being,
balancing what intra-personal and extra-personal factors can be considered stressor on one hand
and the experience of health on the other. The concept of salutogenesis has applications in areas
of health and well-being and includes a wide umbrella of positive and multidimensional health
resources and assets as seen in Figure 1 (Eriksson & Lindström, 2010).
Figure 1 – Salutogenesis: Assets for health and well-being. Eriksson M, & Lindström B. (2010)


Antonovsky’s (1993a) 6Cs (complexity, conflict, chaos, coherence, coercion, and civility, as seen in Figure 2) and how the individual interacts within an environment in a heterostatic, rather than homeostatic state, is a complex interdependent and multidimensional organization of several individual systems interacting simultaneously on a collective level. In his model, conflict and stressors are seen as inevitable and outside of our control, and a part of a complex existence which can be either seen as an opportunity for growth and reorganization, or an obstacle that results in tension and chaos. Life is not a balance of separate and siloed issues, it is a hybrid of issues all happening simultaneously.
We are in a constant flux on an ease/disease continuum (Lindström & Eriksson, 2010). The complexity of all these different interactions can lead to conflict with several different options or paths depending on the sense of coherence of the individual. SOC within any system could manage an individual or group towards civility and the avoidance of tension or encourage adaptation or push towards a life of chaos. With civility, we acknowledge and respect each other’s strengths and abilities as humans and are constantly ready to relate to change. The opposite path of civility is coercion which leads to oppression and domination.

Figure 2 - The six Cs—an ontological perspective on salutogenesis. After Antonovsky, 1993a, p. 969. Published with permission from the copyright holder and Social Science and Medicine. (Eriksson, 2017, p. 92)

A strong SOC will enable someone to deal better with stressors of everyday life and to use resources to also counter the stressors. As a result, the coping capacity can be strongly related to someone’s health. A lower SOC can leave an individual vulnerable to hardships of life. The promotion of SOC development will benefit an individual’s health (Eriksson & Lindström, 2007; Flensborg-Madsen, Ventegodt, & Merrick, 2005; Lindmark, Hakeberg, & Hugoson, 2011; Kouvonon et al., 2008; Poppius, Virkkunen, Hakama, Tenkanen, 2006; Super, Verschuren, Zantinge, Wagemakers, Picavet, 2014; Super, Wagemakers, Picavet, Verkooijen & Koelen, 2015; Surtees et al., 2007; Wainwright et al., 2008).
Development of Generalized Resistance Resources

Antonovsky (1979) proposed that SOC stabilizes by young adulthood. Can it change past that point? Little research has been conducted to investigate this question. Super et al. (2015) support that to strengthen SOC after childhood there needs to be a focus on interactive and interdependent opportunities based on a study of the mechanisms underlying SOC conducted by Amirkhan and Greaves (2003), and Kähönen, Näätänen, Tolvanen and Salmela-Aro (2012). The combination of their studies looks at the cause of stressors and successful tension management with positive influences and on the shift of perspective that multiple and diverse stressors happen everyday and are perpetual. Stressors and successful tension management can be consistently in balance and can be socially valuable. Work done by Folkman (2013) on stress and coping dissects coping strategies to concentrate on problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping and meaning-focused coping and how their processes of empowerment and reflection can interdependently address these stressors (Folkman, 1997, 2013). This focus allows people to identify their GRRs to adapt for change and coping (Løndal, 2010; Ley & Rato Barrio, 2013).

Figure 3 - Mapping sentence definition of GRRs (Antonovsky, 1979, p. 103) (Vinje, Langeland & Bull, 2017, p. 31)
The importance of the Workplace

Contrary to Antonovsky’s (1979, 1993a) opinion, Jenny, Bauer, Vinje, Vogt and Torp (2017) accepts that once reaching adulthood, SOC is more set, but it can still be modified (for the better or worse) through the work environment where the duality of work is looked at as a possible health promoter or health deteriorator. Psychological job demands, personal control, and social supports affect the negative health of work engagement. Research done by Karaseck and Theorell (1990) on demand-control-support (DCS) was based off the JD-R model is referenced with an integration of the writers’ views on sense of coherence. Their Strain Hypothesis indicates that a highly mentally demanding job with low control or social support can lead to mental and physical illness. Their Active Learning Hypothesis, which according to Jenny et al. (2017), can be seen as a salutogenic pathway, states a high mentally demanding job and a high degree of control and support can lead to increased learning, motivation, and a feeling of mastery. This all lends to building up a sense of coherence, promote positive health and well-being and “have more sustainable effects than interventions reducing job demands.” (Jenny et al., 2017, p. 201).

Job resources are part of GRR and can be used to build up SOC. Research evidence supporting SOC having positive outcomes for the individual at work can be seen as job commitment (Du Buisson-Narsai, 2005), work engagement (Fourie, Rothmann ans & Van de Vijver, 2008; Pillay, 2008; Rothmann, Steyn & Mostert, 2005), job satisfaction (Rothmann, 2001; Strümpfer, Viviers & Gouws, 1998), competence and life satisfaction (Kalimo & Vuori, 1990) general well-being (Feldt, 1997), and an active coping with stressors (Redelinghuys & Rothmann, 2005). The development of the individual through the focus on capacities for self-monitoring and self-optimization can provide feedback to indicate sense of coherence resources
(focusing on personal strengths, resources, values, skills to experience and calling to one’s profession) and areas of need and methods of change.

It is important to recognize that individual health, organizational health and well-being are strongly interrelated. This can be done by prioritizing and recognizing the salutogenic process (6Cs), promoting discussion around working conditions (as in seen in the JD-R/WorkSoc) and working to strengthen an individual’s SOC and health. Two processes that aim to strengthen SOC address the perceptual and behavioural mechanisms (Amirkhan & Greaves, 2003; Kähönen et al., 2012). The first process is that of empowerment and helping an individual focus on identifying appropriate GRRs that could be used to combat or avoid stressors and become more adaptive to their environment. The second process is encouraging reflection on identifying the resources (GRRs) to deal with specific stressors in the situation at hand and their challenges. These activities help shift an individual’s perception and understanding of their world and how they are to deal with it. In order for this process to be successful in shifting an individual’s perspective and the growth of their personal resources as supported in Figure 4, there is a requirement that “health professionals engage in a different health promotion approach that is not focused on changing beliefs, knowledge or intentions, but rather focus on empowering people to mobilize and reflect on the resources they already have available.” (Super et al., 2015, p. 874).
Mayer and Krause (2011) focus on the application of the salutogenesis model in proactive actions, where the health of members is seen as a company asset and consider health promotion as part of the business strategy. These concepts are transcultural, cover a diverse variety of organizations and work settings, and are adaptable to different fields, such as reaching outside of the work place into medical interventions. They use leaders as change agents to help the idea of individual development in a proactive manner, rather an intervention approach in a reactive manner, and can also be done in a collective participatory manner to create a sense of meaning and empowerment.

Meaningful work is the key to longevity in jobs where people work as caregivers. These jobs are often explained as a sense of calling which creates job engagement and can be paradoxical and cause stress; the value of the work and the working conditions may be contrary to each other. Jenny et al. (2017) comes back to useful practices which follow the self-tuning model of self-care (Vinje & Mittelmark, 2006) of introspection, sensibility, and reflection as active coping strategies that help regain job engagement when it falters. Leaders, in supporting
their members, can be a unifying force in this introspective and empowering personal shift in defining a healthy organization and creating a connected community of resiliency and compassion.

The importance of connection through relationships and creation of compassionate communities

We are not meant to be alone, but nonetheless many people feel isolation and suffer from loneliness. Some suffering is caused by “a sense of incompleteness, loss, dissatisfaction or confusion that comes through our histories and with our daily interactions, connections or disconnections with others.” (Martusewicz, 2001, p.33) The world around us has the attitude of swallowing or ignoring the suffering. By forgetting the human needs for happiness such as suggested in Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (1943) or Brokenleg’s Circle of Courage (2003), we suffer and feel disconnect with the people with whom we work and on whom we rely. Wheatley (2005) writes about our uncertain times which are filled with isolation and silence. She theorizes the reason for the silence is due to the fact that we don’t know how to talk to each other anymore, we’re overwhelmed by the amount of suffering in the world, people feel more powerless, we’re afraid of what we might lose if we speak out, and we’ve convinced ourselves that what is happening elsewhere does not affect us. Compassion, if allowed by letting go of the mind and feeling with the heart, can create connection, develop resiliency and empower individuals to be healthy.

Importance of connection and sense of belonging

Despite the lack of research on developing connections between staff members, Martusewicz (2014) reminds teachers that it is not only our responsibility as educators to
recognize this isolation within ourselves, but also to educate others to make that connection within themselves and with others with compassion. We are called upon to have active engagement with these responsibilities. She warns that this means that some despair will be caused, therefore the formation of strong communities is essential, and we must develop our personal resources. Why should the creation of a sense of belonging be investigated in the development of individuals and their need for community? A sense of belonging is key to combatting isolation, creating resilience and empowering community members.

One definition of the concept of sense of belonging (Hagerty, Williams, Coyne & Early, 1996; Walker & Avant, 1988) is “the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system of environment.” (Lampinen, Konu, Kettunen & Suutala, 2018, p. 469). Belonging’s defining attributes are seen as the persons’ experiences of being valued, needed or important with respect to other people, groups or environments, and the persons’ experience of fitting in or being congruent with other people, groups or environments through shared or complementary characteristics (Hagerty et al., 1996).

Lampinen et al. (2018) focuses on factors that foster sense of belonging. This is done by making clear connections to open interactions, effective and encouraging communication, common values, a shared vision of work and its objectives, and a supportive leadership structure. They also looked at the factors which prevented a sense of belonging. These included negative work atmosphere, lack of common time, structural solutions in the organization, problems that occur at the organizational level, and problems related to leadership and management.

In the study done by Grant (2007) outlines opportunities for impact on others and contact with beneficiaries and how they trigger perceived social impact (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2014;
Castanheira, 2016). Castanheira (2016) believes the degree to which employees believe their actions have a positive social impact on others affect their social worth due the perception that their actions are valued by others. Social impact and social worth can also intercorrelate to explain workers’ engagement and performance at work. (Shaufeli & Bakker, 2014).

Opportunities for “doing good” are seen as having a positive effect on beneficiaries’ lives. As seen in the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), when someone gives evidence of “goodwill” toward the other party, this creates a sense of obligation to reciprocate the good deed. The exchange with the customer helps the worker cognitively understand and make sense of events and experiences. Commitment to the customer within the service industry (sense of concern and dedication to the people impacted by one’s work) is also involved with work engagement. Due to the interpersonal and reciprocal relationship that is formed a perceived higher social worth results in a higher affective commitment to the work (Schoenrade, Batson, Brandt & Loud, 1986) and creates a sense of identity and belonging.

Sense of belonging can be viewed through many different perspectives. McMillan and Chavis (1986) defined a sense of community as “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together.” (cited in Lampinen et al., 2018, p. 469). This model of sense of community consists of the four elements of influence, integration, fulfillment of needs and shared emotional connection, and membership (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Membership, which is a feeling of belonging to or being part of a group, has a particular focus of significance. Burroughs and Eby (1998) adds to McMillan and Chavis’ definition by focusing on the construction of psychological sense of community in the workplace. Sense of belonging addresses the trust and security component and the extent to which individuals in a
group know each other and are willing to help each other. How is this being seen in the
connections within educational organization?

Eldor and Shoshani (2016) acknowledge that most educational psychology has focused
on the effects of compassion on students and neglected to look at school employees, namely
teachers. It is noted that the workplace is a great opportunity for compassion. “Beyond being a
place for students, schools are the workplaces of teachers who are also recipients and expressers
of affection and emotions, not only in relation to their students but also with respect to one
another.” (Eldor & Shoshani, 2016, p. 126). Why is compassion needed to make connections
within a school community? It strengthens work bonds and enhances employee productivity
(Dutton, Frost, Worline, Lilis & Kanov, 2002). There are benefits: basic need for affiliation,
source of connectedness, sense of value, increased commitment and job satisfaction. In times of
stress, individuals can rely on resources, compassion adds to the resources. “Compassion should
act as an emotional coping mechanism, enlarging teachers’ resource pools in order to minimize
the negative impact of such stress on the relationship between compassion and teacher positive
affects (PA).” (Eldor & Shoshani, 2016, p. 128).

Eldor and Shoshani (2016) describe a model where compassion amongst and towards
teaching colleagues and school principals has significant influence on outcomes such as
emotional vigor, burnout, organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Compassion is based
on warmth, connection and affection, and is motivated by the concern for others, routine and
ongoing diverse acts of kindness (small, daily ones). It relies on interpersonal relationships and
its consideration in the workplace can be a proactive versus reactive social support.

Despite limitations of this study of focus on one kind of stressor (student misbehaviour)
over a relatively short period of time, conclusions of the study indicate that the workplace is just
an extension of the many social settings to which people belong. The study positively indicated that compassion towards teachers can deeply affect things like self-realization and engagement with their schools. It warns that without compassion and its capacity to enlarge teachers’ emotional and cognitive resources through sharing of experiences, there is a decrease in individual well-being, satisfaction with work, and ability to cope coupled with higher levels of anxiety. School principals need to take a more holistic view of teaching staff with feelings, needs and concerns especially when dealing with the development of emotional coping.

**Importance of compassion with emotional labour**

Emotional labour, like that done by teachers, is defined as “a form of workplace stressor, [that] occurs when employees try to regulate their feelings and expression to achieve organizational goals (Grandey, 2000, cited in Park, O’Rourke, & O’Brien, 2014, p. 385). Through the lens of the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Halbesleben, 2010; Hobfoll, 1998, 2001; Hoboll & Freedy, 1993; Mahoney, Buboltz, Buckner, & Doverspike, 2011; Philipp & Schüpbach, 2010), emotional labour is analyzed in rates of burn out of those who are deeply engaged in emotional labour and those who are superficially engaged.

Emotional labour is involved in the regulation of emotions with varying levels of expression, ranging from superficial to deeply authentic. “Naturally expressed emotions, according to COR, should reduce strain and some studies have found the expression of emotions negatively related to burnout and positively related to job satisfaction.” (Park, O’Rourke & O’Brien, 2014, p. 387). These authors identify the lack of links between organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and emotional labor. OCB is the actions of employees which are not typically task-related but contribute to the overall health of the organization (Organ, 1997). Seen
through the lens of the individual this lack of connection is due to the interpersonal nature of emotional labor and burnout due to interpersonal exchange. The study conducted by Park, O’Rourke, and O’Brien (2014) predicts that those employees who engage in superficial engagement with others will exhaust their interpersonal resources and therefore engage in less OCB-I (organizational citizenship behavior – individual) – they “do not have the interpersonal resources to help other school employees when this involves beyond their job requirements.” (p. 389).

The link to SOC and the abundance of resources, such as interpersonal skills, can be seen to prevent strain from developing (De Cuyper, Schreurs, Vander Elst, Baillien, & De Witte, 2014; Harris, Lambert, & Harris, 2013; Lawrence, Halbesleben, & Paustian-Underdahl, 2013; Park, O’Rourke, and O’Brien, 2014). Interpersonal skills are the ability to affect other people in different situational settings with flexibility (Ferris, Treadway, Perrewé, Brouer, Douglas, & Lux, 2007). These skills enable greater control over the work environment by having the ability to adjust behaviour to multiple situations. It is a resource of problem-solving and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and can be developed within an organization by both staff and administrators. Employees receive training in the use of interpersonal influence – to conserve resources and give coping strategies against stressful experiences from emotional labor. Deeper connection can be encouraged by school leaders through providing teachers and staff with educational seminars and workshops around these strategies. Does the stage in which the educator is make a difference in connection and engagement with their staff?

**Stages of career and level of engagement**

Kirkpatrick and Johnson (2014) investigated teachers who self-describe their beginning careers as enthusiastic but taking a lot of energy and effort to survive the day to day. Second-
stage teachers have had little research done on them. This group of teachers, as they move onto the ‘second-stage’ of their careers now have more free time to re-direct their energies which used to be spent on lesson planning and professional needs to spending their time on things outside of school, such as family, or pursuing professional development. Others continue within their classroom and deepening their craft. Those who continued to be highly engaged in their work but are not recognized or appreciated by administrators or peers, were likely to have loss of motivation and were vulnerable to attrition. The authors recognize that there has been a lot of research around engagement for students, but less with teachers’ work engagement. Despite the slight variations of definitions, the authors indicate that “all of them share the idea that work engagement is both a psychological and a behavioral concept, and when work engagement among employees is high, both employer and employees stand to benefit. Higher employee engagement in various fields has been found to predict greater motivation (Lazarus, 1991), increased productivity (Halbesleben, 2010; Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002; May, Gilson & Harter, 2004; Salanova, Agut & Peiro, 2005), and higher rates of employee retention (Brown, 1996; Halbesleben, 2010; Hakanen, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2006; Huselid & Day, 1991).” (cited from Kirkpatrick and Johnson, 2014, p. 233).

Hargreaves (2005) addressed how the different “seasons” of a teacher’s career influences their orientation within their career (Sikes, Measor, & Woods, 1985; Huberman, 1993). How do the different seasons connect with each other? Hargreaves incites Norman Denzin’s (1984) concept of emotional understanding. “Shared and sharable emotionality lie at the core of what it means to understand and meaningfully enter into the emotional experiences of another.” (Hargreaves, 2005, p. 368). This sharing can work towards better understanding someone and build connections. In the reverse, when feelings are misunderstood, it creates what he calls
“emotional geographies”. (Hargreaves, 2005, p. 968). A need for empathy is called upon to create bridges. Does this change with age? Young teachers are seen as more open and flexible to change and more individualistic. When compared with their younger counterparts, teachers later in their careers who have had many years to experience a wide variety of emotions, seem to thrive on the many changes within their career and are energized by them. Those who have developed a more negative view have focused on restrictions and unappreciated efforts or too much unsupported change in the past. To avoid development of this negative view administrators and educational leaders need to inquire into psychological and developmental stage models surrounding supporting change in educational policies and the mixture of generations of teachers on a staff.

According to Kirkpatrick and Johnson (2014), teachers had increased confidence (increasing sense of efficacy and being able to decide how to spend time and energy) and enjoyed the freedom to engage in their work in whatever way they chose (an increased level of autonomy). Some teachers were frustrated by lack of support or recognition for efforts or accomplishments. Frustration, according to the research, was created when administrators and colleagues ignored, downplayed or even criticized extra efforts. Some leave, others (due to the obvious benefits of being a teacher: summers off, predictable paycheck, job protection that comes with tenure) diminished their engagement (acknowledging that this would likely have negative consequences on the students).

The message is clear, more regular feedback regarding teaching practices (administration noticing and acknowledging what the teacher is doing) can lead to push an expectation to improve and a desire to please. There are a direct and indirect benefits of engagement for all members and there are ripple effects that can be felt throughout the organization. Schools that
organize and promote teachers’ improvement around increasing personal competence can provide opportunity and resources for growth and help create a singular identity of belonging and a united community of practice.

**Development of community and central identity**

Goodnough (2009) focuses on answering two important questions: firstly, how are modes of belonging enacted in a community of practice and secondly, how are teacher identities formed and reformed? Much research has been focused on how the development of self-understanding is critical in how a teacher learns how to teach and how this understanding can be shaped in multiple ways (Acker. 1999; Alsup, 2005; Davis, Sumara & Kapler-Luce, 2000; Goodson & Hargreaves, 1996; Knowles, 1992; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991; Vinz, 1996). “Teacher identity involves teacher, beliefs, values, and emotions about many facets of teaching and being and becoming teachers. It is continually informed, formed and reformed over time and with experience.” (Goodnough, p. 168). Goodnough links teacher identity to a complex play of communal elements.

Wenger’s (1998) work on ‘community of practice’ is an important component to describe the social participation of teachers in the formation of identity (cited from Clarke, 2008). The community has four components. The first component, meaning, involves learning as experience or the ability to both individually and collectively experience the world and life in a meaningful manner. The second component is practice or learning as doing. The third component is a mutually negotiated community. The fourth and most important component in a community of practice is identity, meaning who we are and who we become in the context of the communities to which we belong.
Development of an identity happens within a community, engagement is developed through the process of systematic planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Teachers work together to negotiate meaning. Time is needed for this process and development of a rapport to be established. Teachers need imagination which involves risk-taking, engagement in critical self-reflection, following new learning pathways, and the construction of new artefacts. This can happen if there is engagement within the group. They become researchers themselves and knowledge creators. Through the process, teachers develop an alignment which allows for individuals to “connect their practice to broader initiatives and use their energy to coordinate efforts and work towards common goals.” (Goodnough, 2009, p. 177). The benefits of using teacher-directed, collaborative action research are clear, yet there are restrictions for some due to outside pressures on time. Goodnough (2009) comes back to self-knowledge creation which reveals the possible selves that teachers wish to be or avoid. The crafting of opportunities of new teacher-centred and teacher-driven experiences can be the context for this to happen. She makes recommendation that schools and school districts support this process to create new knowledge, develop teacher identity and a sense of belonging within their community.

Leadership is pointed out as a key and uniting element by Phillips, Bird, Carlton and Rose (2016). An analogy of a music school can be used to describe the networking role that shifted a collection of individual players to “a symphony whose conductor more deliberately orchestrates collective action of its members.” (p. 70). Another role of leadership is being in touch with the members of the community collecting data as well. Looking at the data collected, the focus can be brought to areas which need attention. In this light it is a conversation starter to share different perspectives and interests yet keep a collective sense of “we”. Another use of the knowledge is to identify how communities feel about themselves. It allows individuals to get
involved at the local level to participate with others with a degree of reciprocity. At the leadership level, the larger and smaller/newer organizations must be coordinated, and participation is the key. For larger organizations, participation “is a means to building community from the inside out, of reinforcing residents’ connections to community that can serve as building blocks of individual leadership and collective action over the long term.” (Phillips, Bird, Carlton, & Rose, 2016, p. 77). Community means participation and reciprocity; community resiliency is the tie between giving and volunteering and community provides the ability to orchestrate various organizations together. It is the leader who can make all the difference.

**Leadership: a means to promote relationship and create communities of connection**

In her writing, Wheatley (2005) points out that leadership needs the recognition of systems of relationships.

Everywhere life displays itself as complex, tangled, messy webs of relationships. From these relationships, life creates systems that offer greater stability and support than life lived alone. Organisms shape themselves in response to their environments. All respond to one another, coevolving and co-creating the complex systems of organization that we see in nature. Life is systems seeking. It seeks organization. (p. 25).

**Recognition of duality of overlapping isolationism and conformity**

According to Wheatley (2005) there are two paradoxical forces at work: the need to be free to create one’s self through self-determination and the need to reach out for relationships with others in community. We are all on a continuum between isolationism and conformity. In
between is a sort of community where individuals must acknowledge their neighbours and make choices based on the desire to be in relationship with them to their own health and resiliency. The bumping and overlapping of our own interpersonal boundaries can develop new relationships and be a place to exchange and grow. The question is ‘what calls us together’? A clarity of purpose attracts people together, but does not require them to shed their uniqueness, and gives an opportunity to have a shared sense of significance. It is usually the leader who helps this unity.

In traditional top/down organizations, leaders tend to go outside the organization to find the answers to problems and they bring back the solutions to impose on their members, who are denied the opportunity to be creative, self-organize and find solutions from within. Problems are seen as a problematic intrusion rather change that can be an organizing force. The opportunity is missed as a way to disrupt a system and change it. (Maturana & Varella, 1992).

**Leader is the change agent**

Leaders have a key role in enabling a shift towards change. “Employees earn trust, but leaders create the circumstances in which such trust can be earned.” (Wheatley, 2005, p.44). In effective organizations leaders honour and trust the people who work with them within a system of loyalty and commitment. Effective change happens when people see what needs to happen (this has meaning to them), they apply their experiences and perceptions to the issue (this creates diversity), they find others who can help them (this creates unity) and then use their own creativity to invent the solution (this contribution creates transformation). This innovation can serve as an inspiration to others within the organization. If the organization has a clear purpose and real values, it will have system wide coherence. Leaders need to invite everyone who is going to be affected by change. Those who are not invited to the creative process can show up as
resisters or saboteurs. The human spirit causes innovation or rebellion. The change will not be neat or quick. Creativity and diversity do not look the same for all people (Wheatley, 2005).

Leaders help connection forming among diverse people by nourishing a clear organizational identity, bringing together people to learn about one another’s perspectives to focus on a bigger picture, communicating honestly and quickly to deal with uncertainty, preparing for the unknown by exploring possibilities and by the development of trust. Wheatley (2005) emphasizes that mutual relationship development is the key.

**Servant leader and caring relationships**

Servant leadership is defined by Greenleaf (1970) as “leadership behavior motivated by the intention to serve so that the followers become empowered, responsible, healthier, wiser, and autonomous.” (Rai & Prakash, 2012, p. 64). It is the promotion of shared understanding and vision. The leader’s importance lies in encouraging the collective enactment of a common goal and combined efforts to its attainment. “A shared purpose is an important factor resulting in shared leadership among members and in a process of reciprocal interaction and influence, shared purpose enhances intention, commitment, and motivation of members to undertake joint responsibility (Carson, Tesluk & Marrone, 2007).” (cited in Rai & Prakash, 2012, p. 67)

Rai & Prakash (2012) look at the servant leadership and caring relationships with the encouragement of building organization based on people’s strengths and capacities, and creating the culture of hope, care, compassion, resilience, forgiveness, and other positive attributes. (Cameron, 2003; Luthans, 2002; Searle and Barbuto, 2011; Spears, 2010; Eberner & O’Connell, 2010). Research by Sherif and Sherif (1969) support the idea that “caring relationships facilitate the expression of diverse ideas and leads to constructive reasoning and evaluation of ideas.” (cited in Rai & Prakash, 2012, p. 73). Without relationships/cooperation, there is no exchange of
knowledge and the environment becomes very individualistic (Brown, 1988; De Dreu, Nijstad, & van Knippenberg, 2008; Deutsch, 1949; Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, & Lynch, 1997). There is reduced involvement, reduced sense of belonging, rejection which leads to alienation, withdrawal and the creation of strong criticism and ridicule (De Dreu, 2007; De Dreu et al., 2008). Thus, when trust, support, and liking are high, members would be more willing to disclose information and engage in effortful processing of information (Ehrhart, 2004; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2008; Von Krogh, Ichijo & Nonaka, 2000; Wang & Noe, 2010; Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard, & Werner, 1998).” (Rai & Prakash, 2012, p. 73). How does a leader encourage this growth and connection?

Spears (1998) gives 10 characteristics of a servant-leader (cited in Greenleaf, 2002, 2003): Listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people and building community. Spears (2004) and Autry (2004) add the need for leaders to exhibit, and if needed develop, empathy. It will help recognize people’s unique and valuable spirits, as well as start to close the gap between the ‘them’ and ‘others’ mentality. This empathy needs to display a sense of vulnerability and willingness to consider another person’s perspective, which will lead towards moral leadership. Davenport (2015) believes the next steps after empathy are where there has been a gap and believes compassion will address the shortcomings.

The leader taking this point of view of compassion towards suffering will view followers in a different light. There will be a more personal and significant responsibility to help the follower grow and develop. “As Nouwen, McNeill, & Morrison (1983) explained the compassionate life is a life together. Compassion is not an individual character trait, a personal attitude, or a special talent, but a way of living together.” (cited in Davenport, 2015, p. 307). It
means that a servant-leader must be willing to be emotionally invested in another. It is the servant-leader who can help bring someone from a place of suffering to a place of healing. It pushes the leader to have different action.

**Leader-membership exchange and broadening and building personal resources**

Change-orientated behaviors (LMX – leader-member exchange) are proactive employee behaviors seen in organizational adaptability and growth. LMX is where the leader assists an employee to take charge of situations by bringing about creative future change and improvement in themselves or their organization (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). This exchange happens when the leader fosters and maintains unique relationships based on trust, respect and obligations (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) with members within their organization by differentiating their leadership styles and building up reciprocal connections within it (Liao, Liu, & Loi, 2010). The Broaden-and-Build Theory or BBT (Lin, Kao, Chen, & Lu, 2016) can be used to expand the positive effect of the leader-member exchange to increase capacity in members. “Positive affect encourages individuals to *broaden* the scopes of action, attention, cognition, and mindfulness as well as to focus on new life possibilities and opportunities, and thus positive effect widens individuals’ “momentary thought-action repertoires.” (Lin et al., 2016, p. 402). This broadening helps individuals *build* resources that help them in challenging situations.

Over time, not only does the member broaden their mindset, but also starts to build a resource base that will help build resilience within the individual (Fredickson 2013, Vacharkulksemsuk & Fredrickson, 2012). This capacity has a positive effect on others within the organization (Fredrickson and Losada, 2005). Leaders are called upon to provide social supports to increase employees’ perception of authentic and ethical social exchanges and help broaden the personal resources and self-concept (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman & Combs, 2006) of
members through training (Shin, Taylor & Seo, 2012) and monitoring members’ progress. The members are empowered and real sustainable change towards a caring community of connection is possible.

**Enduring and Substantial Change**

Fullan (2006) points out that some current action theories on change which are popular within school districts do not look at the questions of Under what conditions will continuous improvement happen? and How do we change cultures? These theories don’t consider the time needed to avoid being superficial. For there to be sustained change there needs to be lateral capacity building from school to school and district and district (Fullan, Hill & Crevola, 2006; Fullan, 2006). The development and retention of quality leaders is needed. Job-embedded leadership development is needed where school leaders focus on instruction, coach others and generally lead the transformation of the school. Change theories that do not answer the initial questions about surrounding conditions and cultural change, are ineffective.

Fullan’s core concepts for change revolves around seven key premises surrounding action (cited from Elmore, 2004). These premises can be broken down, but all need time to develop. Uniting factors such as why there needs to be change create motivation and engagement (this is not quickly achieved yet must be evaluated), shared vision and ownership (people learn best through reflective action). The focus on fostering ‘permeable connectivity’ promotes *mutual* interaction and influence across three levels (school and community, district and state). Individually, people learn best through new capacity building with a focus on results “any strategy that increases the collective effectiveness of a group” (Fullan, 2006, p. 9), learning in context where the process of cultural change is based on the modeling of new values and behaviors which displace the existing ones, and through changing context and persistence and
flexibility (resilience through reflection, self-correction and refinement built-in). These concepts will create substantial and sustainable change.

The main measure of success of an overall strategy for substantial change is whether it is motivational. Motivational referring to the energy and what is required to reap and sustain major improvements. Although there is movement in the right direction in our district, there are limits within our systems. Deep cultural change is not a quick process and may be resisted. The relevant knowledge necessary for effective change can be hard to grasp and must also be possessed by the leaders simultaneously for its spread in a consistent manner. Despite these challenges, why is now a good time to apply Fullan’s ideas? Many things have already been tried; therefore, people are more receptive to try alternative strategies (if they are clear and promising), more is known about change knowledge – the strategies are clearer, and more leaders are ‘system thinkers in action’ and using the knowledge.

In the following I use my phenomenological observations of changes in action occurring within my school and district. This will be the point of view of someone transitioning from the world as a classroom teacher to one as an administrator. In the coming chapter I will use the parallels between SOC and the development of core competencies in the new BC Curriculum, and the importance of leadership and community development to create a professional development presentation for other change leaders within my school district and beyond to address how to help foster a healthy and caring community of connection for my staff in times of change.
Chapter 3

Project development

I struggled in the process of developing a master’s project that could relay everything surrounding all the complex systems involved in connecting school staff to each other to foster a healthy and caring community. I ultimately desired to create something I felt was a significant and tangible product where I could feel the satisfaction of seeing the results. I realize that this is not possible. Change takes time and it is not up to me as to where and how to implement a system change within my staff. The kind of change I envision cannot be imposed, but it will be uniquely developed depending on the individuals of the group who decide to get involved in investigating my question of how to foster connection and it depends on the community that forms it.

I have had the privilege to become an administrator to many people with whom I have taught for many years. There are many authentic relationships that had already formed with colleagues before I stepped forward into an official leadership position. In developing those relationships with peers, we developed a mutual trust and had common experiences as teachers and members of the same community. We worked through the development of a common purpose of understanding the new BC curriculum. We helped each other and by doing so had a common goal. As education professionals we worked through change together. Now as an administrator, though still teaching a small number of courses, I sit separated from my peers in a different role. We have a small group of teachers who act as spokespeople for staff. We follow the LMX (leader-member exchange) model of leadership. These are teachers who have voluntarily stepped forward into the role of staff representatives as leaders. This small group discusses significant decisions surrounding the systems within our school. The decisions are then
reported out by the group and the administrative team to the larger population. It was this group that I had in mind when I developed my professional development presentation found in Appendix A. My goal for the sharing of my findings was to establish my vision and desire to foster connection and a healthy and caring community that would help each other in withstanding and becoming stronger in the face of changing assessment reporting practices, changing curriculum and changing leadership. The goal of the presentation, based on my research of literature on health resources surrounding the need for compassion and connection, was to move from theory to practice addressing conflict, coherence and collaboration of our staff towards positive support and change. After my presentation, I would invite feedback and turn the discussion over to the group with the self-assessment tool using the core competencies found in Appendix B. The formation of sense of coherence that Antonovsky (1979) described in children is still developing in adults, with the workplace being the platform for its continued evolution. The self-assessment could be used as a personal feedback tool and a conversation starter. The profile “I can” statements are taken directly from the Core Competencies document. These are statements that are applicable to children and adults alike to identify specific stressors or challenges, empower by focusing on areas of strength (highlighting things that are already used to combat or avoid stressors, and encourage adaptation to the environment) and areas that still need developing. “The profiles emphasize the concept of growing and expanding. They are progressive and additive.” (Core Competencies, 2018, Province of British Columbia.).

**Conclusion**

Creative thinking is deeply collaborative. New thoughts and concepts are built on combinations of existing thoughts and concepts. The ideas available as raw material for creative thinking depend on previous experiences and learning, as
well as one’s cultural legacy. (Creative thinking Competency Profiles, 2018, Province of British Columbia.)

Change can be seen as a stressor or an opportunity for growth. We are surrounded each day in our professional and personal lives with decisions and outcomes. Life is not a static balance of life and work; it is a dynamic and ever-changing environment. Individual health and organizational health and wellbeing are strongly interrelated. When we feel isolated and disconnected change can cause negative health consequences. Within our staff we see evidence of those feelings of being overwhelmed with incidences of illness, burnout, cynicism and attrition. Within a healthy school, change is not seen as a health deteriorator. Conflict as Antonovsky (1979) saw it was inevitable. The greater number of individuals involved, the more complex the systems and tangled the web of individuals. The importance of relationships is recognized, and autonomous reflection and personal experience are valued and meaningful. A healthy community can resist the pressures of change and stress together. It is a support network.

To overcome obstacles, an authentic community needs time to connect and collaborate interpersonally within the organization. It needs to be able to have opportunity to identify how the members belong together through reflection, connection, compassion and engagement with each other. It needs to have time to be able to evaluate “how do we know if we are a community together?” especially with a diverse staff of members who are unique in age/career stage. Individual needs change with experience and life situation. Each individual will come with their own perception of value and significance. Together, individuals through spending time together will find and come to appreciate the sense of meaningfulness and self-identity of each member.

Traditional top/down methods of leadership can result in resistance and even sabotage by the members who do not feel valued or appreciated. Compliance cannot be confused with
engagement and be considered an indicator of success. Mutual collaboration, and time, with opportunities for introspection and reflection on the meaningfulness of work and core values will provide empowerment for a community to develop a mutually supportive system from within. True change is not a one-shot deal from one inspired person who wants to share an idea. It takes resources and commitment. It takes time and compassion. It takes relationships and personal connection.
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Figure 5 – Slide 1. Introduction of topic.

Figure 6 – Slide 2. Introduction to significance of topic.
Introduction of personal significance in topic of connection:
My interest in the topic of connection and belonging developed from my own unique experiences with what I have observed of the mental health of the various staffs that I have been part of, as well as my own experiences in school as a child and with my children. Disengagement and isolation destroy health.

Why I feel that the timing is right for implementing this shift:
Current changes and stressors of new curriculum, new leadership within our school, new assessment and reporting practices, student-led conferences for the first time. My shifting role from teacher to administrator, shifting view of resiliency in students and adults (staff and parents included). How can I help? I believe through servant-leadership, compassion, caring and the focus of energy on those leaders who also want to be change agents, we can help transformational change that promotes health rather than deteriorate it.

How I propose to help transformational change:
The development of a resilient healthy community where people feel cared for and about and are open to self-reflection to identify their strengths which will help the community and reveal areas in need of development. This reflective discussion tool will use the core competencies self-assessment to guide vision and self-development.

What I will cover in my presentation:
I want to share with you how we can move from theory to co-created action to address some gaps that I believe we can address to adapt and even thrive in times of change.
Figure 7 – Slide 3. The myth of search for a “work/life” balance.

**Discussion Question:**

*What does that look like for you? (group discussion to share some thoughts, experiences and ideas)*

Speaker’s notes.

- I have never felt it possible as a teacher, who constantly brings the mental and emotional labour of my students home with me, to leave my work/labour at school. I believe that I am not alone in this scenario.

- One point of view of life is that it is a balance. This means life in a **homeostatic** state and parts of our lives can be separated from one another. Another belief is that we live in a **heterostatic** state, where all aspects of our lives are intertwined and intertwined with others’.

- Life is complex. Individuals live in a heterostatic environment with their own compartments of living (work and personal aspects including physical, social, mental,
and spiritual health), but their lives are coordinating in an interdependent and multidimensional organization of intertwining several other individual systems simultaneously.

Figure 8 – Slide 4. Antonovsky’s 6Cs.

Speaker’s notes.

- Aaron Antonovsky’s theoretical framework, called Salutogenesis, can help us understand how a person interacts with the environment individually or in a collective manner when faced with any kind of challenge.

- Although Antonovsky’s background started with the contemplation of pathogenesis and a concentration on disease, his focus shifted to the study of the origins of health and assets for health, rather than the origins of disease and risk factors. His primary question of research was “What makes people healthy?” I will apply this pathway to try to look at how this concept applies to any complex system of people working together.
Slide 4 demonstrates how an organization such as our school staff can either grow healthier and more connected or deteriorate and disengaged. I will explain how this applies to our community:

1) **Complexity** refers to the level of organizational systems. It is multidimensional and dynamic. It can provide **opportunities** for change or lead to **conflict**.

2) **Conflict** is any circumstance that must be dealt with within the organization.

**Discussion Question:**

*Can you think of some changes/stressors/conflicts that we have seen at the school lately that really need addressing?*

Parts 1 and 2 are inevitable and outside of our control, but the following pathways could involve proactive choice. This is where I want to concentrate. It is how we handle the conflict and the factors that are involved in the paths that we choose. Our choices start with how we react to the conflict:

a) Avoid

b) Be defined as a non-stressor

c) Managed or overcome

d) Lead to tension - overcome and managed

e) Lead to tension - unsuccessful managed tension

Parts 3 and 4 looks at how we individually and collectively react to conflict
3) **Coherence** - sense of coherence (or SOC) is built of your personal coping resources or GRR (Generalized Resistance Resources). A strong sense of SOC will enable someone to better deal with stressors of everyday life and to use resources to also counter the stressors. A weak sense will result in poor coping strategies and, most likely, poor health.

**Reflection and discussion activity:**

*Brainstorm some personal coping resources that they feel would be needed in our line of emotional labour. If they are willing to share, which resources do they feel they confidently possess, are there any that they feel need some work?*

4. **Chaos** refers to a lack of the ability to convert environmental information about stressors and resources can result in cases of burnout, cynicism resulting in job dissatisfaction, apathy, unproductive behaviour), attrition, absenteeism, and growing cases of mental health obstacles such as depression and anxiety.

Parts 5 and 6 are dependent upon the leadership and group dynamics that are present

5. **Civility** is about how we **respect and care for** other people within our organization. It takes into account how we look at them as human beings with diverse strengths and abilities, or as people with shortcomings and flaws. This is where we develop connected and compassionate communities.

Discussion question:

*What are some instances where civility (the showing of respect and care) has been the case and the results they observed?*
6. **Coercion** is an individualistic response to stressors resulting in oppression, domination, and an unhealthy state of feeling overwhelmed, powerless and fearful. There is a lack of connection and members focus on restrictions and feeling unappreciated and undervalued. Members are discouraged and disengaged.

**Discussion Question:**

*What could be some examples that they have observed?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of tension-causing or opportunity for positive change?</th>
<th>Sense of coherence (SOC) describes the individual personal resources each person has to cope.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• PERSPECTIVE TAKING</td>
<td>• PERSPECTIVE TAKING</td>
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<td>• GROWTH MINDSET</td>
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<td>• RESOURCES FOR COPING</td>
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<td>• RESILIENCY</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• SENSE OF ATTITUDE</td>
<td>• SENSE OF ATTITUDE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9 – Slide 5. Individual perception of stressors/conflict already under consideration with school district’s shift of the development of personal coping resources for students.

Speaker’s notes.

- Antonovsky’s theoretical work pointed to these coping resources forming during childhood. We have definitely recognized the importance of our students in their formative years and have started to shift attitudes around overall healthy development and coping methods. This can be seen in our district surrounding resiliency, growth mindset and the restitution model.
Figure 10 – Slide 6. Individual perception of stressors frames healthy coping.

Speaker’s notes.

- Successful tension management happens with positive influences and the shift of perspective that stressors happen everyday, and they are perpetual and inevitable.

- Perception of “hassles” vs. unmanageable events vary from individual to individual. A given instance could be seen though the Salutogenic perspective vs the pathogenic (or disease causing). Perception depends on the coping resources which will determine the perception of a stressor on the continuum. The same stressor can affect individuals differently.
Figure 11 – Slide 7. Shift of BC curriculum to address a holistic and multidimensional student to create resiliency and healthy coping resources.

Speaker’s notes.

- Antonovsky believed that the development of personal coping resources is learned by early adulthood, but not any further. Other theorists believe that this was not accurate. From their perspective, the work environment is where the duality of work can be looked at as a possible health **promoter** or health **deteriorator** and coping resources could continue to grow.

- How can these capacities be built into our staff who are caregivers involved in heavy emotional labour in times of change and uncertainty?

- Thinking about SOC and the creation of resiliency. Core Competencies are shifting the focus of education from just curricular content to creating well rounded holistically educated youth. Could and should this be applied to adults as well. We are all lacking SOC. Their development could improve our health.
• Teachers, like all other human beings, are exposed to stressors in our intrapersonal and extrapersonal interactions. We have potential to be a resource to each other. Especially in a profession that is unique in its demands.

• Why couldn’t we use the same aspects of the core competencies to self-assess areas of weakness to help develop our coping resources as adults? We could also shape and shift perceptions around health and wellbeing and shift our perspective of stressors and different positive coping strategies.

**Reflection Activity:**

_Distribute handout - Self-assessment of core competencies. (Appendix B)_

_Instructions are to look through the document and explain the three columns. The first column is to consider challenges or stressors that have been experienced with that particular core competency. The second column is used to identify the current personal resources that are used confidently. The third column is to be used to reflect on personal resources that are not yet confidently used. If the group is comfortable to discuss, allow for discussion._
Figure 12 – Slide 8. A caring, compassionate and proactive environment enables staff to develop a sense of belonging and identity together.

Speaker’s notes.

- Possible gaps we need to address to develop a compassionate community of connection where we join the head and heart:
  - We need **time** together. Creation of meaning comes from spending time together. This is when people see what needs to happen.
  - We need to **develop trust**. We need to share and apply a diversity of ideas, perspectives and experiences. Through time and the development of trust, actions are valued by others and there is an increase in social value within the group.
  - We need to become **united** and find each other help to **develop loyalty and commitment**. Doing good causes others to do good. There are interpersonal and reciprocal relationships formed. We develop a sense of belonging.
  - We also need to use our **own creativity** with others. As a school community there is engagement, employee retention and work performance increases. We develop a unique identity together.
Step 1: Inclusive Engagement

1) Inclusive Engagement
2) Time
3) Imagination and risk taking
4) Construction of new ‘artefacts’

Figure 13 – Slide 9. The steps to the building of community together.

Speaker’s notes.

- I propose that the opportunity of starting effective change to respond stressors/conflict starts from inside an organization. It provides an opportunity to create trust and connection. This is done through:

  1) **Engagement** within the group requires an invite to all members to systematic planning through collaboration which consists of acting, observing and reflecting. This collaboration must be staff directed, not administrator driven. The process of relating to others produces learning, and the knowledge gained from practice expands one’s own integrated knowledge.

  2) **The need for time** can be a restriction, but is essential for the development of relationships, as well as planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Time given to this development must be a priority. This is time to discover other people’s strengths and capacities to foster a culture of hope, care and compassion, resilience and forgiveness.

  3) With the development of relationships, there is trust and compassion built. With trust,
there can be risk taking and authentic critical self-reflection. Risk taking is also involved in following new learning pathways. Compassion acts as an emotional coping mechanism, enlarging the teachers’ resource pools in order to minimize the negative impact of stress.

4) The idea of an ‘artefact’ can be a common goal which will align efforts and energy with a shared purpose, understanding, responsibility and vision.

Planning activity:

Group is asked to input what could be some examples of ‘artefacts’ that we could create together, after first identifying some needs.

Figure 14 – Slide 10. How can leadership help?

Discussion Question:

Please ask yourself and contemplate the following question: What are the characteristics of a leader who can unite a diverse group such as our staff? Discuss and share.
Speaker’s notes.

“Leadership behavior motivated by the intention to serve so that the followers become empowered, responsible, healthier, wiser and autonomous.” (Rai & Prakash, 2012, p. 64)

- It is the leader who can help move theory into practice, but leaders need to be a servant-leader, compassionate and caring. They often serve as a uniting force in the proactive creation of ‘we’. This leadership style supports the creation of a sense of united relevancy and empowerment and is meaningful.

- A leader is always connected by the vision of a community of resiliency with compassion, reducing the gap between “them” and “others”. This is done by the development of a sense of vulnerability, a willingness to consider another person’s perspective and compassion to others suffering.

- As a uniting force, leaders must thoughtfully make an open invitation to all members of the organization to contribute. If some are not invited in the initial parts of the formation of the community, they can sabotage or resist any change that is proposed. This can create a lack of a sense of belonging.

- With each individual the leader also needs to proactively foster and maintain a unique relationship. The leader will also differ their leadership depending on the needs and wants of the individual. Ultimately the leader is helping the member build their resources to help them in challenging situations. This is done through appreciative feedback which will lead to empowerment and the development of resiliency.

- With the leader’s help, individuals can shift their perspectives through:
  - **Empowerment**: - helping the individual to focus on identifying appropriate GRRs to use against or avoid stressors and become adapted to the environment.
Reflection - helping identify the resources (GRRs) to deal with specific stressors on own through self-assessment. GRR stands for Generalized Resistance Resources which are problem-focused, emotion-focused and meaning-focused coping strategies.

- A servant-leader’s job includes collecting and coordinating data to identify gaps and give feedback. They are to keep sight of the big picture from the sharing of diverse perspectives from a variety of organizations and how the community feels about itself.
- Conflict can be seen as an opportunity to be creative and self-organize and grow in coping resources and perspective taking.

Discussion question:

What are some obstacles or gaps that could be present for the leader?

![Real Enduring, Substantial and Effective Change](image)

Figure 15 – Slide 11. Key components for enduring, substantial and effective change.

Speaker’s notes.

- So, let’s discuss how we could address any of the following challenges with the application of a community model of problem solving:
  - When we look at the current situation with changes in our immediate staff:
• Changing reporting format and the resulting changes in assessment methods
• Change to new BC Curriculum and the Core Competencies and Content
• Change of administrative leaders in our school and in the district

These changes are an opportunity for positive transformational change.

Michael Fullan (2006) frames all enduring and substantial change with two questions: *Under what conditions will continuous improvement happen?* and *How do we change cultures?*

Leaders must study and recognize the systems that are at work and what will be involved in substantial, not superficial change. Displacement of old behaviours and systems take time to displace.

• For real and effective change our leadership team needs:

**Take opportunities for transformation:**

• What creates clear purpose, vision, significance to unite people together? The vision is co-created by the members of our community.

• Time is needed to collaborate and develop trusting and authentic relationships.

• Lateral capacity building has to happen within the school. There needs to be a broadening and building of members within the community. This leadership can then be shared outside of the school to ripple outward.

• There needs to be retention and job-embedded development of quality leaders within an organization. The development of personal coping resources will help foster health and resiliency.
A focus on action:

- Data, trends and themes need to be analyzed and used to identify organizational and member motivation and engagement to reveal a shared vision.
- The creation of ownership through reflective action with mutual interaction and influence at all levels of the school, community, district and province.
- The development of new capacity building, learning in context with flexibility and persistence. Self-assessment, reflection and empowerment are needed.
- Time is needed for all of this!

Figure 16 – Slide 12. If there is compassionate connection = healthy staff.
Speaker’s notes.

- Ultimately to have a healthy staff we need to connect to the input of staff, along with time and energy for feedback and empowerment.

I would like to conclude with some possible shifts in thinking about facing of change.

- In conclusion, I come back to the question of “What makes people healthy?”
  - Our perception of our world is intertwined with other people’s perceptions. These relationships are interdependent and multidimensional. We need to feel connected to each other.
  - Conflict/stressors are inevitable and outside of our control.
  - Individuals must continue to develop their coping resources. The development of a compassionate and caring community allows for a willingness to disclose information and engagement, resulting in personal growth and healthy connection to others.

Staff feedback:

Questions and discussion of next steps or alternatives.

References


Figure 17 – Slide 13. References.
References


Figure 18 – Slide 14. References continued.
Appendix B

Self-assessment of personal coping resources in line with the BC core competencies.

Figure 19 is familiar to all BC educators as it summarizes the core competencies in BC students’ holistic and multidimensional learning. These skills are also applicable to adults who continue to work and grow their personal coping resources.

Figure 19 - Core Competencies: Student Template. (2019). Retrieved from http://myriverside.sd43.bc.ca/studenttemplate/core-competencies/

Summary of the process/activity – each core competency area reflects personal coping resources – assess how you do on each of the points.

1. For each competency, please indicate **SPECIFIC STRESSORS/CHALLENGES** associated with this competency for you.

2. **EMPOWERMENT** – select the affirmative statements that apply/ to you (used to combat or avoid stressors, or help be adaptive to the environment).

3. In the space provided after each core competency, **REFLECT** on areas in which you need to focus to address the specific stressors/challenges you have indicated. What will your next steps be?
Core Competency: CREATIVE THINKING

Novelty and value; Generating ideas; Developing ideas

SPECIFIC STRESSORS/CHALLENGES:

EMPOWERMENT:

- I can get new ideas or build on other people’s ideas, to create new things within the constraints of a form, a problem, or materials.
- I build on others’ ideas and add new ideas of my own or combine other people’s ideas in new ways to create new things or solve straightforward problems.
- I deliberately learn a lot about something (e.g., by doing research, talking to others or practising) so that I am able to generate new ideas or ideas just pop into my head.
- I have deliberate strategies for quieting my conscious mind (e.g., walking away for a while, doing something relaxing, being deliberately playful) so that I can be more creative.
- I have interest and passions that I pursue over time.
- I make my ideas work or I change what I am doing.
- I can usually make my ideas work within the constraints of a given form, problem, and materials if I keep playing with them.
- I build the skills I need to make my ideas work, and usually succeed, even if it takes a few tries.
- I use my experiences with various steps and attempts to direct my future work.
- I can persevere over years if necessary, to develop my ideas. I expect ambiguity, failure, and setbacks, and use them to advance my thinking.

REFLECTION:
Core Competency: CRITICAL THINKING
Develop and design; Analyze and critique; Question and investigate

SPECIFIC STRESSORS/CHALLENGES:

EMPOWERMENT:

- I can identify criteria that I can use to analyze evidence.
- I can analyze evidence from different perspectives.
- I can reflect on and evaluate my thinking, products, and actions.
- I can analyze my own assumptions and beliefs and consider views that do not fit with them.
- I can ask open-ended questions and gather information.
- I can consider more than one way to proceed in an investigation.
- I can evaluate the credibility of sources of information.
- I can tell the difference between facts and interpretations, opinions, or judgments.
- I can experiment with different ways of doing things.
- I can develop criteria for evaluating design options.
- I can monitor my progress and adjust my actions to make sure I achieve what I want.
- I can make choices that will help me create my intended impact on an audience or situation.
- I can experiment with different ways of doing things.
- I can develop criteria for evaluating design options.
- I can monitor my progress and adjust my actions to make sure I achieve what I want.
- I can make choices that will help me create my intended impact on an audience or situation.

REFLECTION:
Core Competency: COMMUNICATION

Explain/recount and reflect; Connect and engage with others; Collaborate to plan, carry out, and review; Acquire, interpret, and present information

SPECIFIC STRESSORS/CHALLENGES:

EMPOWERMENT:

- I am an active listener; I support and encourage the person speaking.
- I recognize that there are different points-of-view and I can disagree respectfully.
- I can understand and share information about a topic that is important to me.
- I present information clearly and in an organized way.
- I can present information and ideas to an audience I may not know.
- I can work with others to achieve a common goal; I do my share.
- I can take on roles and responsibilities in a group.
- I can summarize key ideas and identify the ways we agree (commonalities).
- I give, receive, and act on feedback.
- I can recount simple experiences and activities and tell something I learned.
- I can represent my learning and tell how it connects to my experiences and efforts.

REFLECTION:
Core Competency: **PERSONAL AWARENESS AND RESPONSIBILITY**

Well being; Self-determination; Self regulation.

**SPECIFIC STRESSORS/CHALLENGES:**

**EMPOWERMENT:**

- I can show a sense of accomplishment and joy.
- I can celebrate my efforts and accomplishments.
- I can advocate for myself and my ideas.
- I can imagine and work toward change in myself and the world.
- I take the initiative to inform myself about controversial issues.
- I can recognize emotions.
- I can use strategies that help me manage my feelings and emotions.
- I can persevere with challenging tasks.
- I can implement, monitor, and adjust a plan and assess the results.
- I can take ownership of my goals, learning, and behaviour.
- I can participate in activities that support my well-being and express how they help me.
- I can take some responsibility for my physical and emotional well-being.
- I can make choices that benefit my well-being and keep me safe in my community, including my online interactions.
- I can use strategies to find peace in stressful times.
- I can sustain a healthy and balanced lifestyle.

**REFLECTION:**
Core Competency: POSITIVE PERSONAL AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

Personal strengths and abilities; Relationships and cultural context; Personal value and choices.

SPECIFIC STRESSORS/CHALLENGES:

EMPOWERMENT:

- I can describe my family and community.
- I am able to identify the different groups that I belong to.
- I understand that my identity is made up of many interconnected aspects (such as life experiences, family history, heritage, peer groups).
- I understand that learning is continuous, and my concept of self and identity will continue to evolve.
- I can tell what is important to me.
- I can explain what my values are and how they affect choices I make.
- I can tell how some important aspects of my life have influenced my values.
- I understand how my values shape my choices.
- I can identify my individual characteristics.
- I can describe/express my attributes, characteristics, and skills.
- I can reflect on my strengths and identify my potential as a leader in my community.
- I understand I will continue to develop new abilities and strengths to help me meet new challenges.

REFLECTION:
Core Competency: SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Building relationships; Contributing to community and caring for the environment; Valuing diversity; Solving problems in peaceful ways.

SPECIFIC STRESSORS/CHALLENGES:

EMPOWERMENT:

- I can be part of a group.
- I can participate in classroom and group activities to improve the classroom, school, community, or natural world.
- I contribute to group activities that make my classroom, school, community, or natural world a better place.
- I can identify how my actions and the actions of others affect my community and the natural environment and can work to make positive change.
- I can analyze complex social or environmental issues from multiple perspectives. I can take thoughtful actions to influence positive, sustainable change.
- I can solve some problems myself and can identify when to ask for help.
- I can identify problems and compare potential problem-solving strategies.
- I can clarify problems, consider alternatives, and evaluate strategies.
- I can clarify problems or issues, generate multiple strategies, weigh consequences, compromise to meet the needs of others, and evaluate actions.
- I can demonstrate respectful and inclusive behaviour.
- I can explain when something is unfair.
- I can advocate for others.
- I take action to support diversity and defend human rights and can identify how diversity is beneficial for my community, including online.
- I am kind to others, can work co-operatively, and can build relationships with people of my choosing.
• I can identify when others need support and provide it.
• I am aware of how others may feel and take steps to help them feel included.
• I build and sustain positive relationships with diverse people, including people from different generations.

REFLECTION: