



Teacher Induction and Mentoring
FORUM

Summary of the Research Findings

Pan-Canadian Survey (N=1343)

Telephone Interviews (N=36)

prepared by:

Ian Matheson

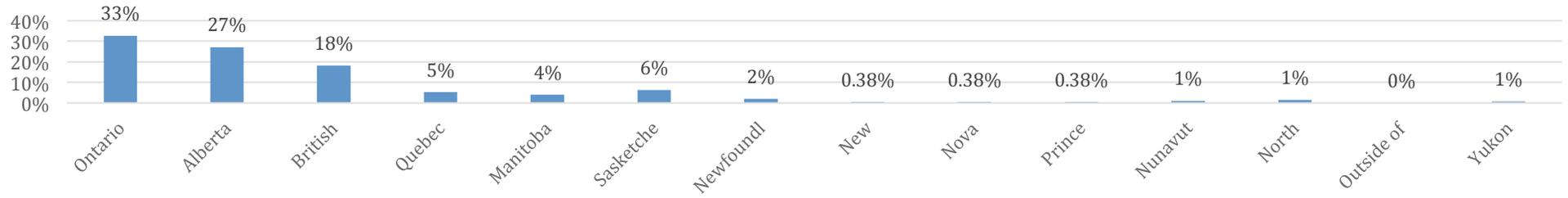
John Bosica

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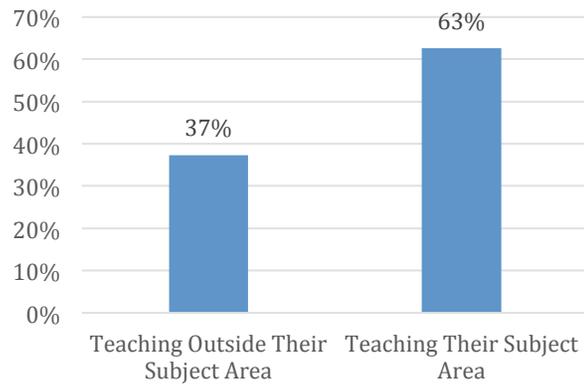
Rebecca Stroud Stasel

September, 2016

Province Respondents Are Currently Teaching In



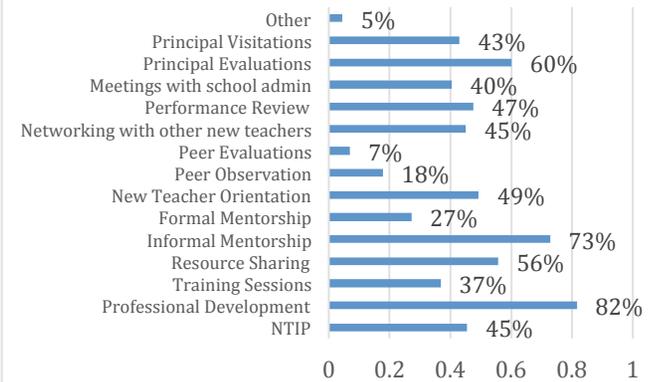
Teaching Outside of Subject Area



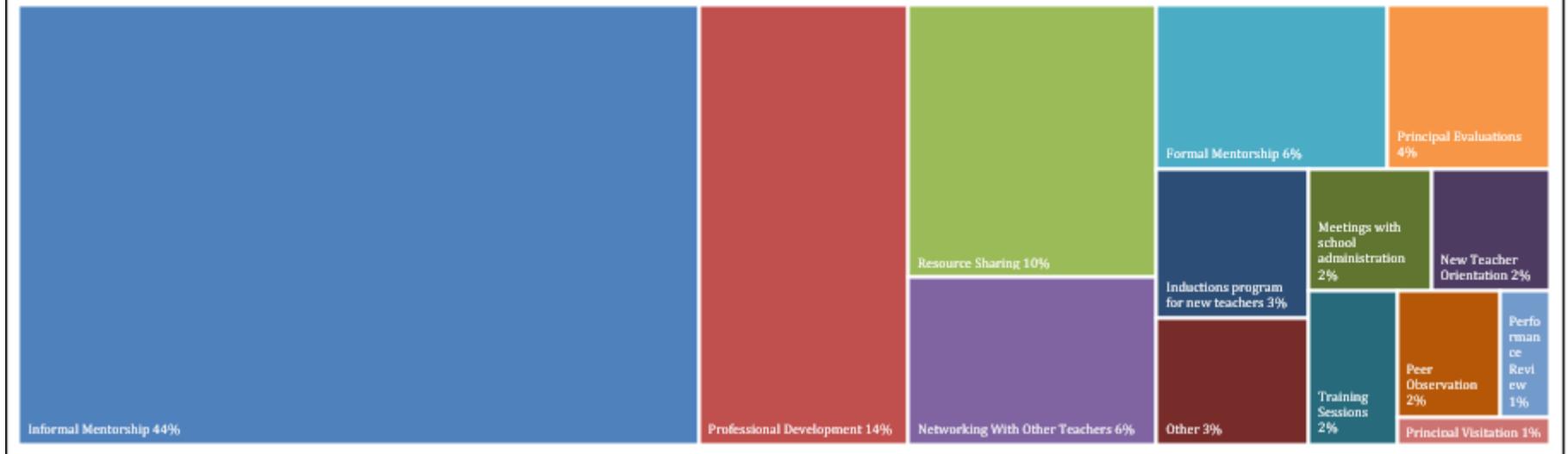
TEACHING OUTSIDE GRADE LEVEL



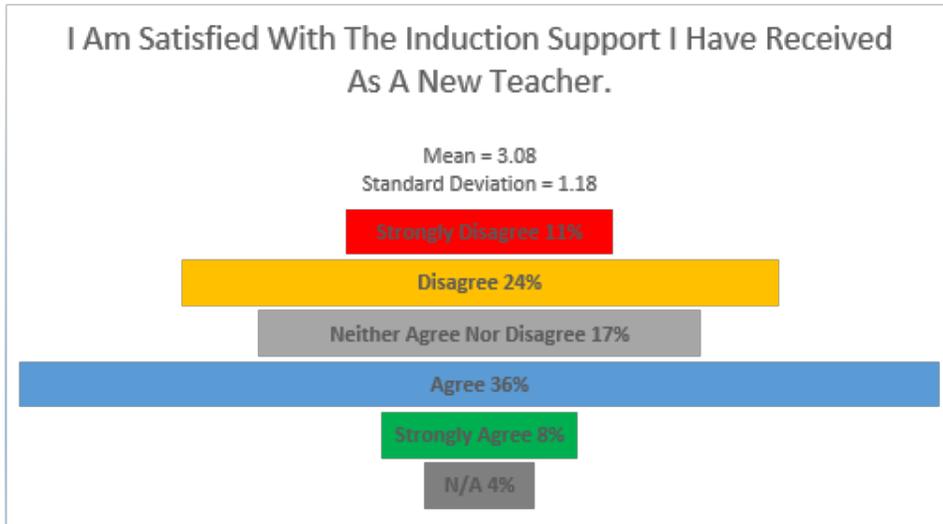
Types of Support



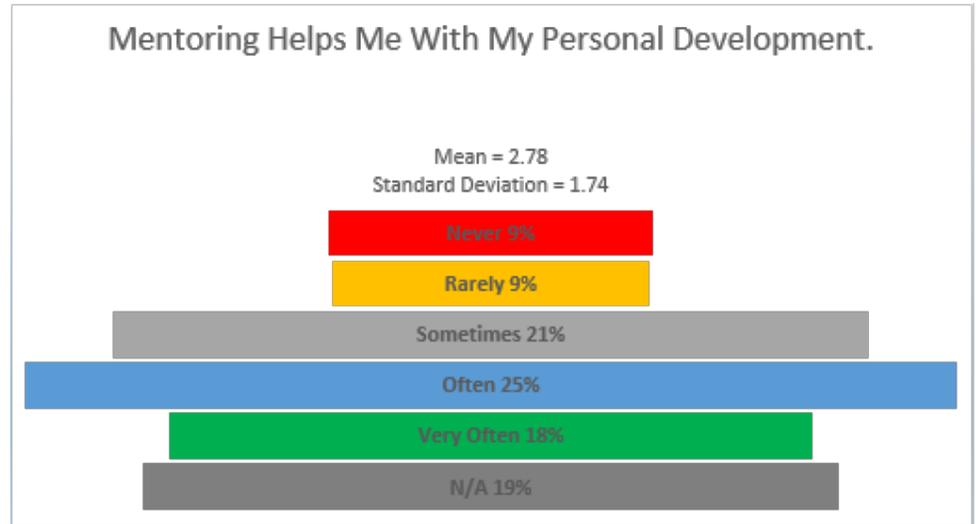
Source of the Most Beneficial Support



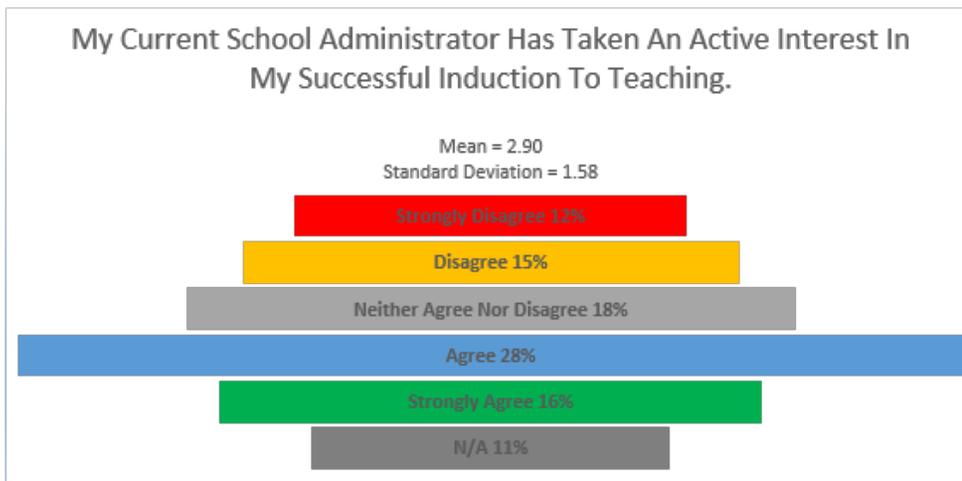
New Teacher Experience



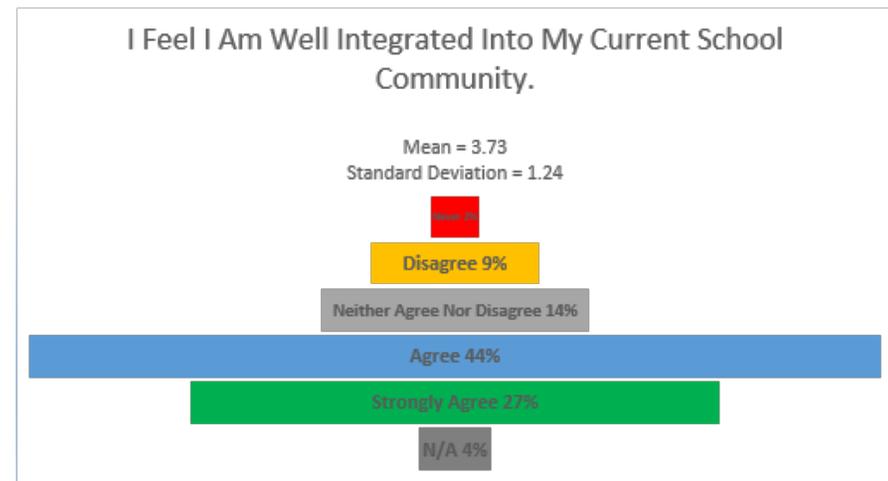
Mentoring



Administration



Career Development



Qualitative Data Analysis (Pan-Canadian Survey Respondents, N=1343)

Overall, has the support you have experienced met your needs as a beginning teacher?

"Yes. The principal has been great and helps with whatever we need. We are set up with a veteran teacher and given collaboration time with that teacher (a mentor). We have mentorship meetings with the VP each week to check on us and see what further supports we have."

"I feel that I have "survived" up until this point. While I have received a lot of support from my colleagues, I feel more needs to be done for new teachers. It is an extremely overwhelming role to be "thrown" into and more care needs to be taken with new teachers. I now understand why they say in university that there is a 50% burnout rate with new teachers- I fight everyday to not be one of them."

In what ways has your mentor been most valuable to you and your teaching?

"The most important aspect of having a mentor was someone to have frank conversations with about my practice, the school, and the division. Especially being new in communities, it's hard to break into social circles to try and find someone you can bounce ideas and issues off of. This is also very difficult working in rural communities where only 1-2 other teachers may work."

What challenges, if any, have you experienced with mentoring processes, structures, or relationships?

"My first Mentor and I had differing personalities. We clashed at times and it made it difficult to discuss challenges or issues I had as a first year teacher. I felt judged constantly and insecure that I was not adequate as a teacher or educator."

I know my current school administrator wants me to succeed because...

"She meets with me and checks in to make sure I know what needs to be done school wide. We have worked together on some behaviour issues and she let me know that her office door is always open for questions."

Where does the expectation for you to engage in professional learning and development come from?

"Myself, colleagues, administration and encouragement from district representatives."

In your first years teaching, what have you found to be the best and most effective source for your professional development?

"Talking to colleges about the craft, specifically those who teach the same subjects."

What factors have been instrumental in your continuing in the teaching profession?

"I enjoy my job and like what I do. I enjoy being with my students and seeing the growth in them over the course of year. I also find that my job is fun most days. My colleagues that I have created close relationships with are also instrumental. Without them the job would be lonely and difficult to navigate through at times since I am constantly learning new things. I have also enjoyed the constant learning that I have the opportunity to do. "

What helps you to sustain your own well-being and “flourish” or “thrive” as a beginning teacher?

“Balancing all of my roles (teacher, mom, wife) having a supportive admin and staff”

How do you feel the intensity and pace of the work of teaching has affected your induction and socialization?

“I have become fully involved with the school community, but socialization in my personal life has suffered.”

What advice would you give a teacher just starting his/her career?

“Find a good mentor. Develop a close relationship with your administration. Avoid the negative teachers in the staff room!”

If you were a mentor to a beginning teacher, what would you be sure to do?

“Observe them, and allow them to observe in return. Give constructive feedback. Allow for time to simply chat about lessons, as well as teaching in general. Encourage questions. Share materials if possible.”

Is there anything else you think is important for us to know?

“Teaching should follow the apprenticeship model. Less pay/responsibility initially”

Qualitative Data Analysis (Pan Canadian Telephone Interviews, N=36)

The purpose of conducting telephone interviews with teachers from different provinces and territories was to get their insights as early career teachers, which would advance our understanding of the role of teacher induction and mentoring programs for teacher attrition and retention across Canada. We contacted the teachers who mentioned on their surveys that they were interested in participating in these interviews.

We conducted our telephone interviews in the summer of 2016 with teachers from 9 provinces and 3 territories in Canada; 33 were in English, and 6 in French. The teachers signed the consent letters and returned them to us. Most of the interviews did not take longer than 15 minutes; some were a little shorter, and some were longer. We asked the interviewees five questions, but before that, we provided them with a brief introduction about the interviews. We told them that they could decline to answer any question or ask us for clarification at any point. We also took their permission to record and transcribe their interviews. We informed them that all proper names and identifiers will be changed to pseudonyms (e.g., schools, teachers, students) and that none of their personal information will be included in our records or writings.

In question one, we asked the interviewees to think back over their experiences of the first years of teaching and tell us what worked best for them regarding their development as teachers. Having a mentor, sometimes formally and sometimes informally, was mentioned the most amongst our interviewees. It was clear that most of them valued learning from others, as well as collaboration for their development as teachers. They also mentioned reflection, mindset and being good planners as self-learning approaches that have helped them. Relationships was a factor that was frequently highlighted, and some talked about healthy relationships with staff, colleagues and people at a school in general. The value of

establishing good relationships with students was mentioned in response to this question. Furthermore, the significance of good relationships with students appears in responses to other questions as well.

In question two, we asked the interviewees to share with us if there was a significant story or particular moments in their first years of teaching that played a part in convincing them to remain in the profession of teaching. Some teachers told us that the active roles of mentors and the support they got from others in their schools had encouraged them to stay. Some told us that it was their passion, or their positive mindset or the accumulation of nice moments that had convinced them that this is the profession they wanted to stay in. It was interesting to learn that for many teachers who had significant stories and shared them with us, their stories were related to students. For example, the bonds with students, the struggles students face and emerge through, the resilience of students, have given many teachers a sense of professional affirmation. Of note was the frequency with which a huge impact these teachers have left on at-risk students. There were some teachers who shared with us their struggles and their frustrations, and it was unfortunate to hear that some of them are considering leaving the profession or left already. These teachers were keen to have these interviews as a venue to send a clear message about their challenging experiences as teachers, and this reflects their desire to make a change in the teaching profession.

In question three, we asked the interviewees as they reflect on the roles of school leaders and administrators in their development as beginning teachers, to tell us about the behaviours, relationships or supports that were most beneficial for them. Having supportive administrators and supportive principals were the most frequent responses we got. Some interviewees told us about the little support they got, and in certain areas only, and its impact on them, and some told us about the difficulties of having no support from their leaders.

In question four, we asked the interviewees to think of those who are just entering the teaching profession, what advice from their own experience for developing resilience and well-being as beginning teachers they might offer these new teachers. Having a work-life balance was the most common piece of advice we got from the teachers. They also talked about finding a mentor, the value of collaboration, not to try to reinvent the wheel, and many other pieces of valuable advice that will benefit new teachers.

Finally, in question five, we asked the teachers if there were any other comments that they would like to share to highlight or characterise aspects of their early years of teaching experience. The teachers were enthusiastic when answering this question, and it was clear that they wanted to use this opportunity to share their passion, their happiness, as well as their struggles and frustration as teachers, and even the personal grief these have caused. We have organized the responses thematically, therefore the responses for question five are sometimes discussed in the first four questions, when appropriate, and mentioned separately, such as some of the findings highlighted in the next paragraph.

While conducting these interviews, we have noted imbedded throughout the questions, and especially in the fifth question, feedback from the interviewees, which we are calling advice from teachers to decision makers in the education system. Our interviewees talked about the benefits of having a formal mentorship program for new teachers; they wanted to have these programs, or at least some kind of orientation to help them. They also discussed LTO regulations and how they think they are hurting the teaching profession more than helping. The teachers talked about the challenges of supply teachers and new teacher induction programs. Communication between the university and the school boards was mentioned as disconnected and our participants shed light on this. The interviewees also talked about the preparation programs in their teaching colleges and provided some advice for the decision makers in these programs. Funding issues were mentioned among our interviewees, and they also highlighted some of their schools' challenges (i.e. teaching a lot of subjects in the same year, low literacy skills, poor attendance, workload, large class sizes, structure & discipline) that decision makers should pay attention to.

In the following section, we will provide some quotes from our interviewees for the four questions, both in English and French.

1. As you think back over your experiences of the first years of teaching, what worked best for you in terms of your development as a teacher?

In my first year of teaching, what I found worked best for my development was just having a mentor teacher there to ask questions pretty much whenever I needed to, and somebody with a lot of research that were willing to share those resources. Coming in and starting with nothing was very challenging, but, you know, thanks to a few of my mentor teachers in the school, I thought it was pretty easy to get back on my feet, and they were very, very supportive about me starting teaching.

2. Is there a significant story or particular moments in your first years of teaching that played a part in convincing you to remain in the teaching profession?

I think there was one time, yeah, I could think of for sure. I had a grade six-seven class, and I was working full time, actually, and there was a student there that was - it was difficult to keep him in class. So I got him at the end of the year, so only for April, May and June, but the teacher before me told me that this student, if he spent time all the time out of class, you know, that's - that would just be kind of normal. So, I tried to - I tried my best to have a relationship with him and to, you know, show him that I wanted him with me and with the other kids. And you know, it was actually - it was kind of surprising because he really - you know, and I was a new teacher to him really at the end of the class, at the end of the year, right? And he ended up staying, like, the majority of the time in the class. He rarely asked to go see the counselor, the childcare worker

3. As you reflect on the roles of school leaders and administrators in your development as a beginning teacher, what behaviors, relationships or supports were most beneficial for you?

Our district has a mentoring program called PAC(ph) - I can't remember exactly what it stands for - and I had a conversation with my administrator towards the end of this year, and he commented that I had taken a lot of sub days just to work with the mentor teachers and said that a lot of other teachers or administrators weren't very excited about this time teachers were missing to do this but that he was very supportive, and I really appreciated that he allowed us to take that time to work with a mentor.

4. As you think of those who are just entering the teaching profession, what advice from your own experience for developing resilience and well-being as beginning teachers might you offer them?

I would definitely offer them the advice to maintain a work-life balance. It's too easy to get caught up. Letting teaching take over your entire life is too easy, so it's important to just realize that you can't get everything done in the workday, and you won't be able to get everything done your first couple years. You won't feel like an effective teacher, because you're still trying to learn the ropes, and there are so many intricacies that you don't learn in teachers college or anyplace, and so you just have to be okay with just kind of getting by and just realizing that every year that you'll be able to improve upon your teaching, but to not get too caught up in letting it take up your entire life.

1. Quand vous pensez à vos premières années d'expérience en enseignement, qu'est-ce qui a bien fonctionné pour vous en termes de développement, professionnel ou personnel, comme enseignant?

Mes autres collègues, donc les autres enseignants, du même niveau dans laquelle j'enseigne en, les formations quelques-unes mais pas toutes, il y avait une formation * que j'ai aimé parce que j'étais en première/deuxième année, donc ça m'a aidé, et aussi parler avec d'autres enseignantes qui elles aussi étaient nouvelles, comme mes amis de la faculté d'éducation, donc juste comparer des événements puis des choses qui ont bien fonctionné.

2. Y a-t-il un événement important, ou des moments en particulier pendant vos premières années d'enseignement qui vous ont convaincu de rester en enseignement?

Enfin, chaque fois que je vois que les élèves apprennent quelque chose de nouveau, puis les élèves ont les poser, quand je vois que les élèves apprennent quelque chose de nouveau, et puis qu'ils sont heureux d'apprendre puis ils sont contents qu'ils apprennent, c'est les moments comme ça que j'enseigne. C'est vraiment les liens avec les élèves. Puis j'apprends toujours, il y a toujours des choses à apprendre, donc il y a des possibilités à l'apprentissage.

3. Quand vous réfléchissez au rôle joué par les directeurs ou les administrateurs scolaires pendant vos premières années comme nouvel enseignant, quels comportements, type de relations ou de soutiens ont été les plus bénéfiques pour vous?

C'est comme [mon mentor] je sais qu'elle est là pour me soutenir, mais elle me laisse quand même essayer de nouvelles choses. Donc pour nous, pour les nouveaux enseignants, on apprend beaucoup de choses dans nos études, mais quand on arrive dans le boulot, on ne peut pas nécessairement les appliquer, puis...essayer ces choses, ça l'aide beaucoup, puis...qui nous laisse faire nos erreurs puis d'apprendre de ces erreurs-là, puis qui nous soutiens si jamais qu'il y a des erreurs qui sont faits. C'est ça donc la direction, si jamais j'avais des questionnements, ou besoin d'aide, ou quoi que ce soit, je peux aller la voir, mais elle ne va pas me gêner dans la classe.

4. En vous basant sur votre propre expérience de jeune enseignant, quels conseils pourriez-vous donner aux nouveaux enseignants afin qu'ils puissent développer leur capacité de résilience et un certain bien-être dans cette profession?

La première année et toujours la plus difficile. Fais-toi confiance. Demande des questions même si tu penses qu'ils sont pas...même si tu penses qu'ils sont stupides, n'importe quelle question, trouve-toi quelqu'un à qui tu peux discuter ouvertement, que ce soit à l'école ou non, essaye de te trouver une amie qui n'est pas dans ton école, ou un collègue qui n'est pas dans ton école, que vous pouvez discuter des stratégies qui sont pas nécessairement dans ton école mais que tu peux pourrais peut-être amener dans ton école, parle aux gens que tu connais qui qui sont enseignants, qui travaillent avec des enfants, travaillent avec des jeunes, parlent aux parents, demandent de l'aide aux parents, si tu as besoins des matériels, il y a beaucoup de choses que je défais, que je ferais ma première année. Puis travaille pas la fin de semaine.

We would like to thank all the teachers who participated in our surveys and interviews for their time and for their valuable contributions - it is highly appreciated.