

Teacher Wellness in Year-round Schools

An exploratory study

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	1
Introduction	
Problem.....	4
Rationale	5
Purpose	7
Research Questions.....	7
Literature Review	
Causes of Teacher Burnout and Attrition	8
Defining Teacher Burnout.....	13
Can Year-round Schools Help?.....	15
Types of Year-round School	18
Setting	21
Methods	
Research Participants.....	24
Data Collection	24
Instruments	25
Procedures	27
Results.....	30
Recommendations and implications	34
Limitations	36
Conclusion	37
References	38
Appendices	
A - District Permission to Conduct Research	
B - Research Instruments	
C – Factor Analysis	
D – Personal vs. Professional Wellness	
E – Teacher Concerns	
F - Teacher Satisfaction	
G – Sick Day Use	
H – Qualitative Data Charts	

ABSTRACT: *The purpose of this study was to examine how teachers characterize their wellness in a school that operates on a balanced calendar. The sample consisted of twenty teachers in a 400 student year-round elementary school. Participants responded to a survey that was designed to measure perceptions of personal and professional wellness along a continuum from very low levels of wellness to very high levels of wellness. Results indicated that, in general, teachers at this school had high perceptions of wellness, with personal and professional factors varying slightly in favour of the former. Separate analyses revealed that despite some reservations regarding the balanced calendar, almost all teachers were strongly against transferring to a traditional calendar school. These findings serve as an initial investigation into calendar reform and have important implications for those concerned with declining teacher wellness in our schools.*

INTRODUCTION

Only two percent of teachers reach the retirement age of 65.

- BCTF Income Security Department, 2006

While several factors likely contribute to this troubling statistic, levels of perceived wellness in teachers are clearly a contributor (Palmer & Bemis, 1999). It is no coincidence that teacher wellness is an increasingly demanded topic of Professional Development Days across British Columbia in recent years (BCTF-a). Teachers are very aware of the imbalance between the expectations and demands placed upon them and the resources provided to them. With ever tightening budgets and a student population with increasingly broad learning and behavioural needs, many teachers are stretched beyond healthy limits (Cooper et al., 2003). Despite new curriculum regularly arriving on teachers' desks around the province (new Science IRPs, Daily Activity Requirements, HACE program, to name a few) they have accommodated changes with courage and grace. Still, one has to wonder whether there is a connection between the mounting challenges to teachers' work and the fact that ninety-eight percent of teachers do not reach their retirement age of 65.

Problem Area

Interestingly, teachers who work in different circumstances like balanced calendars, report fewer concerns regarding burnout (Palmer & Bemis, 1999; Shields & Oberg, 1999). Unfortunately, in British Columbia this option only exists for five average sized elementary schools (Waithman & Shields, 2004). These schools are supporting small community investigations into contemporary

notions of the delivery of education. Serendipitously, they may also be inadvertently addressing teacher burnout in the process. While much can be found in the literature about student achievement improvements in balanced calendar schools, our team of teacher/researchers would like to investigate teacher wellness and burnout through the experiences of teachers working with a balanced calendar. We narrowed our focus to teacher wellness/burnout because (a) one of our researchers has experienced year-round education (YRE) while teaching abroad and commented on its benefits to his wellbeing and (b) the literature suggests few studies have questioned how balanced calendars might affect this issue. Considering the long term educational, economic and personal benefits of teacher wellness and the rising stresses and demands placed upon teachers, this is an issue of importance for all stakeholders in the educational community.

Rationale

For as long as most North Americans can remember, school has started in September and finished in June. This model was very practical when “the school calendar was designed to accommodate children with the needs of an agricultural economy” (Orellana & Thorne, 1998, p. 469). Today, through a rationale of status quo and familiarity, this agrarian based system still dominates school calendars. Families build lives around the anticipated schedules of traditional schools; a fact that has proven enormously difficult to shift by those district administrators who might favour a more transformative policy around school calendar choice. Hypothetically, if a century ago the year-round school calendar had become the “traditional” calendar instead of vice-versa, would present day school districts ever consider moving to a “non-traditional” calendar that allowed children to be away from school for two to three months at a time? Would

society see such a system as educationally beneficial? More importantly for this paper, would educators see such a system as professionally beneficial in promoting teacher wellness and perhaps reducing stressors associated with the agrarian based calendar? In contemplating this hypothetical, one touches upon a point made by Metz (1989) that “while history may have shaped the form of the common script, it is important to seek the reasons that it is so widely embraced by contemporary actors” (p. 81). If answers to these hypothetical questions prove elusive, as we suggest they are, it may be time to rethink the traditional school calendar, especially as a means of addressing teacher wellness.

While the school calendar has seen little change in the past century, one cannot say the same for teachers’ work. There are increasing demands placed on schools (and therefore teachers) to prepare children for a competitive, globalized economy. Such a global citizen needs to learn more than his or her own culture, and teachers are scrambling to provide a sampling of skills and understandings that will serve as a foundation for “a good and worthwhile life” (Coulter & Wiens, 1999, p.4) as we understand it today. As if this were not enough, children have also changed. Teachers often spend numerous hours in June and September rebuilding class lists in order to balance growing numbers of students with particular and exceptional needs. This is done for the simple purpose of addressing and dividing future workloads and teaching stresses evenly. This biannual ritual illustrates the challenges faced by teachers in responding to, amongst other things, students with English as a second language, special needs, individualized education plans, and ministry category designations of autism, mental delays, and physical limitations.

In the hopes of exploring the issues of teacher wellness and burnout, this study's research questions endeavour to give teachers the opportunity to voice their experiences working within a balanced calendar. Upon informally discussing balanced calendar revision with colleagues, often great interest and hopeful anticipation were reciprocated. This being a time where teachers are increasingly asked to accomplish more while being given fewer resources (Naylor, 2001), examining solutions to teacher workloads and accompanying burnout is paramount. One possible solution that this research will examine is the redistribution of this workload through a balanced calendar.

Purpose

Our research purposes to investigate how teachers characterize and describe their wellness in a school that operates on a balanced calendar. Since the entire group of teacher participants would have previously taught within the traditional school calendar, our research will make a phenomenological comparison of their wellness as a function of improved or worsened instructional tempo resulting from a balanced calendar. Our reason for choosing this topic is twofold. On one hand we as educators acknowledge that "serving people's wellbeing is a great challenge, but it is also our greatest calling" (Hostetler, 2005, p.16), while on the other hand, as researchers, we see the "need to think about how we can make life better for people" (Hostetler, 2005, p. 16). If this work can help facilitate a conversation within educational communities about how to better foster teacher wellbeing and in turn have those teachers better serve the wellbeing of children, we will have achieved on both accounts. Perhaps then might we see more teachers reach a happy, healthy retirement.

Research Questions

- 1) How do teachers employed in a balanced calendar school characterize their wellness?
- 2) Do teachers have cautions about the balanced calendar?
- 3) Are teachers satisfied with the balanced calendar?
- 4) Are there differences in the number of sick days used by teachers working in a balanced calendar school and teachers working in traditional calendar schools?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Today, in pluralist societies, K-12 education faces the distinct challenges of teacher attrition, demographic change and economic recession. The growing demands on school teachers and administrators, be they from proximal (students, parents, community) or distal (government, judiciary) sources, is becoming overwhelming, to the point “where large numbers of qualified teachers depart their jobs for reasons other than retirement” (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 499). In examining the increasing signs of teacher burnout and attrition, this review will primarily focus on existing literature around three important aspects of this problem: (1) what is causing it, (2) how the literature defines teacher burnout, and (3) year-round schools (YRS) as potential catalysts for teacher wellbeing. A concluding section describing the various models of YRS, their cited benefits and limitations completes the review.

Causes of Teacher Burnout and Attrition

Undoubtedly, teaching has always been a very challenging profession. However, now more than ever, teachers are choosing to leave the profession in search of higher paying, better respected and less stressful employment opportunities (Grissmer, 1987). Macdonald (1999), in reviewing the causes of these trends, highlights three main “culprits” that are adversely affecting teacher service in democratic societies:

1. Socio-economic and political factors [which] underpin the conditions [that] affect service and, in turn, the conditions of service. In most countries, there is a strong sense that conditions within schooling and those shaping schooling have deteriorated and consequently are causing increasing levels of teacher dissatisfaction and stress, if not attrition (p. 839).
2. Large-scale shifts in population have also been a significant factor shaping teacher attrition. Where countries experience population growth at times of fiscal constraint, the priority for the employment of teachers puts strain on the school systems to provide adequate resources thereby making the work of teachers more difficult (p. 839)
3. The perceived decline in the status of teachers is of concern in most countries from the perspective of how teachers are seen by others as well as how they see themselves...the recognition of teachers' work by communities and governments is poor (p. 839).

Accordingly, Canadian teachers face all of these “culprits” on a regular basis. Galen, Karlenzig and Tamney (1995), in examining the workload and work life of teachers in Saskatchewan, capture the difficult and challenging work of the profession when they point out that “not only must teachers juggle diverse and frequently intense types of interactions with their students, they are also typically asked to respond to requests and demands placed on them by colleagues, administrators, parents, and other members of the community” (p. 40). Unfortunately, as Galen et al. (1995) go on to surmise, these demands are overwhelming for many teachers. In addition to teachers having to respond to the multiple demands of the school community’s stakeholders, they must also juggle the increasing complexity and the undefined limits of the job itself. King and Peart (1992), in looking at cases of burnout amongst Canadian teachers noted, “the workload has no well-defined limit [and] is essentially open-ended... teachers tend to do far more than is required and some try to do more than they can physically manage” (p. 182). This poorly defined workload can lead teachers into situations of role conflict where the immediacy of particular student, school or community needs extends far beyond the traditional needs of the classroom (King and Peart, 1992). “As all roles are important and teachers are constantly pressed for time, they must often make difficult choices about their priorities. For some teachers, these decisions result in an ongoing sense of role conflict.” (Gallen

et al, 1995, p. 55) Because schools rely on teachers to undertake and maintain these split personalities of sorts, many are being stretched to the point of exhaustion.

Findings in British Columbia are no different. In 2001, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) conducted a qualitative survey in which six hundred forty-four randomly selected elementary and secondary school teachers identified sources of stress in their professional lives (Naylor, 2001). BC teachers identified the following areas as particularly taxing: (Naylor, 2001, p. 3)

1. Changing class composition: the integration of ESL students and students with special needs
2. Working with students who live in poverty, or in unstable situations
3. Working with students who are reluctant to be in school
4. The volume of work
5. The range and complexity of teachers' work, and how this has changed over time
6. Seasonal pressures, with intense periods of work in addition to the regular load
7. Curriculum change
8. Expectations

Not surprisingly Macdonald's three culprits match very well with sentiments expressed by teachers in BC and Saskatchewan. Teacher burnout, as Macdonald (1999) suggests, is not unique to one country, region or school district. Here again we have allusions to and questioning of an educational "common script" (Metz, 1989, p. 81). It is not only in the best interests of educators, it is in the best interests of society to continue to question the status quo and perhaps, if one exists, find a more rational, more balanced way of approaching schooling and teaching.

In BC, teacher job satisfaction has been in slow decline since the mid 1990's (Schaefer, 2003), yet little has been done to address this growing problem. Speaking in economic terms, it stands to reason that less satisfied workers make for less efficient workers and that repeated treatments (job actions) over the long-term are much more expensive than actively seeking the proverbial 'vaccine' (addressing teachers' core organizational concerns). From this point of view, all stakeholders have been partaking in very unwise business practices as there is so often a

focus on treatments to the problem (increasing teacher recruitment, greater remuneration) rather than looking for the cures (addressing some of the teacher concerns outlined earlier). The rationale for such decisions is beyond the scope of this review; however until the organization of schools and the working environment of teachers becomes the primary focus of the conversation, there is little chance of long-term stability in the teaching workforce (Ingersoll, 2001).

Shields and Oberg (2000), in agreement with Macdonald's earlier observations, point out that "rapid demographic and economic changes in society have been accompanied by calls for educational reforms to enhance fiscal and academic accountability and educational choice" (p. 27). British Columbia is no different in these regards. Take for example "the Government's overarching goal to make [BC] the best-educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent..." (Ministry of Education, 2008). Whilst this is a worthwhile and noble goal, there lacks any mention of what a "best-educated most literate jurisdiction" looks like or how such qualities could ever be assessed. Moreover, there is no mention of the increased funding required to make such endeavours possible. Fortunately, for the most part, such grandiose statements are inferred simply for what they are - political rhetoric. Unfortunately, stifling accountability contracts, increased standardized testing and under or non-funded Ministry legislated policies are very real and often fly under the public's radar. These less assuming government initiatives often have more political rationale than they do educational and ultimately hinder teachers from effectively doing their jobs. This in turn can diminish a teacher's perceived self-efficacy and lead to burnout (Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

In BC, examples of government legislated programs are numerous. From ActNow BC (health policy) to ReadNow BC (literacy policy), there seems to be oversight into every aspect of the educational system. Most of these initiatives push for positive outcomes, unfortunately either

the feasibility or the provided financing, or both, impair the actual success of such programs. An excellent example of a quasi-failed initiative, from a teacher's perspective, is Bill 33 which was passed by the provincial legislature in May of 2006 to address teacher concerns regarding class-size and class-composition (top source of teacher stress according to Naylor's 2001 study). Despite this amendment to the School Act, "many secondary students are still waiting for smaller classes [while] students with special needs at all levels are waiting for the support they need" (BCTF-b, 2008). Most alarming of all is that "the government has not provided school districts with any new funding to implement this legislation," (BCTF-b, 2008) meaning school district administrators are charged with maximizing already limited classroom seats and lean budgets. Cruelly, as is often the case, what began in part as a way of improving teaching conditions and reducing teacher workloads has resulted in increased stresses as teachers attempt to make up the gap for reductions in services and funding elsewhere.

The irony of situations such as Bill 33, in which teachers take one step forward and find themselves two steps back, is not lost in the literature and is certainly not solely a feature of a Canadian educational system. Ball (2004) comments on similar conundrums regarding Great Britain's educational system in pointing out "there is a double irony [in cases] of state interventions [as] the attempt to re-create within the logic of economic rationality, forms of social relations which were destroyed by the imposition of the logic of economic rationality" (p. 22). Drago (1999), of the United States, also points out the inverse relationship of educational funding to educational expectations – as funding decreases, expectations increase. He refers to this as a political movement towards "high commitment work systems... [in which] levels of teamwork, training, meetings, and involvement in the job and decisions around the job...increases demands on employees" (p. 32). Clearly, Ball and Drago present similar findings

to those of Macdonald (1999) and to the BC teachers surveyed in Naylor's (2001) study. Sadly for educators, both Ball and Drago allude to a trend of educational commodification in which government expenses are offloaded, responsibility is shifted and ultimately, more is put on the plates of school districts and school staff alike. Assuming governments are unwilling to metaphorically 'reverse course', the question of how best to address the issues of teacher burnout and attrition within the confines of the 'present course' must be examined. Potential answers to this question must begin with understanding what burnout is, its causes, its consequences and its mediating factors.

Defining Teacher Burnout

Burnout, a term used "to describe health-care workers who were physically and psychologically burnt out, is now commonly associated with human service professionals such as teachers, nurses, social workers, police officers, physicians, therapists, and the like" (Byrne, 1994, p. 646). "The impact of stress and burnout on the quality and consistency of education is easily imagined and clearly serious; 1/3 of teachers stated that if they were 'starting over again' they would not choose to become teachers" (Farber, 1984, p. 325). Farber (1984) also claims that teachers who are "passionate, idealistic, and dedicated are more prone" (p. 326) to burning out. Burnt out teachers are usually less than 40 years of age, in middle school or senior high school and have committed themselves to their profession (Farber, 2000; Farber, 1984).

The three dimensions of teacher burnout are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. Schwab, Jackson, and Schuler (1986) give an overview of the three dimensions and how they co-exist:

The first sign of burnout is a feeling of being **emotionally exhausted** from one's work...emotionally exhausted teachers might say they feel drained or used-up, that they are at the end of their rope and are physically fatigued... Emotionally exhausted teachers may do what many individuals in their situation have done; they cope by **depersonalizing** their co-workers and students by putting distance between themselves and others. They develop a "detached concern," become cynical, and feel calloused toward others in the organization. A third aspect of burnout is a feeling of low **personal accomplishment**. Many individuals began their careers with great expectations of making a contribution to their employer and to society. After a year or two on the job, they begin to realize they are not living up to these expectations... these employees may not recognize the role of the organization in producing their frustration. Instead, they may feel personally responsible and begin to think of themselves as failures (pp 14-15).

“Teacher stress levels exert a significant contribution to the psychological climate within the school. Understanding the causal and mediating factors involved in teacher burnout is an important endeavour for identifying and developing effective intervention strategies” (Grayson & Alvarez, 2007, p. 1349). Causes of teacher burnout can be found at the micro and macro levels of education, and include: lack of control or autonomy, absence of support groups, excessive paperwork, unsuccessful administrative meetings, lack of advancement opportunities in teaching, student apathy, overcrowded classrooms, excessive testing, shortages of available support staff, involuntary transfers, inadequate salaries, demanding parents, poor administrative support and decision making, role conflict and role ambiguity, public criticism of teachers, being left out of decision-making processes, increases in student diversity, fewer resources, government policy formations, and student discipline problems (Farber, 1984; Anderson & Iwanicki, 1981; Farber, 2000; Grayson and Alvarez, 2007). “In a study of over 5,000 American and Canadian teachers, 63% (of teachers) reported student discipline problems as the most stressful factors in their work environment” (Kuzman & Schnall, 1987 in Brouwers & Tomic, 2000, pp. 239-240).

With such multi-faceted factors contributing to teacher burnout, it is likely to lead to undesirable results. Consequences of teacher burnout include mental and physical fatigue,

absenteeism, negative attitudes towards students and colleagues, lack of motivation, intentions of leaving teaching, decreased time and effort devoted to class planning, lower quality of personal life, emotional withdrawal, health related problems, anger, tension, feeling anxious, alienation, cynicism, apathy, and depression (Farber & Miller, 1981; Farber, 1984; Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998; Schwab et al., 1986). The bottom line is that teacher stress and burnout not only affects the teacher, but also inevitably affects the learning environment and interferes with educational goals (Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998). “Clearly, the prevention and treatment of teacher stress and burnout should be paramount educational concerns, and yet they are not” (Farber, 1984, p. 330). There appears to be little evidence to suggest much effort by the governments or by society in general to alleviate the causes and consequences of teacher burnout. It may fall to teachers and administrators to address these issues.

Could Year-Round Schools Help?

To begin, it is important to note that YRS in this review, refers to schools that have redistributed instructional days evenly throughout the year. Specific examples of this redistribution will be discussed later; however, the distinction between balanced calendars, which redistribute instructional days into even segments throughout the school year and modified calendars, which alter the school calendar by adding or subtracting instructional days is important seeing that the former falls within the regulations of the BC School Act, while the latter does not (British Columbia, 1996).

Farber (2000) believes that “the most effective way of treating all types of burnout is through efforts to change the nature or functioning of the school” (p. 688). Grayson and Alvarez (2007) believe that a school-wide approach is necessary to reduce stressors and to decrease

burnout levels. Jackson (1983) believes that teacher stress can be effectively minimized when teachers are more involved in the decision-making processes. “This occurs in part because participation enhances the control employees have over their work environment” (Schwab et al., 1986, p. 16). “Ultimately, emotionally and physically healthy teachers exist in environments where the school systems and middle management work diligently to enhance self-actualization and esteem in their teachers” (Grayson & Alvarez, 2007, p. 1352).

The idea of balancing the school calendar in order to provide year-round education is not a new one. In fact, the first recognized North American YRS opened in 1904 in Bluffton Indiana for the purposes of increasing building capacity (Palmer & Bemis, 1999). Ironically, this is still the predominant factor influencing balanced calendars today, followed next by attempting to ameliorate student achievement and lastly by attempting to reduce operating costs (Wildman et al, 1999). These three aspects dominate the majority of YRE literature; however it is encouraging to see that some studies drew connections to improved teacher wellness as well (see table 2). In schools where balanced calendars exist, administrators, teachers, and parents have to work together in order to be successful. Haser and Nasser (2003) have found evidence that “innovative, supportive school administrators combined with the flexible work opportunities and periodic breaks created by the year-round calendar are a powerful combination to improve teacher retention and job satisfaction” (p. 66).

Schaefer (2001) states, “it is in the best interest of teachers, students, and the educational system for teachers to have a sustained period of rest” (p. 11). Teachers in YRS have reported that breaks occur just when they need to “step back” from the classroom; year-round schedules gave them more professional choice, flexibility and increased job satisfaction; decreased

absenteeism for teachers and students; and that the schedule has been a welcome change and is beneficial to staff, students, and parents (Haser & Nasser, 2000; St. Gerard, 2007; Venable, 1997). Also, teachers felt that the altered school calendar has allowed for personal and professional renewal, improved school climate, increased communication, allowed for off-season travel; fostered innovation in teaching and learning; reduced discipline problems; renewed passion; increased parent support; strengthened authority of administration and teachers; and most importantly, reduced teacher stress and burnout (Haser & Nasser, 2000; St. Gerard, 2007; Venable, 1997).

Perhaps an innovative idea such as balanced school calendars can help improve the public's faith and support of BC's education system. Schaefer (2001) comments that replacing "teacher-bashing" and negative comments regarding public schools "with a supportive, respectful milieu in which true education can occur would go a long way to improving the work life of teachers" (p. iii). Teachers in year-round systems believe that balanced school calendars have given them "a better public image" and have seen widespread interest and support coming from "the news media, city officials, and the corporate world" (Haser & Nasser, 2003, p. 67; Venable, 1997, p. 27). "Most human service professionals, including teachers, enter their profession with a commitment to people and an expectation that their work will lead to growth and change for those they serve. Many expect that in turn this will change and improve society" (Schwab et al., 1986, p. 17). Scheduling a balanced calendar collaboratively with their school community may inspire teachers to become part of an innovative process resulting in changes and improvements in the educational system. Where available in North America, YRS have become so popular there are few teacher and student vacancies (Haser & Nasser, 2003; Venable,

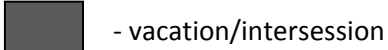
1997). This in itself should indicate that further research and perhaps implementation of this system, is warranted.

Types of Year-Round Schools

Year-round schools tend to come in two forms – single track (ST) or multi-track (MT). “The primary difference between the two schedules is that single track programs provide for the entire student body and staff to follow the same school calendar, whereas multi-track programs divide students and teachers into groups and assign each to one of several tracks with staggered instructional blocks and vacation periods” (Palmer & Bemis, 1999, p. 2). Many instructional patterns exist within YRS; however the two most commonly cited from the literature reviewed were the 60-15 and the 60-20 plans in which sixty instructional days are followed by either a fifteen or twenty day intersession¹. Either of these plans can be implemented in both single and multi-track YRS. The following diagram may help conceptualize these differences.

Table 1 – Examples of calendar schedules

Type of School		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Traditional													
ST 60-20													
MT 60-20	Track 1												
	Track 2												
	Track 3												
	Track 4												



¹ Intersession refers to the period of time between instructional sessions. In the traditional calendar, summer vacation would be considered the only intersession.

Table 1 represents the balancing of non-instructional time throughout the year for both ST and MT models. Within MT schools, an entire school population is divided into smaller streams, in essence smaller schools within the school. As one can see from table 1, each of these “tracks” will rotate between instructional and intersession periods every 3 months, allowing for maximal occupancy of the building. Efficient use of space (and therefore money) is the primary reason cited for implementing multi-track YRS (Palmer & Bemis, 1999) whereas single track schools choose balanced calendars for a variety of reasons including teacher choice, community needs, student achievement and reduced teacher absenteeism to name a few (Shields & Oberg, 2000; Waithman & Shields, 2004).

This review will now examine other benefits of YRS (table 2) followed by their disadvantages (table 3). Using the three predominant rationales for YRE proposed by Wildman et al. (1999) as foci, some of the literatures commonly identified benefits and drawbacks will now be examined. It is important to note that some points apply to multiple categories, but instead have been assigned to the most applicable focus. In comparing tables 2 and 3, one will immediately notice a distinctly larger list of benefits. This difference accurately portrays the proportion of reviewed research that found YRE to be beneficial compared to research that did not. Of particular interest to this review are the benefits YRE can have on teacher wellness. The **bolded** selections in table 2 reflect some of the aspects of YRS that positively affect reduced teacher burnout.

Interestingly, administrator burnout (table 3) has also been identified in YRS, particularly in MT schools where classes are continually in session and administrators find it difficult to take vacations (Wildman et al., 1999; Palmer & Bevis, 1999). Little research has examined administrator burnout in ST schools; however, one might assume that opportunities to spend time away from the workplace would be

greater than in MT schools and would therefore reduce some of the stresses these administrators may encounter.

Table 2 –Cited Benefits of YRE

School Efficacy	Academic Achievement	Costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuity of instruction (Ballinger et al. 1987) • building continually occupied • school community and community at large can have common stakes in change process (Shields & Oberg, 2000) • Improved faculty wellness through regular breaks (Levine & Ornstein, 1993) • Less teacher absenteeism (Palmer & Bemis, 1999) and attrition (Macdonald, 1999) • Greater involvement in extra-curricular activities (Shields & Oberg, 1999) • Teachers generally prefer (upwards of a 90% approval for) teaching in YRS (Shields&Oberg, 1999; Waithman & Shields, 2004; Palmer & Bemis, 1999; St. Gerard, 2007) • Maximal use of school space especially with MT schools • More consistent breaks allow for more frequent major repairs and cleaning (Wildman et al., 1999) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most literature suggests academic achievement is certainly as good if not slightly greater in YRS (Shields & Oberg, 1999; Kneese, 1994, Ballinger, 1995) • regular intersessions provide remedial opportunities for students (Ballinger, 1995) • reductions in summer-learning loss (Cooper, 1998) • significant advantages for lower socio-economic families, at risk students and second language students as they have greater opportunity to stay in touch through intersession activities • improved student attendance (Palmer & Bettis, 1999) • less time reviewing allows teachers to more freely vary teaching strategies (Shields & Oberg, 1999) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • save on portable and new construction costs • greater utilization of school facilities (Wildman et al., 1999) • save on TOC costs - Calgary saved \$25,625 in TOC costs over 2 years in eight schools using balanced calendars (Waithman & Shields, 2004) • publicly and/or privately funded intersession activities can serve as school fundraisers

Table 3 –Cited Reservations of YRE

School Efficacy	Academic Achievement	Costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hypothesized increase administrator burnout (Wildman et al., 1999.; Palmer & Bemis, 1999) • few studies have controlled for other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some literature disputes greater academic achievement (McMillen, 2001; Naylor, 1995) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • potentially greater operating costs if air conditioning is required • increased maintenance costs reflecting more widely used buildings

factors besides calendar balance making positive impacts related to YRE questionable		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • greater day-care costs for families (Palmer & Bemis, 1999)
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Based on the literature reviewed several things are clear. One, there are teachers within BC that feel overworked, underappreciated and ill equipped to deal with increased government and community demands (Naylor, 2001; Schaefer, 2003). Two, this number has steadily grown over the last decade (Naylor, 2001; Schaefer, 2003). Three, this is a systemic problem affecting educators across the globe (Macdonald, 1999; Ball, 2004). Four, many factors are at play, but the solution to the problem must be as much organizational as it is individual (Ingersoll, 1999; Farber, 2000). And five, year-round schools employing balanced calendars have had positive effects in increasing teacher wellness and reducing teacher burnout (Levine & Ornstein, 1993; Shields & Oberg, 1999; Waithman & Shields, 2004; Palmer & Bemis, 1999; St. Gerard, 2007). Based on this logic, it is prudent to further investigate the positive effects YRS may have on teachers, acknowledging that such a solution addresses both the individual and the organization and ultimately benefits the most important group of all – the children.

SETTING

Richmond is a culturally diverse, multi-ethnic urban community located between Vancouver (10 km distance) and the United States border (20 km distance) on the West coast of British Columbia. “Richmond has undergone enormous change over the last several decades, with significant growth in the early 1990's” (City of Richmond, 2008). Since this time “much of the ... population growth has been made up of Asian immigrants” (City of Richmond, 2008). As of 2008, people of Chinese or South Asian ancestry comprise sixty percent of the city’s population (City of Richmond, 2008). These same demographics can also be seen within the schools that make up the Richmond School District (RSD).

The city of Richmond is served by fifty-five public and private schools educating children from Kindergarten to Grade Twelve. Of this total, fifty-one are public schools accounting for nearly 95 percent of all children enrolled in Richmond schools. Last year (2007-2008), the district's forty public elementary schools (K to Grade 7) provided seats for 13,510 students while the district's eleven secondary schools (Grades 8 to 12) provided seats for 9,662 students. These numbers make Richmond one of the largest school districts in the province; however, district wide enrollment has been steadily declining for the past seven years. Despite this decline, the number of students taking English as a second language (ESL) continues to be strong. In fact, of all the elementary aged students attending public schools in Richmond, thirty-six percent (4,796) are designated ESL. In light of the challenges resulting from diminishing district enrollment, a high ESL student population and trends such as the increasing enrollment of children with autism (doubled in last five years), one has the makings for a dynamic, changing and challenging district to teach in, especially when framed against the backdrop of diminishing resources.

Within these schools work approximately 1,317 teachers and 154 administrators. In general these educators are experienced (median teaching experience of 13.4 years) and older (median age of 43); however both of these statistics have been decreasing over the past five years.

On the West side of Richmond, in the affluent neighbourhood of Terra Nova, one can find the small elementary school of Spul'u'kwuks. The 400 students and the school's staff experience something unique as they are only one of five British Columbian schools to use a balanced calendar. The school employs a ST academic calendar divided into thirds, thus

allowing three evenly spaced breaks of one month throughout the September to July school year. More than half (217) of the students attending Spul'u'kwuks are designated as ESL learners while 252 students speak a language other than English as their first language. Ministry designated students with special needs have fluctuated from year to year but currently sits at thirteen students.² Spul'u'kwuks is now entering its ninth year of operations; however because the school originally opened using a traditional school calendar, this will be the fifth year it has employed a balanced calendar. This change was implemented in 2004 based on the attainment of a seventy percent approval between school staff and the parents of students. In deciding whether to maintain this change parents, school and district administration, teachers and board trustees were involved in on-going discussions from 2004 to 2007.

METHODS

The study intended to explore teacher wellness at a YRS. In order to better understand what wellness looks like for our participants, we have avoided adding parameters to what types of responses are and are not acceptable. To this end, we created qualitative and quantitative instruments capable of collecting and differentiating the various domains of wellness touched upon by our participants. It is important to note that these domains (and therefore our results) were ultimately determined by the sum of participant perceptions and not arbitrary individual responses. That is to say, trends in the entire sample defined personal, professional and overall wellness and helped determine the effects that a YRS had therein.

Each participant's responses ultimately reflected a snapshot of his or her current reality vis-à-vis the stressors, anxieties, workload and demands of life and work. In this way,

² All school based statistics from this section have been retrieved from: <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/levels/perf-bas.php>

perceptions and reality were interdependent and close approximations of one another, thus making participant perceptions a valid measure of their wellness at the time and the focus of data collection. However, one caution needing to be addressed is that perceptions can be highly variable. A bad day, for example, could have greatly altered a respondent's perceptions of wellness even though the following day those perceptions may have returned to a given baseline (one's actual wellness). The question becomes one of differentiation - does one's wellness fluctuate on an action to reaction basis or just one's perceptions of wellness?

We don't know this answer; however, from the literature, we do know that wellness generally presents and changes on a continuum rather than in absolutes, suggesting that one's wellness, barring drastic events, is fairly consistent from day to day (Byrne, 1994). Accordingly, the perceptions collected as wellness data will be represented on a five point sliding scale from low to high. Furthermore, to attempt to alleviate the potentially biased daily fluctuations of perceptions, specific, moment dependant questions of wellness were avoided whenever possible. Instead we attempted to use more broadly worded, globally oriented items. Additionally, qualitative and quantitative data has been cross referenced to help detect potential participant bias

Research Participants

The sample population was limited to teachers at Spul'u'kwuks Elementary. Teachers, in this case, referred to all staff (full or part-time) that were current members of the BCTF and held a valid teaching certificate at the commencement of the study (February, 2009). This group did not include school administration or support staff such as educational assistants. In total twenty of twenty-three teachers participated in this study.

Data Collection

Data for this study has been collected from three sources: (1) Spul'u'kwuks' teaching staff, (2) Spul'u'kwuks' school records, and (3) the Richmond School District's (RSD) records. Our first set of data came from a survey that measured quantitative and qualitative aspects of teacher wellness at Spul'u'kwuks. These surveys were hand delivered to the principal of the school so that he could distribute them to the school's staff. It was our good fortune that the school's monthly staff meeting took place later this same day, providing the majority of teaching staff an opportunity to complete the surveys. Due to the small sample size, and the negative ramifications of a low return rate, we provided small gift certificates to a local café for completed surveys. In total, twenty-two of twenty-three teachers completed surveys, of which two requested to not have their responses included in further analyses. The twenty surveys that were included represented 87 percent of the school's teaching staff (20/23).

Aggregate sick day information was then retrieved by contacting both school and district offices. From the RSD we requested the total district full-time equivalent (FTE) for all teaching staff currently under full or part-time, continuing or temporary contract (not including teachers on call) and the total number of teaching sick days used by these teachers for the past four school years inclusive (2004-2008). Because Richmond does not keep an individual school's sick day data at the Board Office, we again contacted the school's principal to help us obtain comparable data for Spul'u'kwuks. He was able to provide the requested FTE and sick day information from the school's records for the same four year period. Both sets of data were received electronically in spreadsheet format.

Instruments

This section provides a more thorough description of each data collection instrument including what data each collected and how this data relates to the stated research questions (pp 7-8).

Survey Instrument

The first section of the survey asked respondents to provide information regarding their age, teaching experience, years teaching in a YRS, work load (FTE) and whether they transferred to Spul'u'kwuks specifically to work in a balanced calendar. This information was primarily collected for the purposes of organizing survey responses and making comparative analyses. It was our hope that with this information we would have been better able to perform post-hoc analyses based on demographical differences. Unfortunately this proved impossible due to the broadness of provided response cells (the ranges given for response on any given question). Despite our attempts to collapse these cell sizes into workable ranges, the small sample hindered even distributions and we therefore chose to omit this section of data.

The second section of the survey consisted of a twelve item questionnaire that used a five point Likert-type scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. Should a question not have applied to a particular respondent, a sixth option - “not applicable” was provided. Within the survey three questions (three, five and eleven) were phrased such that they needed to be reverse coded upon analysis. This questionnaire, hereafter referred to as the teacher wellness survey (TWS) was originally constructed with ten items. These items were designed to measure perceptions of personal and professional wellness on a micro and macro level. For example, broad questions on aspects of wellness (stress, regular breaks) in regards to the school calendar were followed by more specific questions about an individual's perceptions of his or her personal

wellness. Upon further review of the literature and in consultation with colleagues, we felt it prudent to investigate for correlations between teacher wellness and some of the commonly cited rationales for instituting YRS (see table 2, p.20). For this reason, two items were added to the TWS to address collegiality and shared decision making (item 9) and extra-curricular involvement as a result of a balanced calendar (item 7). The data from this section provided a general sense of overall teacher wellness as well as a means of analyzing aspects of one's personal and professional well-being. This data has been used in various ways, as we will discuss shortly, to help answer the first three questions posed by this study.

The last section of the survey sought to provide teachers with an opportunity to share their personal experiences in a YRS through anecdotal responses. Questions were left open-ended as to allow opportunity for rich, thoughtful answers as well as the introduction of new, previously unknown or unaddressed issues. Data from this section has been grouped by theme and is used in conjunction with the TWS to answer the research questions.

Sick Day Data

As mentioned previously, sick day data for the past four years has been obtained, in aggregate, from Spul'u'kwuks and the district as a whole. Originally we had planned to compare Spul'u'kwuks to three similar elementary schools; however, in the interests of increasing reliability we chose to use a district average as a control therefore providing us a much larger more reliable sample from which to compare differences in sick day usage between school calendar models.

Procedures

All applicable data (the quantitative TWS, and qualitative open-ended responses) were entered into a spreadsheet/database using the *iWork '09* program *Numbers*. This program proved versatile in that it allowed for easy data entry, data organization, data sharing and data presentation. Furthermore, the program had the ability to compute the statistical components of this study in addition to being able to integrate the input of qualitative components. The specific data entry procedures undertaken for each of these components will be further discussed in the following section.

Data Entry

Prior to entering quantitative data, responses from the TWS was coded according to a five point scale with a five representing a position of very high wellness to a one representing a position of very low wellness. Coding for questions three, five and eleven was reversed as to correspond with the nature of their wording. Once coding was completed, quantitative data for each respondent was entered in conjunction to their cross-referenced qualitative responses. To ensure data entry accuracy, all entered data was repeated back against original responses by a second and third group member. Once the data was entered, TWS component mean scores and standard deviations were displayed in table form. As described earlier, higher scores indicated agreement with positive perceptions of wellness, while lower scores indicated perceptions of burnout/ poor wellness.

Statistical Analysis

Although we designed the TWS to examine two factors of teacher wellness (personal and professional), we anticipated that the late modification of original survey items as well as the addition of new survey themes (collegiality, extra-curricular involvement) may have produced

new, unpredicted factors of wellness. In order to better interpret the results of this data according to statistically significant themes, we used a factor analysis (Varimax Rotation; pairwise deletion for non applicable or missing data) to investigate for common factors. Such an analysis measures the variation between an individual respondent's answers to the twelve TWS items. Once this has been completed for each of the twenty respondents, these variations are correlated against each other to identify the variance of correlations. By analyzing this second variance for clustering, one can identify which variables (TWS questions) were more in common (the common factors or themes). To ensure accuracy, the statistics program *Statplus* was used to verify findings from computations made in *Numbers*. Additionally, a measure of internal consistency, as measured by Cronbach's coefficient alpha, was used to determine whether questions appeared highly correlated to one another. A resulting high correlation of 0.94 suggested that participants perceived survey questions to address similar factors (types of wellness) and that the internal reliability of this instrument was high.

Because only two factors from the factor analysis were identified, a t-test was used to analyze and compare raw TWS scores across both factors. With the assumption of normally distributed data, a null hypothesis of covariance between the factors was tested using an alpha value of 0.05.

The process of investigating research questions two and three proceeded similarly except in regards to the appropriate TWS items for each. However, because of the small sample size involved with examining fewer TWS items, we used a Mann-Whitney U Test to investigate differences between the two items pertaining to teacher satisfaction and a Kruskal-Wallis Test to investigate the differences between the four items pertaining to teacher reservations. Both of these tests are more appropriate for smaller sample sizes, compare medians as opposed to means

and use rank-sums rather than sums to determine difference. The particular items used for each of these tests can be viewed in appendices E and F.

Qualitative data was analyzed for the recurrence of common themes. A database of responses, again using the program *Numbers*, was created according to these identified themes. We then tabulated the frequencies of commonly recurring responses within these themes and presented this a general statement followed by a percentage. A higher percentage reflected a higher proportion of respondents making similar comments. Because the TWS and open-ended responses were cross-referenced, it was possible to analyze a respondent's qualitative responses against his or her quantitative scores. In doing so, we gained a general understanding of why certain TWS items scored better than others.

Lastly, regarding the district sick day data, we calculated the ratio of sick days taken per FTE across the district and compared this to the same ratio at Spul'u'kwuks for the past four years. We then graphed these ratios against one another to identify trends for each.

RESULTS

The findings in this section have been divided according to each of the four research questions. Each research question will present a summary of quantitative findings as well as a discussion of the associated qualitative responses that were most common amongst the participants. Prior to answering the first question, results of the factor analysis will be presented. As each of the first three research questions relate directly to aspects of personal and professional well-being, this section will begin with the results of the factor analysis.³

The factor analysis identified that two common factors could explain all twelve items. The following tables outline the results of the factor analysis as well as to which factor of wellness

³ For further details on all statistical analyses and participant responses please refer to appendices C through J.

TWS items belonged. The higher the resulting correlation the more a question pertained to a given factor.

Table 4 – Correlations between variables (TWS items) and factors

Factors of Wellness (Varimax Rotated Common Factor Matrix)		
TWS ITEM	FACTOR 1 (Professional)	FACTOR 2 (Personal)
1	0.456	0.370
2	0.369	0.578
3	0.250	0.306
4	0.615	0.245
5	0.331	0.415
6	0.828	0.133
7	0.751	0.022
8	0.753	0.210
9	0.430	0.247
10	0.219	0.360
11	-0.203	0.460
12	0.408	0.164
Variability	29.70%	37.70%
Cumulative %	58.30%	41.70%
Eigenvalues	7.007	1.085

Table 5 – TWS items and corresponding factors of wellness

Survey Items

Mean

1. I prefer a balanced calendar over a traditional calendar. (PRO)	4.45
2. The balanced calendar has had a positive impact on my personal wellness. (PER)	4.26
3. The amount of time spent with my family has diminished because of a balanced calendar. (PER)	3.56
4. Evenly distributed breaks have been beneficial in reducing stress and burnout. (PRO)	4.40
5. I am considering transferring to a school with a traditional calendar. (PER)	4.42
6. I have used fewer sick days while teaching under a balanced calendar. (PRO)	3.67
7. I have more energy for extra-curricular involvement as a result of a balanced calendar. (PRO)	3.26
8. I am a more effective teacher in a balanced calendar. (PRO)	4.00
9. A balanced calendar has a positive impact on collegiality and decision making within the school community. (PRO)	3.47
10. I find beginning a school year in a balanced calendar school less stressful. (PER)	4.16
11. I find returning after the winter and spring breaks more stressful in a balanced calendar school. (PER)	4.05
12. I would recommend more schools implement balanced calendars. (PRO)	4.16

PRO = professional wellness PER = personal wellness

How do teachers employed in a balanced calendar school characterize their wellness?

Overall, the participants had high perceptions of wellness as is indicated by an overall group mean of 3.92. Factors of personal wellness scored slightly better at an average of 4.09 than did professional factors with an average of 3.99. Using a t-test to compare raw scores between the two factors, a significant difference was detected ($p=.02$). This was somewhat expected given the factors had been previously identified during factor analysis.

Do teachers have cautions about the balanced calendar?

Teachers expressed concern regarding their families and colleagues being on different schedules. This was reflected in both the qualitative and quantitative data. In comparing items three, five, ten and eleven from the TWS, we could not detect if the items as a whole were statistically different from one another ($p=0.39$). However, given that item three fell well below the others in terms of a mean score ($\mu=3.56$), we conducted a post-hoc analysis of variance between item three and each of the other selected items (items, 5, 10, 11) individually using a Mann-Whitney U test. This revealed that there appeared to be a statistical difference between items three and

five ($p=0.08$). Because of the small sample size we have chosen to accept this somewhat higher p-value as indicating difference between these items. This difference, in general terms, would suggest that although respondents may have had reservations in regards to diminished family time, they were not considering transferring to a traditional calendar school. Qualitative responses reflected these same personal reservations with 84 percent speaking to children and colleagues being on different scholastic and working schedules respectively. Professionally, teachers were most disturbed by the fact that some students tended to over extend holidays (30%) and that students were over tired in July as a result of staying up too late (20%)

Are teachers satisfied with the balanced calendar?

Teachers expressed high perceptions of satisfaction with their school's calendar. This was reflected by above average scores for items five (4.42) and twelve (4.16). Particularly interesting is how these items divided according to the factor analysis. Item five, which asks about transferring to a traditional school was seen as unattractive to participants for what we can assume are personal factors of wellness. Conversely, item twelve which asks about other schools implementing similar calendar schedules was perceived as a factor of professional wellness. Difference between personal and professional satisfaction in regards to a balanced calendar did not vary significantly ($p=0.27$). Written responses revealed some of the reasons respondents gave for these high scores. Professionally this included reduced stress because of better pacing and even breaks (34%) and being better able to help late bloomers and ESL students (17%). Personally, this included off-season travel

options (29%) and being more rested, relaxed, organized and better able to enjoy time away from school (21%).

Are there differences in the number of sick days used by teachers working in a balanced calendar school and teachers working in traditional calendar schools?

Over the past four years, teachers at Spul’u’kwuks have used an average of 1.2 less sick days per FTE than teachers throughout the rest of the District. This difference may have been larger if it were not for an anomalous year in 2006-2007; however, because it is foolish to assume similar spikes do not occur elsewhere in the District we included this outlier for inclusion in our overall average. These findings are also corroborated by the sixth TWS item which asked respondents for a general sense of sick day usage since working in a YRS. With an average score of 3.67 teachers perceived the balanced calendar as being moderately successful in reducing the use of sick days.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Perhaps the most important aspects of this study are the recommendations of those who participated. The comments of teachers varied between professional recommendations such as “it would affect sports and transitions to high-school” to those of a personal nature, “in three years, I will have to consider what to do with my own school-aged children.” The following table represents responses from both professional and personal vantage points along with the corresponding response frequency for each. The actual comments and recommendations of teachers have been grouped into common themes and are displayed in the left hand column.

Table 6 – Teacher recommendations for improving YRS

Recommendations (from teacher respondents)	
General Theme	Frequency (%)
High school needs to be on same schedule.	50
More YRS are needed in order to accommodate demand.	20
Students need to be discouraged from extending breaks with trips abroad.	10
There needs to be more community programs during inter-sessions.	10
Daycare in July needs to be accessible to teachers with younger children.	10

These recommendations inform the five implications that we feel this study highlights. These are in no particular order:

1. **Wellness** – Year-round schools appear to offer teachers benefits to their personal and professional well-being.
2. **Teacher retention** – Respondent’s showed a strong preference for year-round schools with almost all strongly against a transfer to a traditional school after having taught at Spul’u’kwuks.
3. **Demand** – A capped enrollment at Spul’u’kwuks suggests YRS may be successful elsewhere in the District.
4. **Logistics** – For the balanced calendar to be successful long term, there needs to be similar calendar options at the secondary level.

5. **Synergy** – For implementation to be meaningful (successful), the majority of stakeholders must be willing participants in calendar change. Spul’u’kwuks satisfied a 70 percent approval amongst school staff and the local parent community in order to change to a YRS.

LIMITATIONS

It is difficult to remove bias from research. Researchers inherently choose topics of interest, which if careless, can lead one to only acknowledge supporting data. With this in mind, we have tried to objectively maintain a narrow focus on teachers and their wellness as a function of the school calendar. Our findings in the literature review touch largely on the positive aspects of YRS simply because this information was vastly more abundant. As such, our study of Spul’u’kwuks’ teachers attempts to determine if some of these findings are true. Our aim has been to incorporate a research methodology that objectively measures teacher wellness at this site. With this objectivity in mind, certain limitations in the data collection instruments exist. Some of these include:

1. **no effort to define wellness** - As one’s wellness is a personal and subjective state. This may lead to personal interpretations of survey and short answer questions.
2. **depth of instruments** - Twelve survey and four short answer questions cannot touch upon the complete spectrum of one’s wellness. An interview, in hindsight, may have provided greater insights; however, this type of instrument would have proven difficult because of research time constraints.
3. **length of time as a YRS** – The relatively short period of time the school has used a balanced calendar would affect the reliability of sick day data.
4. **time of year** - Perhaps another time of year would yield different results?
5. **sample** - the size of the sample could have lead to spurious results
6. **participant bias** - do participants want to portray their school in a positive light despite contradictory feelings?

7. **control** – Teachers employed in a traditional calendar school with whom we could have compared findings would have served as measuring stick for our sample.

CONCLUSION

Teachers at Spul'u'kwuks characterized their wellness as personal and professional. Our data concluded that a balanced calendar had a positive affect on teacher wellness. Results showed that teachers' personal wellness scored slightly higher than their professional wellness; however, throughout our study there was considerable evidence that some personal wellness factors most likely had an affect on professional wellness, and vice-versa.

Teachers at Spul'u'kwuks did have some cautions about their balanced calendar. The biggest caution regarding their personal wellness was working in a district with two types of school calendars. A number of respondents stated that the YRS calendar did not match up with their children's and/or colleague's school calendars. Teachers also had some cautions about their professional wellness. Concerns such as students extending their month long breaks and who were overtired from staying up late in July were at the forefront of their frustration. It should be noted that professional cautions were not as prominent in the data compared to responses concerning personal cautions; nevertheless, they are still important and should be addressed for the implementation of YRS.

After analyzing the qualitative data, the majority of teachers at Spul'u'kwuks identified that they were very satisfied with the year-round calendar. Teachers experienced personal satisfaction with perks such as: off-season travel; feelings of more rest, relaxation, organization,

and focus; less stress during busy months (September, December, and June); feeling re-energized; and a reduction of illness. Professionally, teachers found that the year-round calendar's format made it easier to plan and teach, benefited ESL and late blooming students, and reduced curriculum review at the beginning of each term.

Sick day data gathered from the district revealed that over a four year time period Spul'u'kwuks used less sick days than the district average. Not only do these results give support regarding teacher wellness, but also benefits the district financially by minimizing TOC costs.

After analyzing the data we found that a majority of teachers were willing to share their experience, knowledge, suggestions, and insight regarding the sustainability of YRS throughout the school district and/or province. Although this was not one of our research questions, we considered this an important part of our research. Many teachers at Spul'u'kwuks believe that in order for YRS to be successful there *needs* to be a secondary school on the same year-round schedule, more YRS to accommodate student demand (Spul'u'kwuks is full), increased community programs in December and June, and to provide and extend day care to the end of July.

In summary, YRS appear to offer teachers benefits to their personal and professional well-being; thus reducing teacher burn-out and increasing teacher retention. The demand for YRS is evident; however, parents and teachers are less receptive when monthly breaks do not coincide with breaks in secondary and other elementary schools in the district. Finally, in order for YRS to be meaningful and successful, all stakeholders (teachers, parents, and the school

district) must be willing participants in calendar change. Spul'u'kwuks received a 70% approval from the teachers and parents in order to change to a YRS.

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