



LOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Henry J. Mroz Administration Office
155 Merrimack Street
Lowell, Massachusetts 01852

Abigail Anderson
Director of Research and
Accountability

Tel: (978) 674-2164
E-Mail: aanderson@lowell.k12.ma.us

To: Liam Skinner, Chief Schools Officer
From: Abigail Anderson
RE: Research Proposal, Justin Garwood
Date: March 23, 2023

Dr. Justin Garwood is employed at The University of Vermont and through a sponsorship with the U.S. Department of Education, is studying teacher burnout and the impact on behavior. The main purpose of this survey is to better understand the risks factors that contribute to burnout of special education teachers and, how a teacher's feelings of burnout may impact their ability to deliver effective behavior interventions to students with disabilities. The PI intends to conduct a multi-phase mixed methods investigation to determine what can be done to prevent and remediate special educator burnout. The evidence-based practice movement is designed to identify and promote the use of practices in schools with sufficient backing in high-quality research. The focus by national education agencies (e.g., Institute of Education Sciences) on identifying, validating, and scaling up effective school-based interventions has come along with a concern about teachers' abilities to implement procedures with fidelity. The current situation in the field of special education is precarious: serving students with EBD can lead to stress and burnout, which in turn leads to struggles with FOI in behavior interventions, which then causes more distress as behaviors among students do not improve. If this negative cycle is to be broken, there needs to be an examination of the malleable factors that influence teacher burnout along with an in-depth inquiry into the specific mechanisms within burnout that trigger teachers' low FOI of behavior interventions. The PI will address these gaps in Project Burn and Turn.

Dr. Garwood proposes to conduct an exploratory project to address the following overarching research question: What factors are associated with teacher burnout and could be potential targets of interventions designed to prevent/reduce burnout and subsequently improve teacher instruction and educational outcomes for students with and at risk for EBD. Standardized measures for all variables of interest are included in the project, through the use of online surveys, group interviews, and observation. Teacher and student consent forms will be signed for all participants and participation in this study is voluntary.

The insight gained in this study will help teachers learn more about how to manage feelings of burnout. Students will benefit by being taught by teachers who are less stressed/burned out and therefore better able to deliver effective supports. Results will be disseminated out at national conferences and in peer-reviewed journal publication, while maintaining confidentiality of all participants. No materials will be shared that divulge the location of any participating school districts.

The work conforms with Policy LC. I recommend approval by the school committee.