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Introduction

When it comes to choosing a career, most people think back to the subjects they liked in school or what they're teachers have taught them about different careers and jobs there are around the world and what type of education you need to do that job. These early but impressionable years shape young minds and teachers are the guide to them discovering they want to be and what their future may look like. Therefore, teaching is such an important job and can be the driving force of what our future leaders and people may look like.

However, in the United States schools are underfunded and understaffed and teachers needs are overlooked causing many to want to leave the profession. I've always heard how teachers are not paid well and that they must go in their own pockets in order to supply their classrooms. So, it made me wonder how they've been dealing with the pandemic and how it has shaped their classrooms. In my personal experience as a student going through this pandemic, I've definitely felt a shift in teaching in not just from in person to remotely but from how the dynamic of the classrooms change and how the lessons were less interactive and more distanced than before.

With this paper I would like to see how things were for the other side and how the pandemic has changed teaching. What had also spiked my interest in this topic was a recent tweet I read where

a person explained how most of the teachers at their child's school had quit and in the comments I saw that a lot of people who had gone through the same things at their schools.

My research question is: How has the pandemic affected teachers in schools across the United States of America? And my theory is that teaching has become harder during the pandemic and that it has a negative toll on teachers and can be the reason why of them are choosing to retire or leave the profession.

Source Entries

Citation #1

Bartlett, Lora. "Will the Pandemic Drive Teachers out of the Profession? What One Study Says."

Education Week, Education Week, 26 Aug. 2021, <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-will-the-pandemic-drive-teachers-out-of-the-profession-what-one-study-says/2021/08>.

Summary

The article talks about the vast struggles teachers have gone through during the pandemic and how many are feeling brunt out due to the many changes that came with it. The author is an associated professor of education at the University of California, Santa Cruz and is currently focusing and researching on the teacher profession and schools as workplaces for teachers. She wrote this article to put a spotlight to the cries of teachers in the pandemic who felt unheard and stretched too thin to the ever-changing conditions COVID-19 brought to their classrooms. From being constantly criticized by parents to the lack of help from their school's officials, these were some of the countless issues they had to go through while navigating how to stay safe during a

pandemic. The article also pays attention to the feelings and emotional toll teaching in a pandemic had on them.

Reflection

I agreed with the article and felt that this viewpoint is important and should be seen as big concern because as the author mentioned, teachers have been feeling overwhelmed since the start of the pandemic and it can cause many teachers to quit if their problems and needs are not addressed. And seeing as the author is a professor in education and focus on these topics as a career, I felt she was most qualified to voice her opinions and state as to why the pandemic will drive teachers out the profession. And I feel like she efficiently cited reasons as to why that may be true and what is the current reality for teachers in the United States. And I found it really interesting that not only do teachers feel out of place due to the new normal COVID-19 had brought along but from the actions and the inactions schools' officials have been doing since the start of the pandemic. She mentioned one of them being their enforcement of old policies that doesn't help with their current environment.

The author did well in structuring the paragraph and sentences were everything was easy to understand and read. It also seemed like the audience of this article was for parents, schools' officials, those who didn't understand the hardships teachers had to face during the pandemic. And I would say that she did a great job as to voicing the needs and frustrations of teachers.

Quotation

“The pandemic continued, students were struggling emotionally, and teachers were stretched thin trying to adapt to the ever-changing conditions. But unlike the spring, when teachers felt they were part of a concerted effort, teachers now felt silenced and blamed for what others saw as the

shortcomings of the educational response. They were inundated with a constant stream of criticism, particularly when they raised safety concerns. Some parents seemed to hold teachers responsible for COVID-19 schooling conditions that teachers themselves found frustrating. Too often, teachers were beset by school decision-making that excluded their perspective and often required them to stick to policies that didn't make sense in the new context. Emotionally exhausted and feeling unheard, teachers found it increasingly difficult to sustain the effort needed to teach students well," (Bartlett).

Citation #2

CBS News, director. *Nationwide Teacher Shortage Made Worse by Pandemic*. CBS News, CBS Interactive, 18 June 2021, <https://www.cbsnews.com/video/nationwide-teacher-shortage-made-worse-by-pandemic/#x>. Accessed 10 Apr. 2022.

Summary

In the news segment they interviewed Scot Sherburne from Michigan, about the difficult decision he had to make last year when he decided to retire early during the middle of the school year. He talked how hard it was to leave his students but how it was the best decision for him and his family. This was due to him contracting covid in November and the increased demands and pressure at work. Also, stating that if the pandemic hadn't happened, he wouldn't have had to quit. They also interviewed Karen Bingert, a principal in Hillsborough high school located in New Jersey, about why a good chunk of the staff is no considering retirement. In her school 56 members have retired or plan to retire by the end of June 2021 since last July, of those 38 are teachers. She says that she worried if she'll be not able to fill these positions and she personally

feel like this national shortage of teachers has been coming and can be the effect of lessening interest in the field due to the lack of respect for their profession and lack of pay.

Reflection

The video was very informational on how teaching during a pandemic has affected teachers and it agrees with my hypothesis that it has taken a negative toll and has caused some to leave the profession. It stated that in Michigan has seen a 40% of increase of teachers retirements compared to last year which is a common them among the states since nearly every state have reported shortages. And with the Principal Ms. Bingert mentioning how that can correlate with the amount of respect people have for teachers and the way they have been treated. I can agree with that statement, I've definitely seen a trend videos and posts of teachers being mocked, disrespected, or even assaulted in classrooms by their own students or by their parents.

The video was also easy to watch and understand and gave two unique points of credible people who know what it is like teaching during a pandemic and why it is the reason as to the now current nationwide teacher shortage. A question I have after reading it is, what was the messaging that exists in the world about teaching Ms. Bingert had brought up and how has it affected her school to be specific?

Quotation

“Pay has also been a deterrent for many teachers who feel they aren't compensated properly for the demands of the job. And in the pandemic, we all saw the challenges teachers had to face with remote learning.’

‘If it wasn't for the pandemic, do you think some of these teachers who are retiring may have just held on a little longer?’

‘I think the pandemic was certainly, perhaps, the last straw.’

‘So how do you turn the teacher shortage around? What needs to happen?’

‘Some of it is just the messaging that exists out in the world. Education is a phenomenal career. It is – it sparks joy, ’” (Meg Oliver, Karen Bingert).

Citation #3

Cerullo, Megan. “Teachers Battling Stress, Depression during the Pandemic.” *CBS News*, CBS Interactive, 24 June 2021, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/teachers-had-most-stressful-job-during-pandemic/>.

Summary

This article by Megan Cerullo shows how vastly different the teaching and student worlds is after the pandemic and explains the many frustrating things teachers must go through that weren't there before the pandemic or have been exacerbated due to it. The article includes multiple interviews and discussions with teachers across the country who all to juggle keeping themselves safe and those who attended their schools on top of their curriculums. Some of the topics discussed was vaccinations and the how to design curriculums that can work outside a classroom. She also stated that the expectations and pressure that came along with teaching also had an effect on them and mentioned that the reason that the interviewees had stayed with the profession was not due to their salary amount, which average in the United States for High school teachers is an average of 62,870 a year, but due to their passion for teaching. But for some that was not enough to stay with the current conditions as it is. The author reported that a study saw that one in four teachers said there were likely to leave their jobs the end of the next school

year. It also states, “One teacher told Rand researchers of ‘constantly having to tell teenagers to pull their masks up, and [there are] no real consequences available for those who refuse to comply,’” (Cerullo). This shows one of the many barriers they must face in order to have a safe environment and with not only having the danger of students not wearing masks while in schools but with students not wanting to get vaccinated although eligible

Reflection

I agree with this article, and I feel like it shows the moral dilemma that’s going on during this time that teachers must think about involving their classrooms. One major one was health concerns and the pressure that came along with teaching grew during the pandemic and how they were really tested on their resilience and dedication to the profession. In the article it states that, “In January 2021, 78% of teachers said they experienced frequent job-related stress, compared to 40% of employed adults, according to a survey of public school teachers from the Rand Corp. funded by the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers,” (Cerullo). The stress and concerns with teaching have certainly taken a toll on teachers and have pushed many to consider retirement or to even leave the profession. Which directly prove my hypothesis of teaching in a pandemic having a negative toll on teachers

The piece was written where you read more of the quotes from the interviewee than the author themselves, so it made this piece more credible, and I like how it gave not just interviews with current teachers but those who have retired during the pandemic as well. And with these direct quotes it showed me exactly the reality teachers had to face and why they were truly essential workers.

Quotation

“Teachers are expected to give teaching their all — there is this stigma where you have to be 1,000% devoted, and most people are, but I don't think people realize that teaching is a job. I feel like the humanity is taken out of teaching and the expectations for teachers are crazy. While I'm happy to meet those expectations, I do feel that there comes a huge emotional and mental health impact on my own self worth and feelings about, 'Well I can't think about myself, I have to think of the children.’” Other teachers decided to cut their careers short, given the risks posed by COVID-19. Miami-based high school teacher Amy Scott is among the teachers who are no longer active in the profession since the pandemic. ‘Teaching is who I am,’ said the 69-year-old Scott. ‘It gives me energy, ideas and creativity. But I am not willing to die for it,’” (Cerullo).

Conclusion

In conclusion, after summarizing the information I've gotten from all three sources I can prove that my hypothesis of teachers being negatively impacted by the pandemic and has caused some to quit is correct and that it is in fact one of the reasons why we have a nationwide shortage of teachers. In my research I found that not only do teachers been having a tough time trying to stay safe during a dangerous pandemic, but they have had to juggle the new stress and stigma it has brought a long with it as well. That stress can come from health concerns and to having to reshape their whole curriculum so it can be taught online. And as for the stigma, that was something I was surprised to hear about. It was stated in my second citation in the quotation section that teachers had received criticism from parents about the new rules and schooling conditions that they had to enforce during the pandemic, and I think it was unfair to put that on the teachers because they had no voice in the decision makings with those polices and instead the

people who did have a voice were schools' officials or the states and government officials. And I definitely feel my understanding of the topic has changed and that it is not just the pandemic that is causing many to quit but a culmination of a lot of things that happened before and a structure that is not doing a good job in supporting them. After seeing the data of how many teachers are retiring and leaving the profession, I can see that it is a big problem in the United States and is not just with one state or a couple, but a majority of states are going through a teachers shortage and if the needs of them are not being met it will just rise as time progresses. That is why this topic is so important; we can't have our schools understaffed and put even more pressure on the remaining staff. We must address these problems, we can do that by creating new legislature that increases teachers' pay, the resources at their disposal, and adapting a new cultural attitude on teachers because they are the life force to a good education. That is why I hope my research reaches school officials, state and government officials, and parents. I believe parents can help by appreciating teachers more and encouraging their kids to do the same and bring back the days where kids had a little bit more respect for teachers.