



(This article is an excerpt from CTF's report: Work-Life Balance and the Canadian Teaching Profession July 2014)

- issues that contribute to work-related stress and work-life imbalance.
- factors that may contribute to improving teacher work-life balance.

These are among the key findings:

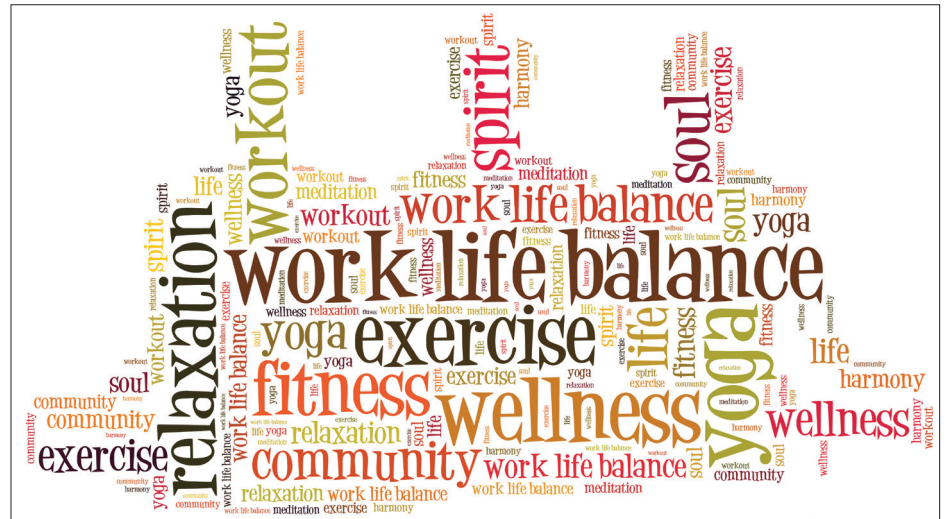
- The vast majority of teachers told us they feel torn between their teaching responsibilities and their responsibilities outside the workplace (54% indicated significantly). Women were more likely than men to report feeling this way.
- A majority of teachers (79%) believe their stress related to work-life imbalance has increased over the last five years;
- 85% of teachers reported that work-life imbalance is affecting their ability to teach the way they would like to teach 35% indicated that it was having a significant impact.

Teachers were asked to identify sources of stress associated with their conditions of professional practice. They told us that the top stressor in their work environment is the inability to devote as much time as they would like to each of their students. Other important stressors include:

- issues related to class composition and students with special educational needs, including development and implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) as well as program adaptations or modifications for students who do not necessarily require an IEP, or have not been identified as needing an IEP.
- lack of time for: planning with colleagues; marking and grading student work; and preparation.
- insufficient human and material resources to support the curriculum.

- Regarding teacher autonomy respondents indicated that they felt they had the most autonomy with respect to pedagogical approaches in their classes, extra-curricular activities, and student assessment and evaluation practices. They told us they had the least autonomy in terms of curriculum development and implementation, professional development and workload.

- While over half of teachers (among those teaching for at least five years) felt that their professional autonomy had decreased (either somewhat or significantly) over the past five years, the majority of respondents told us that enhancing their level of professional autonomy would have a positive impact on their overall work-life balance.
- Outside of the work environment, most teachers reported they experience stress related to having insufficient time to spend with their



- Respondents were also asked to select, from a list of 14 items, the four top priority areas they felt would improve their work-life balance and enable them to become a more effective teacher. The top priority was reducing class size. This was followed by:
 - improving support for children with special educational needs.
 - increasing the time available for planning and preparation.
 - reducing non-teaching demands (administrative tasks, paperwork).

Reduce class sizes so teachers can actually manage their classes more effectively, and

I truly believe that increasing teachers' sense of work/life balance will directly and proportionately translate into improved student achievement. Feeling less stressed will increase teachers' ability to be more 'present' and attuned to the current academic and personal needs of their students, and to be able to better address those needs.

These findings are generally consistent with other research in the area of teacher workload and work-life balance and contribute to the growing body of research in these areas.

The NSTU is working with Saint Mary's University's Department of Psychology and researcher Dr. Kevin Kelloway, Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Occupational Health Psychology and Director of the CN Centre for Occupational Health and Safety to conduct a study that reflects the current demands on teachers' time in Nova Scotia. Results of this study will give the NSTU a clearer view of the work-life balance issues for teachers in Nova Scotia.

[From The Teacher, March 2015, Volume 53 Number 5, Page 6 © NSTU 2015]