

Understanding COVID-19-Related Impacts on the Health and Well- Being of Educators in the Yukon

FINAL REPORT



Lakehead
UNIVERSITY





1. INTRODUCTION

Background **01**
Research Need **04**
Executive Summary **05**

2. APPROACH TO INQUIRY

Our Research Team **11**
Goals and Objectives **12**
Study Design and Methods **14**

3. KEY FINDINGS

Differential Effects on Health **22**
Challenges Navigating the Pandemic **25**
Mitigating and Moderating Factors **29**
Visual Schematic Model **32**

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Educator-Identified Suggestions **38**
Summary of Recommendations **49**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

5. CONCLUSION **49**

6. REFERENCE LIST **50**

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS **51**

8. APPENDICES

A. *Recruitment Materials*

B. *Research Instruments*

- *Survey*

- *Interview Guide*

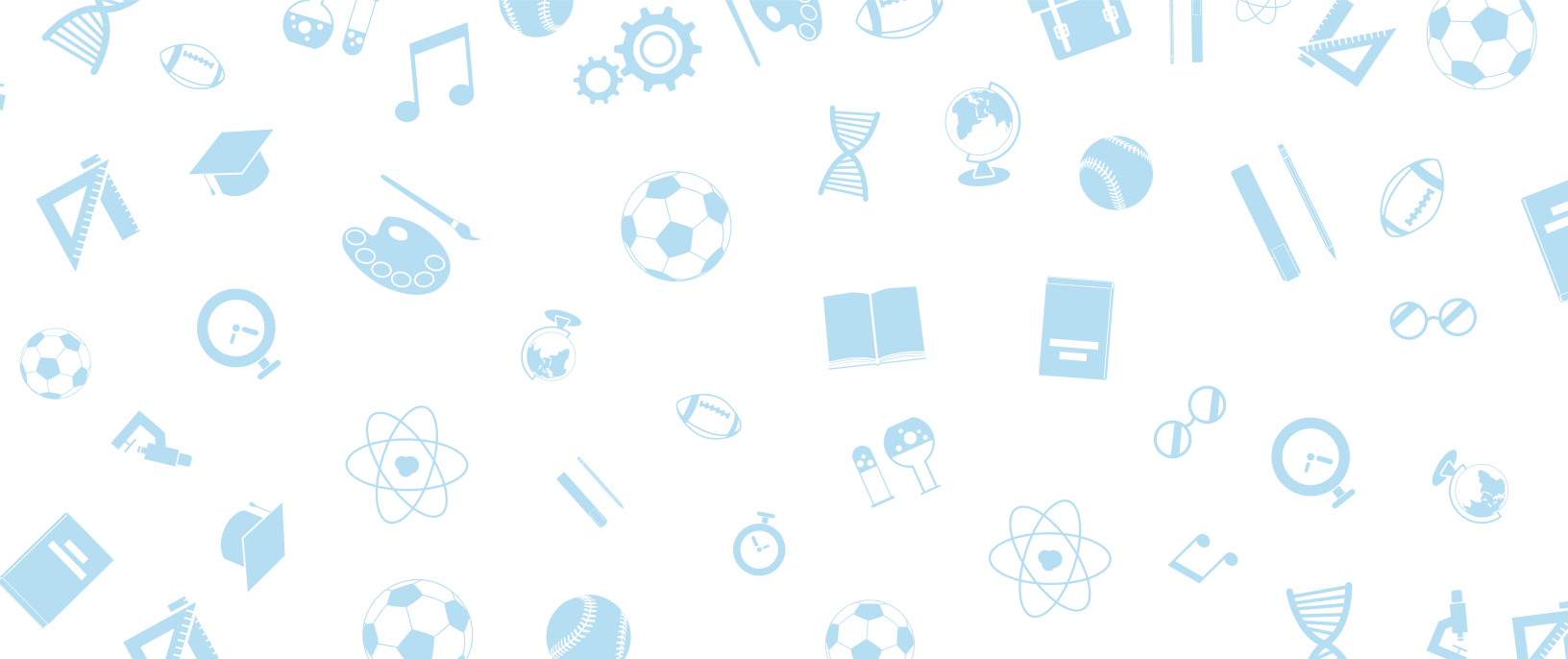
C. *Letters of Support*

D. *Detailed Working Summary of Results*

- *Key Findings*

- *Categorized Quotes*

E. *Additional Outputs*



1. INTRODUCTION



BACKGROUND

This research explores the ways by which the COVID-19 pandemic, associated public health measures, and resulting changes to the delivery of education have impacted the health and well-being of K-12 educators in the Yukon.

On March 18, 2020, during the scheduled spring holidays, Yukon's Department of Education extended the break until April 15 (Government of Yukon, 2020a).

In-person schooling did not resume after the break, and the territory began at-home learning for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year (Yukon's Department of Education, 2020a, 2020b). Educators in Yukon had to quickly adjust their delivery of education, while addressing their own concerns and uncertainties with the growing pandemic.

Then, in-school learning resumed for the 2020-21 school year with enhanced and dynamic health and safety measures, including physical distancing, changes to routine, and mask requirements (Government of Yukon, 2020b).

Territorial responses to the pandemic, such as travel restrictions, self-isolation requirements, and mask mandates, along with a prompt uptake of vaccines, are lauded for keeping case counts within the territory low until June 2021 (McPhee-Knowles et al., 2021; Yukon Government, 2022a). Since then, there have been several outbreaks within the Yukon's urban centre, Whitehorse, where nearly three-quarters of the population reside (Yukon Bureau of Statistics, 2020), and within rural communities spread across the territory (Yukon Government, 2022a).

Throughout this pandemic, educators have been forced to contend with dramatic changes to all aspects of their personal and professional lives. This includes navigating a collective global trauma, dynamic national and territorial mandates, disruptions to the educational system, evolving health and safety operations within the school, and reconciling their thoughts and feelings about these happenings.

RESEARCH NEED

To understand the impacts of the suspension of face-to-face learning on student success, the Department of Education distributed a survey in the summer of 2020 to school staff (Yukon's Department of Education, 2020a). Findings showed that 33% of educators were not confident in their preparedness to teach using digital tools (Yukon's Department of Education, 2020a). Specifically, there was a need for consistent and timely information from administrators, and professional development for delivering online learning was required (Yukon's Department of Education, 2020a). Further, 47% of educators felt unprepared to continue blended learning in the next school year (Yukon's Department of Education, 2020a).

A second survey distributed to school staff in November 2020 corroborated these findings while also uncovering that 34% of educators did not know how to access available mental health and wellness supports (Yukon's Department of Education, 2020b).

These surveys were focused on the pandemic's impact on students while revealing the ways by which educators were able to provide student learning. While the findings suggest adverse implications for educators, these surveys did not explore how these changes affected educators' health and well-being.

Therefore, a qualitative study was warranted to capture the experiences of educators as they continue to navigate the pandemic while also exploring the complex interconnections between territorial measures, Department of Education decisions and policies, and adapted operations within schools.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This qualitative research project explores how the COVID-19 pandemic, associated public health measures, and consequent changes to the delivery of education have impacted the overall health and well-being of educators in the Yukon.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- Provide foundational insight into how the pandemic affected educators' mental, physical, social, and emotional well-being
 - Explore and highlight educators' experiences and perceptions of navigating the pandemic while examining workplace health impacts
 - Provide educational stakeholders with evidence to help inform pandemic- and workplace health-related decisions moving forward
-

APPROACH TO INQUIRY

This qualitative research was a community-based and action-oriented project that utilized grounded theory methodologies. This process included in-depth semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis via open and axial coding, and the generation of a theoretical framework to help explain our findings.

KEY FINDINGS

Differential Effects on Health and Well-Being

Yukon educators' health and well-being continued to suffer throughout the pandemic. All dimensions of health were affected, including cognitive, emotional, social, and physical well-being.

Specifically, we heard the following:

- Significant effects on cognitive and emotional well-being, including challenges contending with job-related uncertainty and concerns with quality of education delivered
- Diminished social connection and sense of belonging related to physical isolation, loneliness, and severed relationships
- Exacerbation of existing mental health concerns
- Negative physiological, mental, and behavioural responses to work-related stressors
- Most educators proclaimed to be burnt out or described signs of burnout
- These effects were exacerbated during periods of isolation for their families during which they had to simultaneously assume caregiving and teaching roles at home
- Conversely, a number of educators reported positive effects on mental health and well-being during the period of at-home learning

Challenges Educators Faced While Navigating the Pandemic

Throughout the pandemic, educators contended with new and adjusted work environments, evolving guidelines, policies, and procedures, altered school culture and climate, and a collective global crisis.

Challenges Educators Faced While Navigating the Pandemic

Educators experienced the following:

- Heightened and prolonged levels of stress and fear within and beyond their workplace
- Changes to their physical, social, and psychological workplace environment
- Negative effects on school culture and climate
- Changes to the means of delivering education
- Altered perceptions of professional and personal roles, and related responsibilities
- Concerns with the execution of pandemic-related decisions, which were made across different scales (e.g., territorial mandates, Department of Education policies, and schools' enhanced health and safety procedures)
- Lack of supports for educators

Circumstances that Mitigated or Moderated Adversities

Antecedent conditions, including an educator's individual characteristics, the workplace environment, and the school's culture and climate determined exposure to, and the severity of, adverse effects on health and well-being.

The following circumstances mitigated or moderated adversities:

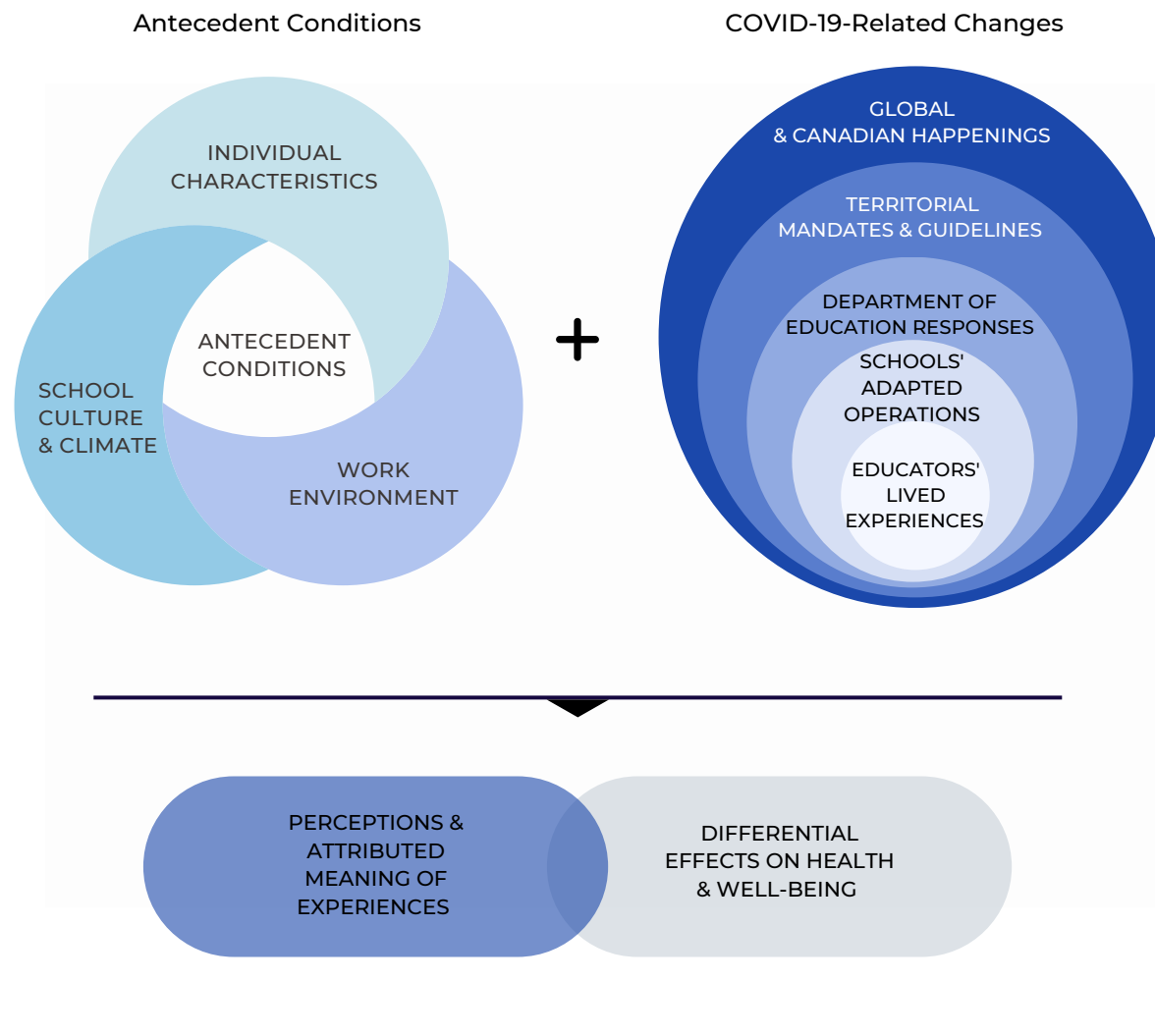
- Individual characteristics affected perceived capacities and proficiencies when dealing with pandemic-related changes
- The physical, social, and psychological work environment influenced perceived roles and responsibilities, impacting work duties and connections with colleagues
- The school's climate and culture established the perceived atmosphere for day-to-day practices

VISUAL SCHEMATIC MODEL

The previously noted effects on health and well-being were a result of a myriad of factors affected by COVID-19-related changes nested within different scales, which overlapped and intersected in complex ways. The impacts and challenges perceived by educators were dependent on antecedent conditions. Further, pervasive societal norms, values, and practices influenced lived experience prior to and throughout the pandemic. Acknowledging this complexity, below is a visual schematic model that offers an attempt to delineate these interconnections.

Figure 1

Summarized Schematic Model Depicting Interactions between Antecedent Conditions, COVID-19-Related Changes, and Effects on Health and Well-being



IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the interviews with Yukon educators and a review of the literature, recommendations which aim to preserve the health and well-being of educators in the territory have been made.

These recommendations are focused on:

- Involving educators in decision-making processes
 - Improving structures that support educators' health and well-being
 - Promoting and maintaining positive school culture and climate
 - Prioritizing long-term planning and preparedness
-

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to a deeper and more contextual understanding of the ways by which the COVID-19 pandemic, associated public health measures, and resulting changes to the delivery of education have impacted the health and well-being of educators in the Yukon.

It is imperative to situate educators' experiences within the contextual realities of new and adjusted work environments, evolving guidelines, policies, and a collective global crisis. By amplifying educators' voices, this study may serve to provide additional context information for decision-makers in the education sector.

More research is needed to evaluate the potential for cascading effects on educator recruitment strategies, overall job satisfaction, the work environment, school culture and climate, and the health and well-being of educators post-pandemic.



2. APPROACH TO INQUIRY



OUR RESEARCH TEAM

This research was conceived and conducted by a team of researchers at Lakehead University's Research Institute for Enhancing the Prevention of Injury and Disability at Work (EPID@Work). Aligning with EPID@Work's aim to reduce work-related injury and disability through collaborative applied research, this project is poised to inform practice and policies to improve work-related health and social outcomes for educators in the Yukon.

More information about the EPID@Work Research Institute can be found on our website www.lakeheadu.ca/centre/epid

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FUNDER

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Recovery Research Program

PROJECT SUPPORTERS

Yukon's Department of Education
Yukon Association for Education Professionals
Yukon First Nation Education Directorate

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Our overarching goal was to explore and understand the ways by which the COVID-19 pandemic, associated public health measures, and resulting changes to the delivery of education have impacted the health and well-being of K-12 educators in the Yukon.

To achieve this, our team concentrated efforts on the following three main objectives:



1. Provide foundational insight into how the pandemic affected educators' mental, physical, social, and emotional well-being

2. Explore and highlight educators' experiences and perceptions of navigating the pandemic while examining workplace health impacts



3. Provide educational stakeholders with evidence to help inform pandemic- and workplace health-related decisions moving forward

CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION

How has the COVID-19 pandemic and associated changes to the delivery of education impacted the health and well-being of educators in Yukon?

The following secondary research questions served to guide and refine our inquiry:

- How have new or adjusted activities, events, policies, or procedures impacted educators' physical, emotional, and mental health and well-being?
 - What were the consequences of Yukon's public health measures, the Department of Education's pandemic response, and schools' adapted operations for educators?
 - What were the most significant challenges experienced when navigating the pandemic changes?
 - What specific actions, interactions, social processes, supports, policies, or procedures mitigated adverse effects on health and well-being?
 - How has the delivery of culturally inclusive school programming been affected by the pandemic?
 - How do the experiences of urban educators compare to rural educators?
 - How do the experiences of educators in varying roles differ?
-

STUDY DESIGN & METHODS

This qualitative research was a community-based and action-oriented project that utilized grounded theory methodologies. This process included in-depth semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis via open and axial coding, and the generation of a theoretical framework to help explain our findings.

These grounded theory practices enable us to approach the data inductively; by emphasizing the voices of educators we interviewed, themes and connections emerged from participant experiences (Corbin, & Strauss, 1990; Creswell, & Poth, 2018). Moreover, our overall approach to inquiry remained an iterative process informed and supported by project advisors.

Specific methods and research techniques are detailed in the following pages.

RESEARCH ETHICS

While this project remained researcher-led to ensure that conflicting agendas did not interfere with the integrity of our research, we first obtained the endorsement of our project's design by Yukon's Department of Education, the Yukon Association of Education Professionals (formerly known as the Yukon Teachers' Association), and the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate.

In September 2021, we obtained Research Ethics Board approval through Lakehead University and formal approval from Yukon's Assistant Deputy Minister of Schools and Student Services to conduct this research in accordance with the Department of Education's *Research in Schools Policy*. This project maintains full data privacy and confidentiality and adheres to all ethical procedures required with projects through the EPID@Work Research Institute.

Outside of procedural ethics, we gave careful consideration to the potential influence of our team's unique social locations within the research process. A member of our research team is a rural Yukon resident and partner to a Yukon educator, which was declared openly to funders and advisors to ensure transparency. Therefore, our team had a thorough understanding of the research setting and context, which aided in building rapport with our participants. However, to mitigate any potential concerns about the influence these ties could have over participant responses, a non-Yukon-based team member interacted with educators who had existing relationships with this researcher.

Moreover, to further support credible and rigorous qualitative inquiry, and to enhance the trustworthiness of our results, before completing our final interpretation, EPID@Work team members who were not involved in data collection and analysis also reviewed our findings.

Additionally, as territorial leaders embedded in education, our project advisors were presented with a working summary of our results in July 2022 and given the opportunity to provide additional insight and contextual information to help inform this final report. We were directed to publicly available reports on Yukon Government websites, which were included within the background and discussion sections of this document.

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

We launched an online recruitment survey using the online survey platform Qualtrics to identify Yukon-based K-12 educators who were interested in participating in our research. A recruitment poster was distributed by the Yukon Association of Education Professionals and was shared through social media.

To capture a range of perspectives, this survey obtained demographic, work experience, and contact information to ensure our interview sample varied sufficiently by specific characteristics including age, sex, and gender.

We then reached out to selected potential participants to schedule interviews with our team.

INTERVIEWEE CHARACTERISTICS



In total, 91 educators completed our online survey. Of those, 85 were K-12 educators in the Yukon eligible for our study. Our team contacted 62 potential participants to arrange an interview. Based on theoretical saturation, more teachers completed our recruitment survey than was required to establish an inductive sample size in the field. New interviews would not add additional themes to our findings. Therefore, we did not contact all 85 eligible and interested participants.

Of the 62 potential participants contacted, we conducted interviews with 37 educators with various social locations and work experiences. The timing of communication with potential participants became critical in securely scheduling interviews (e.g., contact was difficult during times of report card completion). Our team was unaware of each school's schedule, which may explain why 25 of those contacted were not interviewed.

Our team selected interested participants based on the intention of making meaningful comparisons between urban and rural educators and those in varying roles, such as educational assistants, teachers, and administrators.

However, we quickly learned that these categories are not as discrete as we had originally envisioned. Many interviewees assumed multiple roles within the school (e.g., teacher with administrative duties), shared important distinctions about their roles that we had not considered (e.g., differences in specialist teachers vs. classroom teachers), or transitioned between different schools or roles throughout the pandemic years.

Based on the above, we categorized interviewed participants according to their primary role:

Table 1
Participant Breakdown

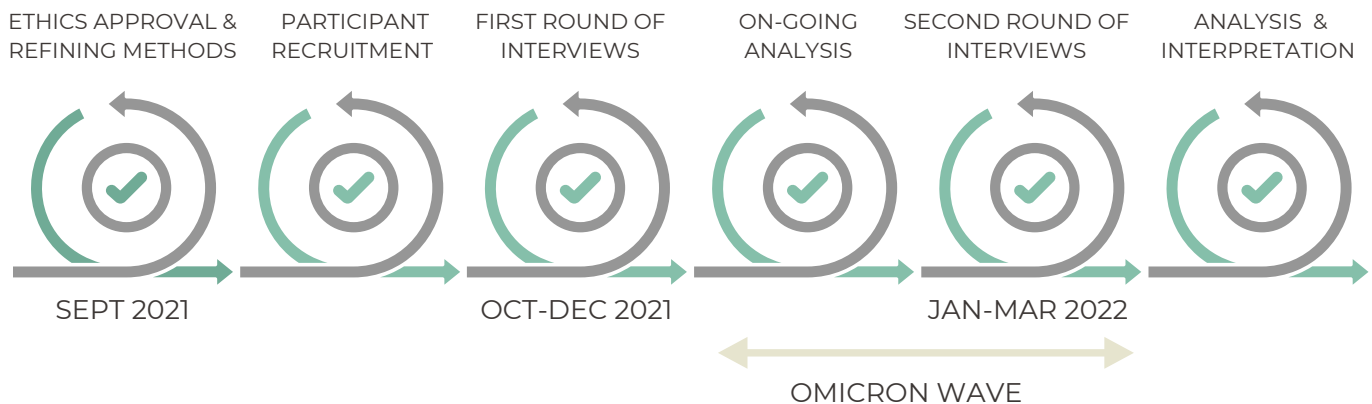
	Rural	Urban	Total
Elementary Teacher	5	6	11
High School Teacher	5	6	11
Educational Assistant	2	4	6
Administrator	5	4	9
Total	17	20	37

Non-probabilistic sample sizes were determined using guidelines from Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), where it is possible to report substantive theories on common perceptions and experiences with a sample size of 12. Useful interpretations of high-level overarching themes can be established with relatively homogenous subgroups with sample sizes of 6 (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

Therefore, we were able to make the following comparisons within the data we obtained:

- Detailed and nuanced differences and similarities between the experiences of Whitehorse-based educators (n=20) and rural educators (n=17)
- High-level commonalities and distinctions between the experiences of educational assistants (n=6), administrators (n=9), and teachers (n=22)
 - Teachers' experiences can be further subdivided in two meaningful ways:
 - Whitehorse-based teachers (n=12) vs. rural teachers (n=10)
 - Elementary teachers (n=11) vs. high school teachers (n=11)

RESEARCH TIMELINE



We began recruiting educators at the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year with interviews commencing in October 2021. At that point in time, cases of COVID-19 were low in the territory and vaccines were readily available to adults and youth aged 12-17 (Yukon Government, 2021).

In response to increasing Omicron cases in the Yukon in late December 2021, public health measures (e.g., mandatory masking, limited gatherings, etc.) were reintroduced (Yukon Government, 2021a). These restrictions were eased in late February 2022, and the State of Emergency in the Yukon ended on March 17, 2022 (Yukon Government, 2022). To ensure perspectives of the Omicron era were captured within this research, we conducted a second round of interviews between January and March 2022.

INTERVIEW PROCESS

We conducted in-depth, one-on-one interviews via Zoom. These interviews remained semi-structured in nature, following a pre-established guide with both focused and prompting questions. Each interview was between 35-120 minutes, with most lasting 60-90 minutes. The Zoom sessions were recorded, transcribed, de-identified, and uploaded to NVivo, a qualitative research software, for full analysis.

Participants were emailed a \$50 President's Choice gift card as compensation for their time.

DATA ANALYSIS

Two research team members were responsible for all data collection and analysis via a collaborative process. First, interviews were intentionally assigned to either researcher to ensure equal division by the aforementioned categories. Data analysis began concurrently with data collection through memoing and member checking during the interviews.

Immediately following each interview, the interviewer independently completed notes on emergent overarching themes. Then, during biweekly meetings, both researchers discussed emerging connections and the main ideas identified. This iterative process established preliminary themes and theoretical saturation within the field and served as the basis for a first-level coding matrix.

Interview transcripts were then fully analyzed in NVivo. There was even distribution between each researcher based on who conducted the interview, while ensuring equality across each category. Transcripts were coded independently by using the coding matrix developed in the preliminary analysis, which was expanded to include subcodes. Next, this coding was reviewed by the other team member and discussed as a duo.

Afterward, a full thematic analysis via axial coding was completed collaboratively. Connections between codes, categories, and themes were explored via query functions in NVivo with a manual review of all passages. Significant statements, in the form of participant quotes, were then extracted to build context for the findings.

This emergent theory was visually represented through the creation of a schematic model depicting the conditions and interventions that were shown to influence the health and well-being of educators.

The study results and schematic model were then discussed in relation to academic and grey literature to ensure adequate interpretation.



3. KEY FINDINGS



SUMMARY OF RESULTS

This section details the key findings of this research by amplifying the voices of educators that were interviewed. The following pages showcase established connections between the themes that emerged from our data and the nuances of educators lived experiences. Centered around a visual schematic model, the results are explored via the four categories below.

01 Differential Effects on Health and Well-Being

02 Challenges Faced While Navigating the Pandemic

03 Circumstances that Mitigated or Moderated Adversities

04 Connecting Results in a Visual Schematic Model

01 Differential Effects on Health and Well-Being

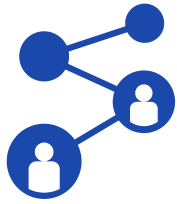
Yukon educators' health and well-being suffered throughout the pandemic. All dimensions of health were affected, including, cognitive, emotional, social, and physical well-being.

Specifically, we heard the following:



Significant effects on cognitive and emotional well-being

- Challenges contending with job-related uncertainty:
 - Unclear responsibilities and not knowing what to prepare for induced self-doubt
 - Ethical tensions related to conflicting values and priorities of others
 - Increased pressure on administrators to provide direction when they felt ill-equipped to manage staff
- Concerned with quality of education delivered and progress made with students
 - Both as a motivation to 'pivot' and a risk factor for burnout due to psychological pressures
- Most reported reduced satisfaction with their job and career related to unsustainable workloads and mental loads
- Negative thoughts, feelings, and avowed quality of life
- Pressure to present with a positive affect for students, despite contending with adversities



Diminished social connection and sense of belonging related to physical isolation, loneliness, and severed relationships.

- Educators with family and friends outside of the territory and those who lived alone described severe impacts related to travel restrictions



Exacerbation of existing mental health concerns.

- Anxiety, depression, stress responses, and traumatic experiences



Negative physiological, mental, and behavioural responses to work-related stressors.

- Lifestyle changes perceived to be unhealthy (e.g., dietary and exercise changes)
- Altered sleeping patterns
- Increased consumption of alcohol

"[...] everyone's doing the best they can and we're all just running on empty. And you kind of can't hold anyone to task because everyone's struggling."

Most educators proclaimed to be burnt out or described signs of burnout:

- Physical and emotional exhaustion
- Cynicism and withdrawal
- Impaired functioning with poor morale and inefficiency



During periods of isolation with their families, educators experienced exacerbated impacts on health and well-being as they had to assume both caregiving and teaching roles at home



"It's trying to juggle, who's going to stay home? We're not supposed to use our regular sick days. [...] I don't have a lot of special leave left. I'm afraid I'm going to have to take some days, leave without pay, just for caring for my kids."

Conversely, a number of educators reported positive effects on mental health and well-being during the period of at-home learning

- These included decreased stress and better self-care strategies
- Related to a reduced workload and no longer being exposed to behavioural problems within the school setting

"It [at-home learning] kept me from having to go on stress leave."

02 Challenges Faced While Navigating the Pandemic

Throughout the pandemic, educators contended with new and adjusted work environments, evolving guidelines, policies, and procedures, altered school culture and climate, and a collective global crisis.

Specifically, educators experienced the following:



Heightened and prolonged levels of stress and fear within and beyond their workplace

- For many, this had been unrelenting, continuing over the summer breaks and into the next school year



Changes to their physical, social, and psychological workplace environment

- Transitions between at home and in-person learning
 - Challenges with at-home learning
 - Insufficient resources to work from home and reach students
 - Family duties interfered with teaching duties
 - Difficult to separate home life from work life
- Alterations to classrooms and other physical school spaces to comply with health and safety guidelines
- Inability to congregate, collaborate, or effectively support others
 - Distancing and mask use affected engagement with students, especially in primary settings
- Unclear role for educational assistants and some non-classroom teachers online



Negative effects on school culture and climate

- Severed connections and limited interactions between staff, students, families, and community
- Negative atmosphere and collective attitudes within the workplace
 - Conversely, some educators described a stronger sense of belonging and connection with others related to sharing the experience of trauma
- Shift in perceived values of the school (e.g., prioritizing health and safety over connection and relationships) and of the Department of Education (e.g., focused on policy and public image and not retaining educators)



Changes to the means of delivering education

- Newfound dependence on technological means of instruction
 - Logistical challenges with learning technology or developing non-technological 'solutions'
 - Concerns with equity in access to computers, internet, and at home supports for all students
- Limited experiential and culturally-inclusive learning opportunities
 - Despite this, some educators had creative 'solutions' that centred land-based learning
- Reduced ability to co-teach or collaborate with different classes



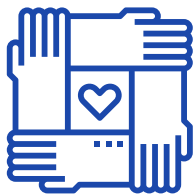
Altered perceptions of professional and personal roles and responsibilities

- Impacted workplace motivations, intentions, and expectations
- Diminished quality and quantity of education delivered



Contending with the execution of pandemic-related decisions, which were made across different scales (e.g., territorial mandates, Department of Education policies, and schools' enhanced health and safety procedures)

- Decisions appeared detached from school-based realities, despite seemingly good intentions
- Affected educators' ability to exert autonomy and agency within their professional and personal lives
- Guidelines and recommendations were viewed as inconsistent, complicated, and ever-changing. Sometimes this resulted in noncompliance
- Poor communication to educators of policy change (e.g., was not timely or was unclear)



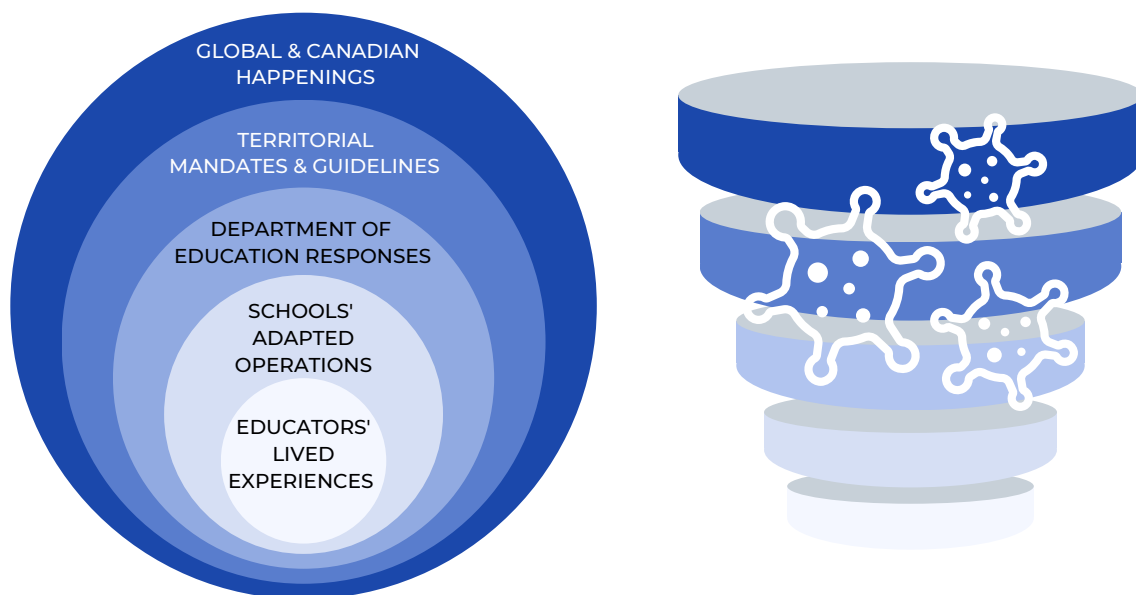
Lack of supports for educators

- Many described supports for mental health and well-being as being unavailable, inaccessible, or inadequate
 - Many used external supports or self-developed strategies to cope
- Limited resources to adjust their delivery of education
 - Nearly all interviewees spoke about challenges with human resources (e.g., not enough staff resulting in increased workload)
 - Rural educators provided many examples of challenges being short-staffed
 - Amplified with vaccine mandate-related vacancies
 - Lack of guidance to oversee new instructional methods and provide feedback
- Concerns with overlap between pandemic-related happenings and other inequities in social determinants of health (e.g., housing shortages, access to food, ability to travel for school supplies, etc.)



"There's definitely a disconnect and a lot of frustrations on how we're supported, and how we're heard, and how they {Yukon Government} are involved in the schools' decisions to sort of get on the front lines with us."

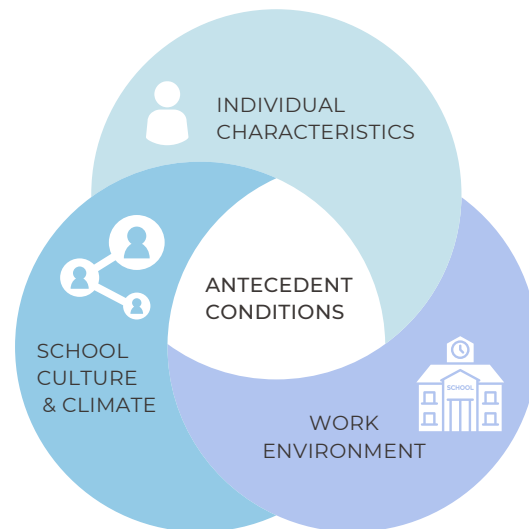
While COVID-19-related challenges were felt at the individual level, these experiences were nested within different scales. Personal lived experiences were within the context of schools' adapted operations, which were highly dependent on the Department of Education's responses to territorial mandates and guidelines. These happenings were informed by federal governance processes influenced by global-level events and politics.



03 Circumstances that Mitigated or Moderated Adversities

Antecedent conditions, including an educator's individual characteristics, the workplace environment, and the school's culture and climate, determined exposure to, and the severity of, adverse effects on health and well-being.

The following section outlines circumstances that mitigated or moderated adversities.



Individual characteristics affected perceived capacities and proficiencies when dealing with pandemic-related changes.

- Self-proclaimed resiliency, adaptability, or flexibility
- Established mechanisms to cope with stress (e.g., physical activity, meditation, immersion in favourite hobby, etc.)
- Educators who lived with a partner or family spoke about both the positive (e.g., connection with others) and negative (e.g., inability to find alone time)
- Those who were not high-risk for severe disease and did not have close family or friends who were high-risk for severe disease felt fortunate
- Expression of gratitude for living in the Yukon (e.g., low number of cases, access to natural environments, etc.) and a positive outlook when considering happenings in other jurisdictions

EDUCATORS OFTEN DESCRIBED THEIR INDIVIDUAL TENDENCIES IN ONE OF TWO WAYS:



01

Strictly followed all set rules and responsibilities despite many contextual challenges in doing so

- Often involved increased workload (e.g., greater number of tasks, more time spent on existing activities, etc.)
- Compromised their ability to deliver curriculum, connect with students, and maintain a work-life balance

02

More explicitly centred on students' learning and well-being while making judgement calls on whether to adhere to all evolving rules

- Values, priorities, and intentions of others (e.g., workplace superiors, Government of Yukon, etc.) did not align with their own
 - Created tensions between others, ethical and existential crises, and adverse effects on emotional and cognitive well-being
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The physical, social, and psychological work environment influenced perceived roles and responsibilities, impacting work duties and connections with colleagues. Moreover, the school's climate and culture established the atmosphere for day-to-day practices.

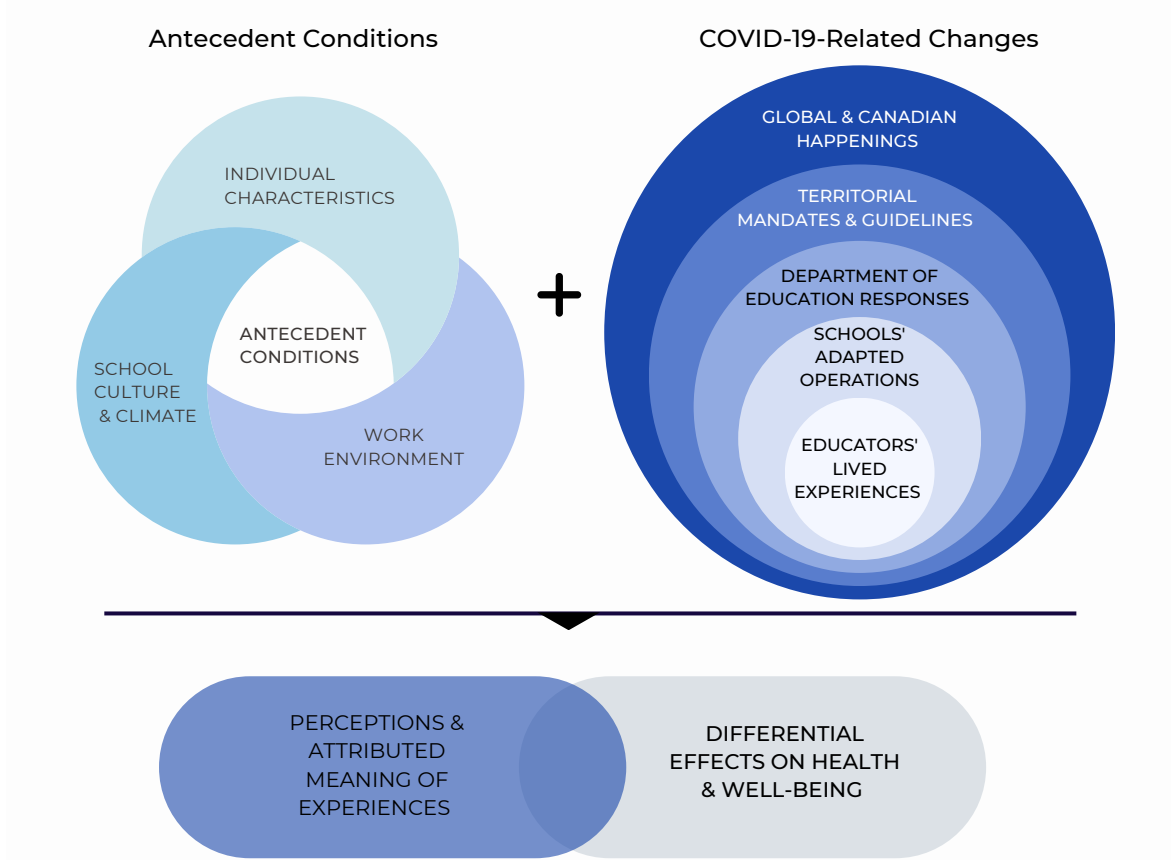
- Educators who had strong, trusted, collaborative relationships with their superiors felt like they had autonomy and flexibility with how they delivered education to their students
 - Educators in larger classrooms were able to adjust to distancing requirements more quickly
 - Educators included within school-related decision-making processes (e.g., involved in developing the school's operational plan, collaborated on ways to improve hallway traffic flow, etc.) felt valued, which contributed to a sense of purpose
 - Schedules that allowed for time away from students (e.g., prep, lunch, etc.) gave educators time and space to decompress
 - Educators in schools with available or advertised health and teaching supports spoke about accessing these resources to cope with adversities
-

04 Connecting Results in a Visual Schematic Model

Differential effects on health and well-being were the result of a myriad of factors affected by COVID-19-related changes nested within different scales, which overlapped and intersected in complex ways. The impacts and challenges perceived by educators were dependent on antecedent conditions. Further, pervasive societal norms, values, and practices influenced lived experience prior to and throughout the pandemic.

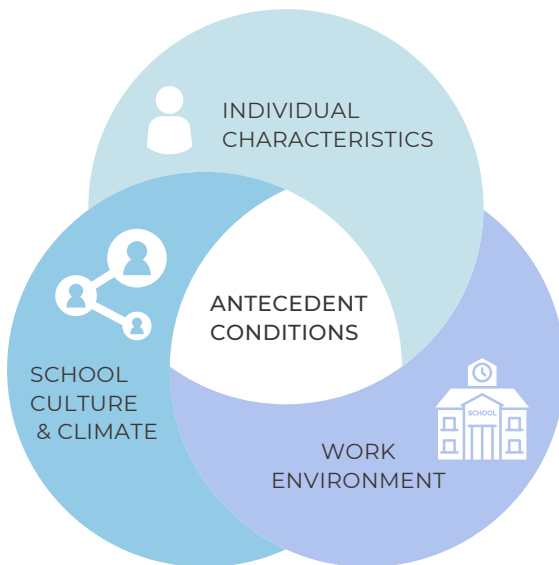
Acknowledging this complexity, below is a visual schematic model that offers an attempt to unravel these interconnections. In the following section, each component of this conceptual framework will be explored in detail.

Figure 1
Schematic Model Depicting Interactions between Antecedent Conditions, COVID-19-Related Changes, and Effects on Health and Well-being



ANTECEDENT CONDITIONS

Figure 1.1
Antecedent Conditions



INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Health status and lifestyle (e.g., pre-existing conditions, health-related activities, and day-to-day behaviours)
- Life stage (e.g., age, family ties, etc.)
- Social location (e.g., factors that combine to create one's unique position within society, which include gender, race, social class, sexual orientation, and religion)
- Employment status (e.g., full-time vs. part-time, permanent vs. contract)
- Job position (e.g., educational assistant, teacher, or administrator)
- Work experience (e.g., tenure, and past positions and role)
- Geographical location (i.e., rural Yukon vs. Whitehorse)

SCHOOL CULTURE AND CLIMATE

The overall atmosphere for daily practices, which is comprised of:

- Implicit beliefs, attitudes, and values
- Explicit behaviours, actions, and strategies (e.g., interactions with others and teaching practices)

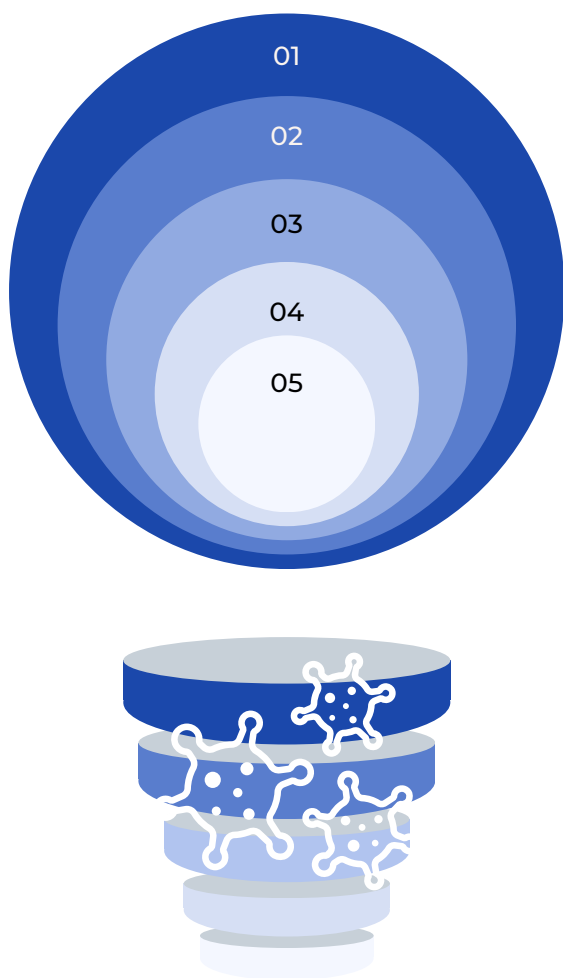
WORK ENVIRONMENT

The physical, social, and psychological workplace environment, including:

- Policies, procedures, and schedules
- School-specific structures and systems
- Infrastructure and resources
- Leadership and management

COVID-19-RELATED CHANGES

As described earlier, the challenges faced by educators were nested within different scales. These challenges resulted from COVID-19-related changes.



01 Global and Canadian Happenings

- Spread of COVID-19 globally and nationally
- Federal mandates and guidelines

02 Territorial Mandates and Guidelines

- Enacting a state of emergency
- Travel and gathering restrictions
- Public announcements and guiding documents

03 Department of Education's Response

- Collaborative decision-making
- New and adjusted policies and procedures
- Development and provision of supports

04 Schools' Adapted Operations

- Administering enhanced and dynamic health and safety measures

05 Educators' Lived Experiences

- Navigating the COVID-19 pandemic as an educator

TOGETHER, PRE-EXISTING CONDITIONS AND COVID-19-RELATED CHANGES ALTERED PERCEPTIONS AND ATTRIBUTED MEANINGS OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF EDUCATORS.



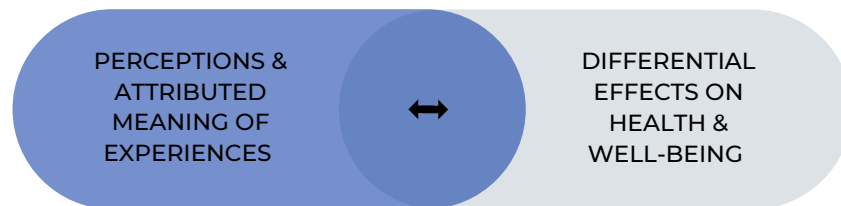
Perceptions and Attributed Meaning of Lived Experiences

- Motivations, intentions, and expectations
- Professional and ethical responsibilities
- Perceived roles, capacities, and proficiencies



Differential Effects on Health and Well-Being

- Cognitive well-being and job satisfaction
- Social connectivity and sense of belonging
- Emotional well-being and avowed quality of life
- Physiological, mental, and behavioural responses to workplace stressors



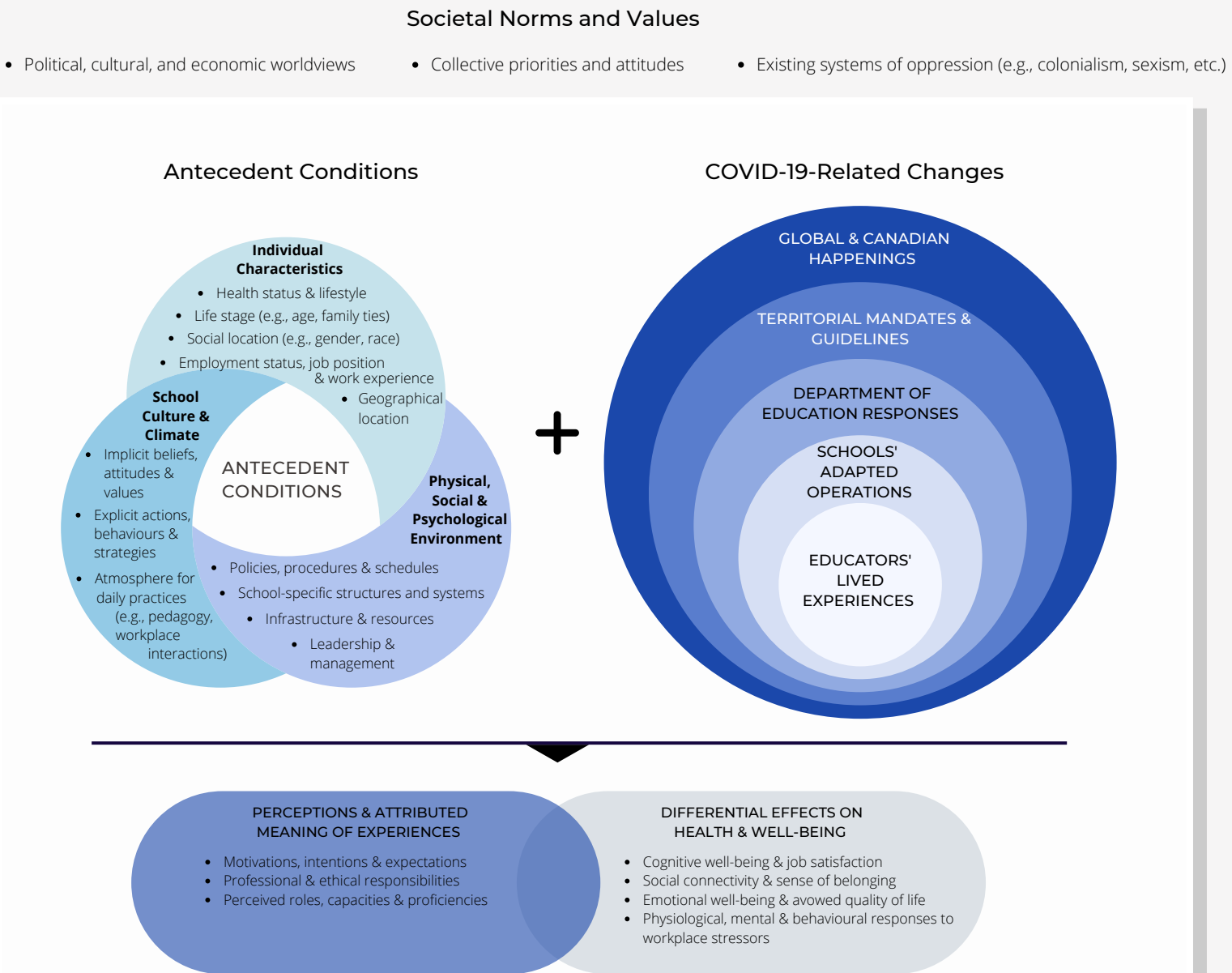
Antecedent conditions, COVID-19-related changes, and evolving perceptions determined the lived experience of educators navigating the pandemic, and influenced their health and well-being in a bidirectional fashion (e.g., adverse changes to health and well-being also had a negative effect on perceptions of the workplace).

EXPANDED VISUAL SCHEMATIC MODEL

The following conceptual framework depicts the connections between the themes established throughout this research.

Figure 2

Expanded Schematic Model Depicting Interactions between Antecedent Conditions, COVID-19-Related Changes, and Effects on Health and Well-being





4. RECOMMENDATIONS



EDUCATOR-IDENTIFIED SUGGESTIONS MOVING FORWARD

While we aim to highlight the implications of our findings and provide recommendations identified through thematic analysis and engagement with literature, we also want to highlight the voices of our participants.

Educators spoke passionately about the context, challenges, and consequences of navigating the COVID-19 pandemic. While not explicitly asked, many educators were keen to provide advice to high-level decision-makers in education.

THE FOLLOWING ARE SUGGESTIONS BY EDUCATORS ON HOW TO MOVE FORWARD:

- Develop systems and structures to support educators' health and well-being to establish clarity and consistency across schools and classrooms
 - Provide resources that allow time for self-care within the work day
 - Develop a health advocacy position to plan and support these efforts
- Find ways to reduce the workload of educators
 - Prioritize processes to recruit and retain staff to reduce workload, especially in rural schools where shortages may result in classroom or school closures

- Involve educators from all job positions in decision-making processes related to policies and procedures
 - Ensure educators feel valued and not in a tokenistic fashion
 - Establish means to evaluate the effectiveness and Impacts of collaborative efforts
 - Re-evaluate policies and procedures for sick leave, given COVID-19-related challenges
 - Rural educators expressed the need to support their leave requests
 - Consider potential long-term impacts of the pandemic, including the notion of collective trauma and plan for ways to support educators
 - Develop preparedness and disaster plans should an event like this happen again
-



"The decision-makers need to understand that the impacts of their decisions go beyond politics to people. And it needs to be clear, consistent, compassionate. [...] Words are not enough."

"We must be really conscious of what that [long-term trauma] looks like. [...] How do we make sure that people are being taken care of in all aspects of their life? So, if we're going to preach self-care, what's going to be done to ensure that everybody is actually healthy?"



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the interviews with Yukon educators and a review of the literature, the recommendations included below aim to preserve the health and well-being of educators in the territory.

These recommendations are:

01 Involve Educators in Decision-Making Processes

02 Improve Structures that Support Educators' Health & Well-Being

03 Promote & Maintain Positive School Culture & Climate

04 Prioritize Long-Term Planning and Preparedness

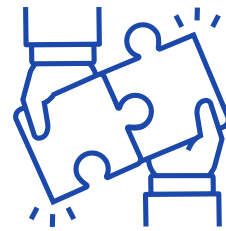
01

Involve Educators in Decision-Making Processes

FROM A CLASSROOM TO TERRITORIAL LEVEL, MEANINGFUL INVOLVEMENT OF EDUCATORS IN DECISION-MAKING MUST OCCUR ACROSS SCALES.

Engaging educators in decisions that affect them has the potential to:

- Meaningfully anticipate and address the concerns of those who must implement associated changes (Odell Gonder, 1994)
- Prevent passive resistance or opposition to changes (Odell Gonder, 1994), especially those that cannot be controlled (i.e., enforcing territorial mandates)
- Recognize and showcase the importance of autonomy, respect, and feelings of value as an employee and educator (Odell Gonder, 1994)
- Build rapport and trust that crosses school boundaries, strengthening relationships across the education system (Odell Gonder, 1994)



"[...] it's our job as admin to take away that anxiety, to try to sequester those stressors, to listen and reassure, and to support in any way we can. But there's nobody asking us, there's nobody saying, "Hey, what can we do for your school?""



Meaningful and participatory decision-making may be achieved by considering:

- Developing or enhancing Department of Education-level committees and boards comprised of educators who are actively involved in decision-making
 - Educators should be provided coverage for time away from regular duties to participate in these pursuits
- Actively seeking input or insight from employees before decisions are made
 - This requires the establishment of processes to administer and evaluate internal surveys quickly and effectively
 - Results of this research should be made available to all employees
- Facilitate opportunities to foster trusting and collaborative relationships between educational stakeholders and workers across the territory

"You [need] to get the people who are making the decisions to visit schools, to be on the field, to be on the ground, to understand what is the reality, because it's easy to make decisions when you are seated at your computer and when you are not living the reality."

02 Improve Structures that Support Educators' Health and Well-Being

All educational stakeholders in the territory must work collaboratively to improve structures and systems that support educators' mental, physical, social, and emotional health and well-being. This may be achieved through the development of new workplace health programs or by integrating this recommendation within existing systems and processes.

Specifically, it is important to consider:



Increasing the visibility of available mental health supports and frequently and effectively communicating how to access these resources

- Focus school-level professional development days on educator well-being
- Incorporate health resource updates within regular staff meetings



Providing time and resources that allow for self-care and reduced job demands within portions of the workday

- Employ creative and innovative scheduling practices to provide flexible short-term coverage to support needed wellness breaks (e.g., yoga, meditation, etc.)



Extending health and safety committee programs in schools to explicitly prevent adversities in non-physical dimensions of health for employees

- Evaluate schools' psychological and social workplace environments, school climate and culture, and overall well-being of staff
- Address areas of concern and support opportunities for improvement



Equip educators with the tools to recognize and address heightened stress and burnout

- Provide in-school professional development opportunities focused on maintaining mental health

The aforementioned efforts must be pursued through collaborations with health and safety organizations or professionals. Alternatively, a health and wellness advocacy position could be created to plan and support the above suggestions

03 Promote and Maintain Positive School Culture and Climate

In addition to improvements in operations, and in order to support efforts to improve the health and well-being of educators, it is crucial to shape and maintain positive school climates, and constructive cultures.

According to Odell Gonder's (1994) handbook, strengthening schools' culture and climate has been shown to:

- Reorient and motivate educators toward innovative approaches to instruction and students' success
- Foster a sense of community, belonging, and trust within the school
- Develop a coherent school-wide ethos with consistent agreed-upon goals and pedagogies

SCHOOL CLIMATE

Current feelings and attitudes towards the school, which originates from explicit behaviours, tangible actions, and strategies enacted by educators, students, and community (Odell Gonder, 1994).

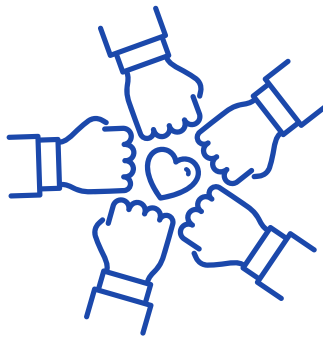
SCHOOL CULTURE

The long-term implicit school-wide values and beliefs that contribute to a collective perception of the social and psychological learning and working environment (Odell Gonder, 1994).

School climate and culture, work environments, and individual characteristics interact in complex ways to establish an overall perception of a school.

Improvements in school culture and climate may be achieved by:

- Providing those in leadership roles with opportunities to acquire of knowledge and skills necessary to maintain positive working relationships to:
 - Empower staff through support and encouragement
 - Collaborate meaningfully with an honest non-hierarchical exchange of ideas
 - Communicate effectively and timely
 - Lead with integrity, trust, and consistency
- Build and expand networks of educators across schools with similar teaching areas to foster connections, leverage strategies, and resources, and improve social well-being
 - Communication and facilitation of these happenings is essential
- Collectively identify and discuss the values, beliefs, and goals of the school to motivate staff and provide a unified purpose



04 Prioritize Long-Term Planning and Preparedness

Our recommendations have centered around strengthening antecedent conditions because, in times of crisis, any pre-existing vulnerabilities will be exacerbated.

This recognizes that there may not be tangible solutions to complex issues related to the pandemic or other large-scale crises. However, there are steps that can be taken to improve adaptive capacities, promote prompt and effective decision-making, and mitigate adversities.

Therefore, long-term planning and preparedness are essential to support and sustain systems-oriented change across scales, schools, and communities. Specifically, technical and relational procedures must be developed and communicated should there be another event that disrupts the delivery of K-12 education.



It is critical to recognize and address rural-specific considerations within the above efforts

- Further research examining the wants, needs, and priorities of rural educators is required in order to recruit and retain staff
 - This research must explore relevant interconnected health and social issues that extend beyond typical concerns of education (e.g., issues of housing, arranging required travel, etc.)



5. CONCLUSION



Concluding Summary

This study contributes to a deeper and more contextual understanding of the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic, associated public health measures, and resulting changes to the delivery of education have impacted the health and well-being of educators in the Yukon.

While educators have been forced to contend with many adversities, it is important to not only investigate potential implications of the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather, it is imperative to situate educators' experiences within the contextual realities of new and adjusted work environments, evolving guidelines, procedures and policies, and a collective global crisis.

By amplifying educators' voices, this study may serve to provide additional context for decision-makers in the education sector. Overall recommendations include involving educators in the decision-making process, improving structures that support health and well-being, promoting and maintaining a positive school culture and climate, and prioritizing long-term planning and preparedness.

More research is needed to evaluate the potential for cascading effects on educator recruitment strategies, job satisfaction, the work environment, school culture and climate, and health and well-being post-pandemic.

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Appendix C

Recruitment Materials

This section includes:

1. Statement for YTA's "Wednesday Fax"
2. Recruitment Poster
3. Email to Interested Participants
4. Follow Up Email to Interested Participants

1. Statement for YTA's Wednesday Fax

The following paragraph will be distributed by the YTA as an item in their "Wednesday Fax", which will be posted on YTA's public Facebook page, sent to all schools and posted in their staff rooms and/or emailed to staff, and distributed to YTA's "in the loop" email list:

Statement for YTA:

How has the pandemic affected your health and well-being?

Researchers at the EPID@Work Research Institute at Lakehead University are exploring the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health and well-being of educators. They are recruiting Yukon educators to share their experiences during a one-on-one interview. Interested participants are asked to complete a short 1-minute survey. Those selected for interviews will be contacted by the research team and provided a \$50 honorarium for their time. Anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained at all times. To access the recruitment survey, please visit bit.ly/YukonEducators.

2. Recruitment Poster

The following poster will be sent by the YTA via email to their "in the know" distribution list.



RECRUITING YUKON EDUCATORS FOR

RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF EDUCATORS

Your voluntary participation would involve an individual online interview, taking approximately one hour of your time. In appreciation for sharing your experiences, you will receive a \$50 gift card.

**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN
PARTICIPATING, PLEASE COMPLETE THIS
ONE-MINUTE RECRUITMENT SURVEY**
-----LINK TO QUALTRICS-----

For more information, contact Dana Korten at
(905) 687-4592 or dkorten@lakeheadu.ca

This study has been reviewed and approved by Lakehead
University's Research Ethics Board

3. Email to Interested Participants

The following is an email template that will be used to contact potential participants who were selected for interviews.

Dear [potential participant's name],

My name is Dana Korten and I am a Research Assistant working under the leadership of Dr. Vicki Kristman at the Enhancing the Prevention of Injury and Disability @ Work (EPID@Work) Research Institute at Lakehead University.

We thank you for completing our recruitment survey and for your interest in our project.

As you are already aware, we are conducting a research study on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health and well-being of educators in Yukon. Given your role as an educator in Yukon and responses to our screening questions, you are eligible to participate in this project. I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

If you chose to volunteer, your participation will consist of a one-on-one semi-structured interview via Zoom that will take approximately one hour of your time. You will be asked questions about your experiences navigating the pandemic as a provider of education in the territory. With your permission, we would like to record the interview to ensure accurate transcription and analysis.

In appreciation for your time, you will receive a \$50 President's Choice gift card upon completion of the interview.

Please read the attached Information Letter and Consent Form for more details about what is involved with this research. Also note that this study has been reviewed and approved through Lakehead University's Research Ethics Board.

If you would like to participate or require more information, please do not hesitate to contact me at dkorten@lakeheadu.ca or (905) 687-4592. You may also contact the principal investigator of this study, Dr. Vicki Kristman, at vkristman@lakeheadu.ca. Also, please let us know your preferred name and gender pronoun.

Sincerely,

Dana Korten, HBSc.
MPH Candidate, Indigenous and Northern Health, Lakehead University
Research Assistant, EPID@Work Research Institute, Lakehead University

4. Follow Up Email from Dana to Interested Participants

The following email will be sent to potential participants who completed the recruitment survey but did not respond to the email inviting them to be interviewed within two weeks. The original email will be forwarded and the following text will be included:

Dear [potential participant's name],

I am writing to follow up on the email I sent to you on [insert date], forwarded below, on behalf of the Enhancing the Prevention of Injury and Disability at Work (EPID@Work) Research Institute team working on a research project exploring the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health and well-being of educators in Yukon.

We want to thank you again for completing our recruitment survey and your initial interest in our project. As a reminder, detailed information about the study is included in the attached Information Letter and Consent Form.

Please let me know if you would like to participate in an interview or require more information. You may contact me at dkorten@lakeheadu.ca or (905) 687-4592. Alternatively, you may contact the principal investigator of this study, Dr. Vicki Kristman, at vkristman@lakeheadu.ca.

Sincerely,

Dana Korten, HBSc.

MPH Candidate, Indigenous and Northern Health, Lakehead University
Research Assistant, EPID@Work Research Institute, Lakehead University

Appendix B Research Instruments

This section includes:

1. Recruitment Survey
2. Interview Guide with Statement of Introduction, Questions, and Debriefing Points

1. Recruitment Survey

Upon clicking the initial link, potential participants will be brought to an introductory page with the following text:

You are invited to participate in this recruitment survey, which will be used to identify potential participants for interviews exploring the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health and well-being of educators in Yukon.

Please read through the Information Letter below for details of the purpose of this survey, and potential risks and benefits.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact Dana Korten (dkorten@lakeheadu.ca or (905) 687-4592) or Dr. Vicki Kristman (vkristman@lakeheadu.ca or (807) 343-8961). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant in general, please contact Sue Wright at the Research Ethics Board at 807-343-8283 or research@lakeheadu.ca.

Clicking on the “agree” button below indicates that

- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You have read and understand the information contained in the attached Information Letter
- You understand the risks and benefits to the study
- You understand that the data will be initially stored on Qualtrics then kept on Lakehead University’s secure server for at least 5 years
- Your name and contact information may be used to contact you to schedule an interview
- You understand that completing this survey does not guarantee that you will be interviewed
- You understand that due to the collection and storage of data via an online tool, we cannot absolutely guarantee the full confidentiality and anonymity of your data

If you do not wish to participate, please click the “disagree” button to decline participation.

[agree]

[disagree]

The actual survey questions, which will be in Qualtrics, are as follows:

What sex were you assigned at birth?

1 Male

- 2 Female
- 3 Intersex

Which best describes your current gender identity?

- 1 Masculine
- 2 Feminine
- 3 Gender fluid
- 4 Non-binary
- 5 Two-Spirit
- 6 Not listed above (please specify): _____[box to fill in]_____
- 7 Prefer not to say

Please identify where you currently position yourself along this gender continuum:

_____[Sliding scale from Masculine to Feminine]_____

How would you best describe yourself?

- 1 Heterosexual or straight
- 2 Gay or Lesbian
- 3 Bisexual
- 4 Transgender
- 5 Not listed above (please specify): _____[box to fill in]_____
- 6 Prefer not to say

What is your age?

_____[box to fill in]_____

How would you best describe yourself?

- 1 First Nation
- 2 Métis
- 3 Inuit
- 4 Non-Indigenous
- 5 Prefer not to say

Where do you work?

- 1 In Whitehorse
- 2 In a community outside of Whitehorse

Which best describes your job position?

- 1 Elementary teacher
- 2 High school teacher
- 3 Educational assistant
- 4 Vice principal or principal
- 5 Department of Education staff
- 6 Other (please specify) _____[box to fill in]_____

How many years have you been employed with Yukon Education?

____[box to fill in]____

Were you working as an educator in Yukon in March 2020?

1 Yes

2 No

Were you working as an educator in Yukon in September 2020?

1 Yes

2 No

Please enter your contact details.

____[First Name]____

____[Last Name]____

____[Phone Number]____

____[Email Address]____

2. Interview Guide with Statement of Introduction, Questions, and Debriefing Points

Date and Time of Interview: _____ Zoom Meeting Info : _____

Participant ID: _____ Interviewer: _____

Ensure participant has: [] Reviewed information letter [] Completed consent form [] Opportunity to ask questions

Confirm demographic information:

[e.g., Just to confirm the information you filled out in our recruitment survey, you are a 35-year-old female high school teacher in rural Yukon? (wait for response and note answer) You identify as First Nation? (wait for response and note answer) You have been teaching in Yukon for 10 years and were employed with Yukon Education in both March 2020 and September 2020? (wait for response and note answer)]

Read introduction as follows:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. As you read in the information letter, we are interested in exploring how the pandemic has affected the health and well-being of educators in Yukon. This will provide useful information to decision-makers on how to best support educators as we continue to navigate changes related to the pandemic. So there are no right or wrong answers; I am interested in your own experiences and perceptions.

Your participation is completely voluntary and your responses will remain confidential. We will be de-identifying any information that has the potential to identify you or your school. You may also decline to answer any question I ask or stop the interview at any time for any reason without repercussion.

The interview itself will take approximately one hour, but this really depends on how much information you are willing to share with me. With your permission, I would like to record the interview to ensure I don't miss any important comments.

Do you have any additional questions about what I just explained?

To confirm, do I have your permission to begin recording?

Interview Questions

Note that the following questions serve as a guide only. All of the main questions will be asked to ensure all themes are covered. However, specific prompting or probing questions will also be used to elicit meaningful responses based upon answers to the main questions. Examples of these are provided below. Since the focus will be on the participants responses, the interview may be directed out of the intended order of questioning. Also, active listening techniques, such as repeating back and using basic prompts (e.g., then what happened? Tell me more about...), will be used. Interpreting questions will also be asked for clarity, such as “Is it fair to say that what you are suggesting is....”.

The main questions are divided into five main themes with additional sub-themes as follows:

- Pre-pandemic
- At the onset of the pandemic (March 2020)
- Summer 2020
- Return to in person learning
- June 2021 outbreak

Theme	Subthemes	Main Questions	Probing Questions/Prompts
Pre-pandemic	Experiences and perceptions	Can you tell me about your experience working as an educator in Yukon before the pandemic started?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What were your typical responsibilities both inside and outside of the classroom? - In what ways did you use technology as part of your job? - How would you describe your school’s culture? - Can you tell me about your relationships at work (e.g., with co-workers, administrators, students, parents, etc.) - Can you describe any hardships you experienced at work? - Can you describe how First Nations’ culture was included in your delivery of education?
	Connections to health and well-being	Can you describe how your job affected your health and well-being before the pandemic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How did your workplace support or undermine your health and well-being? - What strategies were you using to take care of yourself? - Can you describe any stressors that were related to your work?

At the onset of the pandemic	Experiences and perceptions	Can you tell me about your experience at the onset of the pandemic in March 2020?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How were you notified about the changes to the delivery of education? - Can you please describe how education provided to your students changed during the pandemic? - What did you do to prepare over the two-week March break extension? - How would you describe the communication you had with school staff at the onset of the pandemic? - Can you describe any changes in your usage of technology at work? - In what ways did your role as an educator change? - What were the biggest challenges you faced when you were informed that in-person learning had stopped? - What types of initial supports were provided to you? Who provided them: The Department of Education? School's administrators? The Yukon Teachers' Association?
	Connections to health and well-being	How did the news of the pandemic and changes to the delivery of education affect your health and well-being?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How did the pandemic-related changes to your job make you feel? - Did your mental, physical, or emotional health or well-being change? If so, describe how it changed. - Can you describe any changes to stressors that are related to work? - <i>If they describe adversities</i> – Can you describe any supports or strategies used to cope with the adversities?
Summer 2020	Experiences and perceptions	Can you tell me about your experiences over the summer break?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please describe your typical summer break. In summer 2020, please describe any differences you experienced from your typical summer break. - Can you describe how you prepared for the fall of 2020? In person learning? Online platforms? - How were you notified about the return to in-person learning for the fall 2020?

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How were you informed about your school’s enhanced health and safety operational plan?
	Connections to health and well-being	How did COVID-19 related events affect your health and well-being over the summer break?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you describe any emotions you felt over the summer break? - Can you describe any stressors you experienced over the summer related to your work? - Were you offered any services to help with your mental health and wellbeing?
Return to in person learning	Experiences and perceptions	<p>Can you describe your experience returning to work in the fall of 2020?</p> <p>How did the pandemic affect the inclusion of culturally inclusive programming within your delivery of education?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you describe how enhanced health and safety measures affected your work duties? - In what ways did your role as an educator change when returning in fall 2020? - Did your school’s culture change? Please explain. - Can you describe any challenges you faced upon return to in-person learning? - Can you describe the supports that were available to you to? - Were you able to include or prioritize First Nation teachings upon return to in-person learning? Please describe how First Nations teachings were practiced. - Were you able to provide experiential learning experiences? Explain.
	Connections to health and well-being	How did your return to work in fall 2020 affect your health and well-being?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How would you describe your overall health and well-being when returning to work? - What emotions did you feel when returning to work? - Were there any specific actions, interactions, social processes, supports, policies, or procedures that affected your overall health and well-being? - Can you describe any stressors you faced related to your work? - <i>If they describe adversities</i> – Can you describe any supports or strategies used to cope with the adversities?

June 2021 Outbreak	Experiences and perceptions	Were you affected by the June 2021 outbreak in Yukon? <i>If yes, ask</i> – Can you describe how the June 2021 outbreak affected you?	- Was there an exposure notice at your school? If yes, ask – Please explain how you were notified and what was asked of you. Did your responsibilities change? If so, please describe how. - <i>If interviewing a high school teacher</i> – How were graduation and associated celebrations impacted? - How did the outbreak affect your plans for the summer break?
	Connections to health and well-being	Can you describe how the news of the outbreak affected your overall health and well-being?	- How did the announcement of the outbreak and evolving situation make you feel? - Did your mental, physical, or emotional health or well-being change? If so, please describe how it changed. - Can you describe any stressors related to the outbreak? - <i>If they describe adversities</i> – Can you describe any supports or strategies used to cope with the adversities?

Read conclusion as follows:

I have two concluding questions.

First, what is the most important point you have made today that you would like us to emphasize?

Is there anything else you would like to comment on that I haven't already asked you about today?

I'm going to stop the recording now. I'd like to thank you for your participation – we really appreciate your willingness to share your experiences for this research project. If you are experiencing any distress, anxiety, difficult emotions, or negative thoughts, please know that you have access to mental health supports, which are listed in the information handout.

Here is the information you need to access your honorarium. [explain, give code, etc.]

Do you have any additional questions about the research project?

Provided Participant: [] Opportunity for Additional Comments [] Access to Honoraria [] Opportunity to Ask Questions



Department of Education
PO Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

March 15, 2021

Office of the Science Advisor
1191 Front Street
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 0K5

Re: Yukon's COVID-19 Research Recovery Program

Dear Yukon's COVID-19 Research Recovery Program Committee,

I am writing this letter to express my initial support for Dr. Vicki Kristman's proposed research project titled "The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health and well-being of educators in Yukon", submitted to Yukon's COVID-19 Research Recovery Program.

Pending receipt and review of a fully developed research proposal (including research questions and methodology) and Research Ethics Board approval through Lakehead University, I will be in a position to grant the research team formal permission to conduct this project with Yukon educators. This is in accordance with Yukon's Department of Education Research in Schools Policy.

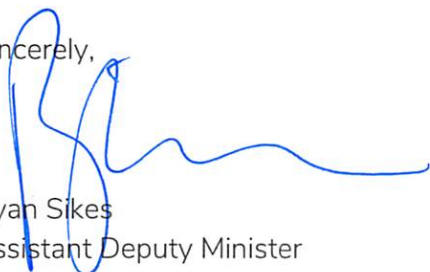
It is anticipated that this study's findings will provide my department with an understanding of how educators have been affected by the pandemic and the associated changes we made to the delivery of education in the territory. I am interested in learning about the impacts on educators' mental, physical, and emotional well-being, and their perceptions of policy decisions, available supports, and school-specific actions. These research findings will be helpful in decision-making and planning as we continue to navigate this pandemic or to inform any future public health emergencies.

I support a researcher-led approach to the study design to minimize the perception that any participating organization's needs may be influencing the study. However, I am happy to make myself available to the research team to provide any advice and guidance as they may need in an effort to ensure that all research questions remain relevant to the Government of Yukon's needs.

My department and I recognize the need for this research and believe that the qualitative approach led by Dr. Vicki Kristman is most appropriate to obtain this information. We will be provided with in-depth descriptions of how educators throughout the territory are experiencing this pandemic.

Therefore, on behalf of Yukon's Department of Education, I endorse the overall concept of this research project. Currently, I have no reason to suggest that Yukon's COVID-19 Research Recovery Project not support the researchers with the opportunity to proceed with this study.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ryan Sikes', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ryan Sikes
Assistant Deputy Minister
Education, Schools and Student Services



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EDUCATION
DIRECTORATE**

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Office of the Science Advisor
1191 Front Street
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 0K5

March 24, 2021

RE: Yukon's COVID-19 Research Recovery Program

Dear Yukon's COVID-19 Research Recovery Program Committee,

Please accept this letter of support to Dr. Kristman's project "The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health and well-being of educators in Yukon" in her application for Yukon's COVID-19 Research Recovery Program.

The Yukon First Nation Education Directorate (YFNED) is interested in the findings of this qualitative study to showcase the effects of the pandemic on the health and wellbeing of educators, and subsequently students. I'm curious to learn about educators' perceptions of how the delivery of culturally inclusive programming may have been impacted throughout the pandemic. This information should provide insight for the YFNED as to how to best support educators who are advocating for First Nation students across the territory. The results could therefore be useful in advancing our objectives.

Findings may also reveal the need for better planning on the part of the Department of Education and Yukon Government, which is something I have been advocating for since the beginning of the pandemic. This research may contribute to evidence that supports an effective plan moving forward.

Members of my YFNED team will provide input on Dr. Kristman's interview questions and offer guidance with the project on an as-needed basis. Although I am keen to support the project taking a researcher-led approach, where the research team conducts interviews with educators and manages the research process.

In summary, I endorse the efforts of Dr. Kristman's team as they seek funding to support their research.

Sincerely,

Melanie Bennett

Executive Director, Yukon First Nation Education Directorate



Yukon Teachers' Association
Association des enseignantes
et des enseignants du Yukon

2064 2nd Ave
Canada Whitehorse, YT
Y1A 1A9

March 23rd, 2021

Office of the Science Advisor
1191 Front Street
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 0K5

RE: Yukon's COVID-19 Research Recovery Program

Dear Yukon's COVID-19 Research Recovery Program Committee,

On behalf of the Yukon Teachers' Association, this letter is in support of "The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health and well-being of educators in Yukon" led by Dr. Vicki Kristman.

Listening to the experiences of educators through in-depth interviewing should provide rich descriptions of how they have been affected by the pandemic. I think these research findings will be enlightening for the Yukon Teachers' Association and the Department of Education as we learn about new mental burdens and psychological stressors caused by the pandemic and changes to the delivery of education.

As part of our mandate, the Yukon Teachers' Association aims to advance, support, and safeguard educators in the territory. This research aligns with these efforts and will provide much needed insight into the day-to-day experiences of educators as they continue to adjust to COVID-19 measures. Evidence from this study could assist with decisions related to the provision of supports to educators, alterations to policies or procedures, and other planning decisions as we continue to endure this pandemic.

I endorse a researcher-led approach to this project as Dr. Kristman's team has the time and capacity to commit to this study. The Yukon Teachers' Association intends to advertise their study to help recruit participants and make educators aware of their findings.

I encourage Yukon's COVID-19 Research Recovery Program to provide Dr. Vicki Kristman the opportunity to complete this research. It will be very valuable to the Yukon Teachers' Association and the Department of Education.

Sincerely,

Ted Hupé
President, Yukon Teachers' Association

A Detailed Working Summary of Research Findings

Title of Project: The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health and well-being of educators in the Yukon

Background

Our research team has been exploring the ways by which the COVID-19 pandemic and associated changes to the delivery of education have been affecting the health and well-being of K-12 educators in the Yukon. We have conducted 33 in-depth one-on-one interviews with educators across the territory (i.e., teachers, educational assistants, and administrators) who have shared their knowledge, perspectives, and experiences navigating the pandemic. To amplify their voices and highlight their lived experiences, we have categorized key themes, established meaningful connections, and identified powerful quotes to substantiate these findings. Details of our specific methodologies are available upon request.

What is contained in this document?

This report is a detailed working summary of our key findings, showcasing established connections between the themes that emerged from our data and the nuances of educators lived experiences. It includes a point-form textual summary of our research results, a visual schematic model representing the main conditions and consequences of these experiences, and an appendix with categorized quotes. **For a condensed, high-level overview, please see our 4-page Working Executive Summary of Research Findings.**

This draft document is not a final report, and it does not include our discussion of results or our recommendations moving forward. It is to remain confidential. In the coming weeks, our full analysis will be completed with a final report for educational stakeholders and outputs for interviewees and educators broadly.

What are we asking from you?

As territorial leaders embedded within education and supporters of our project, **we are asking you to review this document and provide feedback to our research team** as a form of member checking. This technique supports credible and rigorous qualitative inquiry and enhances the trustworthiness of our findings.

When reading this document, please consider the following:

1. Do you accept our interpretation of the findings? Why or why not?
2. Do you have any additional insight or contextual information that may help inform our analysis?
3. Our goal is to describe the lived experiences of educators interviewed. Therefore, we have reflected on the influence of our own positionalities (i.e., our social identities that shape our worldviews) when interpreting our findings. When reviewing, we ask you to please do the same.

Summary of Findings

The following showcases 1) differential effects on health and well-being; 2) schematic model connecting main findings; 3) challenges educators faced while navigating the pandemic; 4) circumstances that mitigated or moderated adversities; and 5) educator-identified suggestions moving forward.

1) Differential Effects on Health and Well-Being

Yukon educators' health and well-being have continued to suffer throughout the pandemic. All dimensions of health have been affected, including, cognitive, emotional, social, and physical well-being.

Specifically, we heard the following:

1. Effects on cognitive and emotional well-being
 - Challenges contending with job-related uncertainty
 - Unclear responsibilities and not knowing what to prepare for induced self-doubt
 - Ethical tensions related to conflicting values and priorities of others
 - Increased pressure on administrators to provide direction when they felt ill-equipped to manage staff
 - Concerned with quality of education delivered and progress made with students
 - Both as a motivation to 'pivot' and a risk factor for burnout via psychological pressures
 - Most reported reduced satisfaction with their job and career related to unsustainable workloads and mental loads
 - Negative thoughts, feelings, and avowed quality of life
 - Pressure to present with a positive affect for students, despite contending with adversities
2. Diminished social connection and sense of belonging related to physical isolation, loneliness, and severed relationships
 - Educators with family and friends outside of the territory and those who lived alone described severe impacts related to travel restrictions
3. Exacerbation of existing mental health concerns
 - Anxiety, depression, stress responses, and traumatic experiences
4. Physiological, mental, and behavioural responses to work-related stressors
 - Lifestyle changes perceived to be unhealthy (e.g., dietary and exercise changes)
 - Altered sleeping patterns
 - Increased consumption of alcohol
5. Most educators described signs of burnout or proclaimed to be burnt out
 - Physical and emotional exhaustion

- Cynicism and withdrawal
 - Impaired functioning with poor morale and inefficiency
6. During periods of isolation with their families, educators experienced exacerbated impacts on health and well-being as they had to assume both caregiving and teaching roles at home
 7. Conversely, a number of educators reported positive effects on mental health and well-being during the period of at-home learning
 - These included decreased stress and better self-care strategies
 - Related to a reduced workload and no longer being exposed to behavioural problems within the school setting

2) Connecting Findings: A Visual Schematic Model

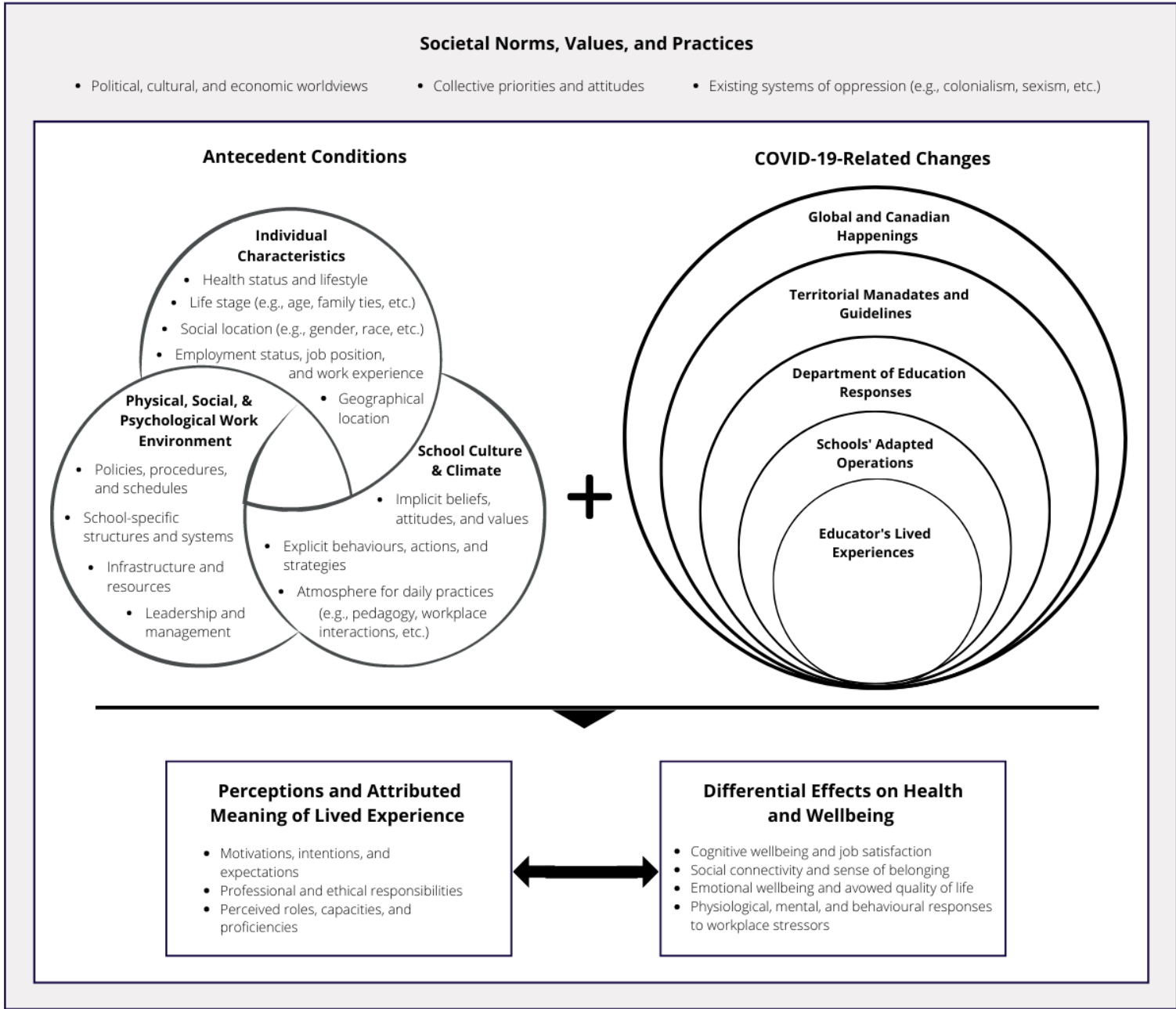
The above noted effects on health and well-being were a result of a myriad of factors affected by COVID-19-related changes nested within different scales, which overlapped and intersected in complex ways. The impacts and challenges perceived by educators were dependent on antecedent conditions. Further, pervasive societal norms, values, and practices influenced lived experience prior to and throughout the pandemic. Acknowledging this complexity, below is a visual schematic model that serves as an attempt to unravel these interconnections.

Antecedent conditions include an individual's characteristics (i.e., health status and lifestyle, life stage, social location, employment status, job position, work experience, and geographical location), the physical, social, and psychological workplace environment (i.e., policies, procedures, and schedules, school-specific structures and systems, infrastructure and resources, and leadership and management), and the school's culture and climate (i.e., implicit beliefs, attitudes, and values, explicit behaviours, actions, and strategies, and the overall atmosphere for daily practices).

COVID-19-related changes were nested within different scales. Changes experienced at the individual level was within the context of school's adapted operations, which was highly dependent on the Department of Education's responses to territorial mandates and guidelines. These happenings were informed by federal governance processes influenced by global-level events and politics.

Together, pre-existing conditions and COVID-19-related changes altered perceptions and attributed meanings of the lived experiences of educators (i.e., motivations, intentions, and expectations, professional and ethical responsibilities, and perceived roles, capacities, and proficiencies).

These conditions, changes, and perceptions determined the lived experience of educators navigating the pandemic and influenced their health and well-being in a bidirectional fashion (e.g., adverse changes to health and well-being also had a negative effect on perceptions of the workplace).



3) Challenges Educators Faced While Navigating the Pandemic

Throughout the pandemic, educators have been contending with new and adjusted work environments, evolving guidelines, policies, and procedures, altered school culture and climate, and a collective global crisis.

Specifically, educators experienced the following:

1. Heightened and prolonged levels of stress and fear within and beyond their workplace

- For many, this has been unrelenting, continuing over the summer breaks and into the next school year
2. Changes to their physical, social, and psychological workplace environment
 - Transitions between at home and in-person learning
 - Challenges with at-home learning
 - Insufficient resources to work from home and reach students
 - Family duties interfered with teaching duties
 - Difficult to separate home life from work life
 - Alterations to classrooms and other physical school spaces to comply with health and safety guidelines
 - Inability to congregate, collaborate, or effectively support others
 - Distancing and mask use affected engagement with students, especially in primary settings
 - Unclear role for educational assistants and some non-classroom teachers online
 3. Negative effects on school culture and climate
 - Severed connections and limited interactions between staff, students, families, and community
 - Negative atmosphere and collective attitudes within the workplace
 - Conversely, some educators described a stronger sense of belonging and connection with others related to sharing the experience of trauma
 - Shift in perceived values of the school (e.g., prioritizing health and safety over connection and relationships) and of the Department of Education (e.g., focused on policy and public image and not retaining educators)
 4. Changes to the means of delivering education
 - Newfound dependence on technological means of instruction
 - Logistical challenges with learning technology or developing non-technological 'solutions'
 - Concerns with equity in access to computers, internet, and at home supports for all students
 - Limited experiential and culturally-inclusive learning opportunities
 - However, some creative 'solutions' that centred land-based learning
 - Reduced ability to co-teach or collaborate with different classes
 5. Altered perceptions of professional and personal roles and responsibilities
 - Impacted workplace motivations, intentions, and expectations
 - Diminished quality and quantity of education delivered
 6. Contending with the execution of pandemic-related decisions, which were made across different scales (e.g., territorial mandates, Department of Education policies, and schools' enhanced health and safety procedures)
 - Decisions appeared detached from school-based realities, despite seemingly good intentions

- Affected educators' ability to exert autonomy and agency within their professional and personal lives
- Guidelines and recommendations were viewed as inconsistent, complicated, and ever-changing. Sometimes this resulted in noncompliance
- Poor communication to educators of policy change (i.e., was not timely or was unclear)

7. Lack of supports for educators

- Many described supports for mental health and well-being as being unavailable, inaccessible, or inadequate
 - Many used external supports or self-developed strategies to cope
- Limited resources to adjust their delivery of education
 - Nearly all interviewees spoke about challenges with human resources (e.g., not enough staff resulting in increased workload)
 - Rural educators provided many examples of challenges being short-staffed
 - Amplified with vaccine mandate-related vacancies
 - Lack of guidance to oversee new instructional methods and provide feedback
- Concerns with overlap between pandemic-related happenings and other inequities in social determinants of health (e.g., housing shortages, access to food, ability to travel for school supplies, etc.)

4) Circumstances that Mitigated or Moderated Adversities

Antecedent conditions, including an educator's individual characteristics, the workplace environment, and the school's culture and climate, determined exposure to and the severity of adverse effects on health and well-being.

The following circumstances mitigated or moderated adversities:

1. Individual characteristics affected perceived capacities and proficiencies when dealing with pandemic-related changes
 - Self-proclaimed resiliency, adaptability, or flexibility
 - Established mechanisms to cope with stress (e.g., physical activity, meditation, immersion in favourite hobby, etc.)
 - Educators who lived with a partner or family spoke about both the positive (e.g., connection with others) and negative (e.g., inability to find alone time)
 - Those who were not high-risk for severe disease and did not have close family or friends who were high-risk for severe disease felt fortunate
 - Expression of gratitude for living in the Yukon (e.g., low number of cases, access to natural environments, etc.) and a positive outlook when considering happenings in other jurisdictions
 - Educators often described their tendencies one of two ways:
 - i. Strictly followed all set rules and responsibilities despite many contextual challenges in doing so

1. Often involved increased workload (e.g., greater number of tasks, more time spent on existing activities, etc.)
 2. Compromised their ability to deliver curriculum, connect with students, and maintain a work-life balance
 - ii. More explicitly centred students' learning and well-being while making judgement calls on whether to adhere to all evolving rules
 1. Values, priorities, and intentions of others (e.g., workplace superiors, Government of Yukon, etc.) did not align with their own
 2. Created tensions between others, ethical and existential crises, and adverse effects on emotional and cognitive well-being
 - iii. These two responses appeared in conflict with each other
2. The physical, social, and psychological work environment influenced perceived roles and responsibilities, impacting work duties and connections with colleagues. Moreover, the school's climate and culture establish the atmosphere for day-to-day practices
 - Educators who had strong, trusted, collaborative relationships with their superiors felt like they had autonomy and flexibility with how they delivered education to their students
 - Educators in larger classrooms were able to adjust to distancing requirements more quickly
 - Educators included within school-related decision-making processes (e.g., involved in developing the school's operational plan, collaborated on ways to improve hallway traffic flow, etc.) felt valued, which contributed to a sense of purpose
 - Schedules that allowed for time away from students (e.g., prep, lunch, etc.) gave educators time and space to decompress
 - Educators in schools with available or advertised health and teaching supports spoke about accessing these resources to cope with adversities
 - Structured processes within the school to update, communicate, and collaborate with staff lessened feelings of uncertainty and prevented confusion

5) Educator-Identified Suggestions Moving Forward

Educators spoke passionately about the context, challenges, and consequences of navigating the COVID-19 pandemic. While not explicitly asked, many educators were keen to provide advice to high-level decision-makers in education.

The following are suggestions by educators on how to move forward:

1. Develop systems and structures to support educators' health and well-being, to establish clarity and consistency across schools and classrooms
 - Provide resources that allow time for self-care within the work day
 - Develop a health advocacy position to plan and support these efforts
2. Involve educators from all job positions in decision-making processes related to policies and procedures
 - Ensure educators feel valued and not in a tokenistic fashion

- Establish means to evaluate the effectiveness
3. Find ways to reduce the workload of educators
 - Prioritize processes to recruit and retain staff, especially in rural schools
 4. Re-evaluate policies and procedures for sick leave in light of COVID-19-related challenges
 - Rural educators expressed the need to support their leave requests
 5. Consider potential long-term impacts of the pandemic, including the notion of collective trauma and plan for ways to support educators
 6. Develop preparedness and disaster plans should an event like this happen again

**Note that this advice came directly from educators interviewed. Our research team will establish our own recommendations upon completion of our analysis and updated review of the literature.*

Appendix A: Categorized Quotes

The following section includes a number of quotes to substantiate our findings above. Please note that many quotes overlap with many of our proposed categories. There is complexity to these insights, connecting many of our themes, which establishes the trajectory of our findings.

1) Challenges Educators Faced While Navigating the Pandemic

Heightened and prolonged levels of stress and fear within and beyond their workplace

I would say that my level of stress [...] before pandemic, there was not that heaviness that goes now with us every day. Everything is adding and **the heaviness is a burden that we carry every day** in different ways.

I do think teaching was already getting harder before the pandemic. It feels like **there's always things added to our plate and nothing ever gets taken off** of our plate.

There is an awful lot of stress.[...] social media caused all kinds of stress. [...] The school within the community became [...] ground zero for like fifth level germ control CDC. If you want COVID, go to this school. [...] And as a teacher, if I went into the grocery store, just to pick up stuff, even though I was wearing a mask and vaccinated up the wazoo. It was interesting, I kind of felt like a feeder shark in a school of fish. Everybody just sort of spread out.

I think the pandemic is just showing what is lacking and where we need to put our effort, but I don't see that it's being address because it's not addressed. Yeah. It's very deep, but the school system is a system, right? And it does not get better. I think I was hoping that things will change, but it's not changing. We're not moving forward, and then when we should with what we are with this... We should learn from that, but I don't feel that... **We're learning, but we're not doing anything different.** So, that is frustrating.

Changes to their physical, social, and psychological workplace environment

There's staff I don't really see. **You don't pop in and talk to people as much as you used to.** It still happens, but it's not the same as before.

It was really scary at first. I felt like my job sort of turned into telling kids to wash their hands all the time. I think it was a huge adjustment [...] All the spacing was literally impossible to accommodate. It felt like what they were saying was expected. And seeing it in schools where they were putting up shower curtains in between desks. And in my head, I was like this is ridiculous. **If we need to do this to be safe, then we can't achieve that. So it's not safe.** So I don't think I ever really felt safe until the vaccines came out.

I'm not a classroom teacher, I work with kids. Probably a dozen to 20 times this year, I've gotten a text between 7:30 and 8:00 that I of getting, saying, "We're short subs. We need

one of you to fill in." So **there have been many, many days where I have not been able to do my job because I am substitute teaching in another classroom**, or doing that for part of the day. And that's not just my school, that's every school, like **everyone in a supportive role just gets shuffled around**.

Schools were closed. That was determined. So we had this onset of, "What does this look like?" **We've never done at home learning before, we've never done this remote learning how do we make this work?** So my March Break was no break. I worked all the way through it. We had meetings every day. Trying to let staff not worry too much and just say, "Take a break at home we'll regroup." They're still wondering what's going on. And so we're trying to figure out what does this look like, how do we keep people safe.

Negative effects on school culture and climate

This is the rule. I have to do my job and enforce it. So that was hard because I found in the last two years, that's what a lot of what I have to do is, is like this is the rule, follow the rule. This is for your safety. And that's like, I don't want to do that. I know I have to, but it's not fun. [...] **I feel like a lot of times I'm destroying relationships that I've built by having to be like, "Put your mask on, sanitize your table."** It's hard to build relationships and then I have to fight people on it.

We were told, you were given all the maximum occupancies of the staff room is a social place. That's why schools have staff rooms so people can gather and connect. **I just started eating lunch alone every day, because we were told that's the safe thing to do. And I still do it now. Because it's totally changed the cultures of schools.**

It affects how we look at every student. If a kid has a runny nose, we start to get really scared because it's like we know it's there now. And if a kid sneezes, it's like well, do we get them home and put that pressure on the family? Do we just let them cough and sneeze all day? And **it's constantly having to make these really tough judgment calls.**

You can't combine classes and we're trying to minimize the going in and out of different classes that's not a part of your bubble. So I think in those ways, collaboration, I guess, is affected a little bit by that, collaboration between colleagues. [...] **It kind of affects the school culture a little bit, because there's a lot less mingling of students and less collaboration between staff members.**

I work hard at supporting other teachers and I've seen other teachers need time off, just not quite on their games certain days. And it's all COVID related. [...] **seeing colleagues needing help or time off has affected me because it's important to me that like, I can't do my job if they're not on their game and vice versa.** And you don't want to pry into people's lives. It's like, you okay? I'm okay. But I don't think you're okay.

I think **what was really hard was obviously the culture.** When you're able to start having school assemblies, you can't have those anymore. We can't do our community

nights anymore. You're also changing the operation of the school, too, kids having to have their hand sanitize before coming in, bubbling the classes, you can't have buddy reading through having two different recesses. So that created some more supervision. So there was less community time within the staff rooms at that time too, still outside where Friday night. So we put a happy face on the whiteboard y'all go and meet up and have a beer after work or something, that couldn't happen. Hard too because you got new staff that have hired on that don't know the culture. And so they're getting this really skewed view of how it runs, how it works. And, yeah, no, definitely just a different sense.

Changes to the means of delivering education

We had families that didn't even have any technology at home, didn't have an iPad, didn't have a computer, so you're trying to balance out. How do we give packages and then have a balance with online learning? And then it was trying to support families of how do we get laptops or computers to them? It was about loaning out. There's also a contract that has to be signed with that. I know there are families that if it breaks, they don't have the finances to replace it. And then how do you start staggering a school at that time, I think about [deidentified number] kids for pickups? And then how do you start? And then **teachers are saying, "How do I assess?"** How do you determine that if the work comes back, were they able to do it independently? So and again, it was what you prioritize, we're not done the school year, we're not through the curriculum. So do you just focus on what was already taught in to hone in those skills?

There was an awful lot of extra added stress once the pandemic hit and the teaching experience shifted from one of, I don't know, sort of teaching curriculum stuff, to more attending to anxieties. That really is how it felt some days, where you didn't teach, you just spent the day just talking with the kids and checking in and making sure they were doing okay and those kinds of things, right. So yeah, it shifted quite a bit.

Traditional teachings are not happening over Zoom. That's not what happens.

I'd send it electronically or sometimes leave stuff that parents would come and pick up at the school. It still is more work to prepare that stuff and try to prepare for the next couple of weeks because **we have long-range plans, but you have to adapt and change day to day.** [...] So trying to figure out what we're going to be covering for the next two weeks was more challenging and more work for me.

Normally I do math review for the first two weeks of the basics. I did it for a month and a half because they had lost simple things that, I don't know, like long division and fractions. They just couldn't remember how to do any of it. So **it meant that I had to kind of take giant steps backwards in their learning, to help them catch up to where we needed to be to kind of pick up where we should have picked up from. So, there was an awful lot of extra work.**

A lot of these problems have always been here. I think Covid has just escalated everything. In some ways it's shown us where the holes are, and what needs to be worked

on. In the same time, **the rules and mandates means that we can't work on the things that we need to improve like that connection, and bring back the importance of school.** The cultural experiences where everyone can get together, we can't do that. And that's where the kids thrive here. They're First Nation kids, they thrive on the land, and we're forcing them to sit in one classroom.

Altered perceptions of professional and personal roles and responsibilities

I'm very much realizing that **this career is not sustainable for me at its current state. And it's not the type of job I want to do poorly.**

I think **the biggest stressor is the pressure of letting our team down and just not showing up for work and feeling guilty for the additional work it puts on to other people's plates** on our team. I think that's the biggest thing that I've been affected by in terms of COVID and mental wellbeing.

It felt like **it was just a failing effort. But as scary as it was knowing how much the community needed it and my role being to serve families and children was also sort of counterbalance.** Just because knowing what families went through having to parent, and work, and do it all, part of me was like you have to do this. **As scared as you are, you have to.** Yeah, so those are I guess the biggest feelings. Fear and frustration, and not meeting the marks that have been set out.

Trying to change the kids to be like, "No, they have to learn that I'm only going to help them until 3:00 PM." It's... Well, then they're not getting help and then you're sacrificing that relationship. [...] The fact that they're coming to me for help is huge. **No matter what time of day it is, the fact that they don't see me in person, then they're going to call me on the phone. Because that's how bad they want help. I'm absolutely going to reward that.**

If I'm feeling a little bit under the weather, I feel so guilty sending that text in the morning to [administrator]. So **there's that personal responsibility we feel towards our colleagues.** [...] it affects the whole day, because even if you take that sick day, you're still sitting up at home working on plans, or trying to make the day smoother and easier for whoever is covering your class. You're sending those text messages while you're at home being like, "Who's covering my class right now? Are they okay? How are the students? Are they behaving?" Just really being a lot more involved than any other teacher who's on a sick day or whatever day in the city would be because we're in a rural school. Just the dynamics are different, I guess.

[...] and **I got to give props to the Department of Education in the Yukon because they really are prioritizing obviously the health and safety of teachers and EAs and school workers. But I think they're also prioritizing the wellbeing of students by keeping the schools open.** At least from what data shows, it's a low risk environment. That's what they're telling us at least. So, it's nice to know that they're not just closing the

schools at fear more than evidence-based data. Yeah, I think they're doing the students a really big favor, except their parents to send them to school or not.

Concerns with the execution of pandemic-related decisions, which were made across different scales (e.g., territorial mandates, Department of Education policies, and schools' enhanced health and safety procedures)

Like, **having six feet apart, unless they're going to build us a massive school that's not going to happen.** And many kids were calling us on that too, especially if they knew what six feet apart looked like. They were like, "But we're not six feet apart!"

The department quietly just said, "Okay, well tell you what for [deidentified school name], the safe distance will be one meter." And they just did that. There's no science or anything. **They were just like, all the kids won't fit. We'll just make the safe distance be one meter.** Can you imagine if that were the case with cobras. Just like, "Hey, you know what? There are too many cobras here for me to walk across the room safely." So I'll just say that the safe distance to be from a cobra is one meter. But a Cobra can strike two meters. Yeah. But then I wouldn't be able to cross the room. **Then what's the point of having any of the rules at all.**

And the minister would be **making announcements for education and we were finding out the same time as the general public.** So that was really tough to you, when you're like... We're not even giving a heads up about decisions being made. And comments about, "Well, we've been working with administrators." It's like, what? Not me. I don't know who you've been talking to.

Once school started and people started to realize that, oh, it takes a lot longer to let the kids come in staggered [...] And especially here when winter hits, kids have a ton of gear on, it takes a while to get that off [...] it was a 30-second interval so it really made no difference. The kids were still all together at their lockers. **My perception was that all this stuff was really there for show, to check the boxes and say, "Yeah, we're doing all this health and safety stuff," but to me, it wasn't actually mitigating any risks.**

The uncertainty that this year caused, the ridiculousness of ever-changing policies. And as an administrator, shielding myself from that as best as I could, as well, so that they weren't hit and bombarded with all of the changing mandates and changing policies, and just kind of picking and choosing the ones that wouldn't have such a massive like emotional effect, I guess, is the best way to describe it. I think that piece is really important when you're looking at your focus is just **what this has done to people in their faith in their profession, their faith in their employer.**

I find is the overall morale suck is the fact that that **workload is very unevenly distributed.** You do get teachers who get to have their own classroom, get to have an easy workload all the time, get to teach the same classes over and over, get to have small class sizes or whatever you might happen to be jealous of. And then there are people who are just constantly overloaded.

I think you have a situation there where **the sort of boots on the ground, values and culture may be a little bit different from what we're getting from above.**

[...] you're also working with, let's be honest, **government officials in the Department of Education that in the back of their mind is always about votes. Is about staying in power instead of doing what's right for kids and right for families.** So I think that's always been a huge stressor for us at this school.

At the end of the day, **I will do what's best for the students with or without the department.** And so far there's been no clash there. I think that'd be true of all teachers that the department and our administration really are saying, well, do your best, we trust you to do the best ethical professional job you can do.

And they've [the Department of Education] **always been a few steps behind then after that, like they're always just a few steps behind what actually needs to be taking place.** And it's not useful.

Lack of supports for educators

I think that **our plates are full and we don't need more things put on us. We need some of our things taken off of our plate and we need more support,** like just all around more support. [...] We just need so much more support than what we have and a little less to do would be nice.

And I feel that as an educator, there's a lot of like, "Our amazing educators, thank you. You guys are totally equipped to do all of this." **And the pile gets increased, and the complimenting and praise seems to be in place of actually help. There's not enough help and there's not enough support,** and the praise for how great we're managing all of it, it's like when you sign any email saying like, "Thank you for your prompt response." Like they haven't responded promptly, you're telling them what to do in that line. And so **I feel like the tone is these compliments that are really a directive,** "Thank you for managing all of this, thank you for taking this on. Thank you for making sure it all gets done."

I would say I still have a joy for working with young people, and I haven't lost sight of that. But the support that comes from government and the Department of Ed has definitely been in question in my opinion. And to me personally, it really comes down to money and what they want to invest in. And it just means the fallout is **we are expected to do more with less, and there's huge, huge ramifications for that.**

There's definitely a divide between the Department of Education and the specialists and consultants that work there versus the people who work in schools. **There's definitely a disconnect and a lot of frustrations on how we're supported, and how we're heard, and how they are involved in the schools to sort of get on the front lines with us.** And that's where I said you really have to advocate for yourself to get people in the building.

They're not going to come and do it on their own. Because I know that they're short staffed too. But yeah, I guess this is now post-pandemic, but there's a huge teacher shortage right now, a huge sub shortage. And the Department of Education and Support Services is completely staffed, and it's another one of those divides of us and them, them and us.

Working in a rural school, we don't have a lot of coverage for time away.

There's such a shortage that it's kind of just like we're all without support. [...] but no one's applying on the jobs. And no one wants to be doing those things so, **even if there's the money, there aren't the people. And so that really contributes to, "Everyone's running on empty and everyone's just trying their best,"** but like, "This is hard for everyone, so we kind of have to do what we have to do."

We got the support and the caveat is we got the support that was available. For sure we couldn't pivot on a dime.

Professional Development now is all virtual and it's often getting canceled because of the situation here, and gets canceled because we're very short-staffed, so **sometimes people aren't allowed to do the professional development they had signed up for.** The professional development that we do do it's almost all virtual, and I find that it's a lot less exciting and inspiring.

I was really starting to flounder and feeling like **my admin was so overwhelmed that I wasn't getting support.**

I think **the department administration and our administrator gave lip service to the notion that it was a stressful time and self-care is important,** but it was kind of like, "We know you guys are dealing with a hard time. We're so sorry, it must be really hard. If you need anything..." And then in the next breath, they were telling us all the extra stuff we'd have to do this year, and it was never really spoken about again. Like it was really quickly acknowledged, and then without follow-up.

I think that education staff doesn't have enough support and I think is continually being asked to do more with less. If I could find another job where I made three quarters of what I make now or so and knew that I could ... I would take that. **I would leave teaching. And I feel like that's a big sentiment within the educational community that a lot of teachers are looking at it like, "I don't know if I can keep doing this."**

2) Differential Effects on Health and Well-Being

Effects on cognitive and emotional well-being, including challenges contending with job-related uncertainty and concerns with quality of education delivered

I think though risks were weighed, I think the process at which we would return had not been explored enough because they didn't consult with anybody. And as a result, **the ground was constantly shifting beneath the staff and students. That just made everybody so stressed and so grumpy.**

Sometimes as **I felt like our health and safety is not as big of a priority**, like that it can be compromised more by people making choices that aren't safe. A kid not wearing a mask is compromising my health and safety. And yeah, I think I looked up our Occupational Health and Safety Act the other day and read it because I was like, I want to know exactly what it says. And it says that like I have to be, I have to make sure I'm being healthy and safe and I have to make sure that everybody else is too. **And it's like that airplane thing. You put the mask on first, then you help the child.**

It's just so much harder than it's ever been, so now I'm like, "Well, **if I could retire at 55, then maybe that's what I should do. And I can go get an easy job**, and work a couple more years to supplement my retirement."

I would say in the time I've started working in Yukon, **the requirements and responsibilities of the everyday classroom educator, specialist educator has continued to rise with less resources and supports, or having to absolutely fight and claw to get the resources and supports you need.** Over the years, it became a lot harder to run the classroom I guess you could say. And the needs of students has only grown as we've tried to move towards a far more inclusive classroom setting. So that for example, could be students who are on the autism spectrum, students with physical challenges, intellectual challenges, with just less and less supports coming from the department, from Student Support Services. And just **really to survive, having to advocate, and advocate, and advocate. Otherwise, the quality of the program that I could deliver would drop. And my own mental, physical wellbeing would be put to the test.**

And there's a lot of people that had to be showing up for work and their anxiety was through the roof because they're immunocompromised or their family members. And, yeah, yeah. And then **it's our job at Admin to take away that anxiety, to try to sequester those stressors to listen and reassure and to support in any way we can. But there's nobody asking us, there's nobody saying, "Hey, what can we do for your school?"**

Diminished social connection and sense of belonging related to physical isolation, loneliness, and severed relationships

[...]the morale in my mind is so low. We had a staff meeting a few weeks ago and it was virtual. And our principal asked everyone to put **one word that's describing their current mood, and it was deflated, exhausted, hopeless.** The only positives were from the principal who was like, "I'm feeling hopeful"[...]

Now students are coming back weaker because of the pandemic. It means you got to find some more resolve. [...] you have to say to kids, this isn't tough compared to most

of the world and teenagers don't want to hear that. And they're still too young to really understand what you mean. [...] Because I am kind of a suck it up and do the job kind of guy. I'm not much for whining. But all the advice I got was no, teenagers are really hurt by this pandemic and you've got to give them some space to be sad or lazy or however they're real acting.

There were huge shifts in social dynamics between students. And even just as us as teachers we kind of lost that. We have a very family feel in my school. So if a kid needs a hug, you give them a hug. That kind of went away, right, like so **there was like an institutional feel that came with the pandemic that didn't exist there, prior to the pandemic hitting.** [...] the relationships between teachers dissolved too.

So it's also being neutral, that if someone who I completely disagree with comes to me for support, I still have to be supportive. And that's fine. I can be neutral about it, but it's just a little bit more stress.

Exacerbation of existing mental health concerns

I felt at first, it was okay. And yeah, I wasn't feeling that bad, but I feel like, I don't know, somehow I became less active, and that continued into the next school year. I've gained weight since the beginning of the pandemic, which I guess some people started working out a lot and I did the opposite, which then I don't feel good about that. And I just missed even having adult interactions outside of the classroom, that is a big thing for me. So I would say being home all the time, being online, I really missed that and not being able to hang out with friends. So **there was a slide into more of a depression** at that point, for sure.

I think there was some amount of stress guilt over navigating other people's COVID boundaries. Like there are certainly people I work with who were like, "Oh, it's not such a big deal," and other people I work with who were more stressed out and sometimes you have this, embarrassment is not the right word, but you're like, "Oh, I think everyone is feeling comfortable hanging out right now, but I'm not." So I'm just going to say, "I don't feel well" so I don't seem like the anxious one.

It was terrible. It was easily the worst summer I've ever had, bar none. You can put that in all caps, bold underlined. I felt so trapped in Whitehorse. [...] I felt super disconnected from nature, and I live in nature. [...] **I felt super disconnected.** [...] **I just felt miserable. I was depressed.** I was in a Groundhog Day. [...] So it was a lot of same thing every day, try to get some exercise, make food, do whatever errands you could do bare minimum. [...] It was really hard on my soul to go through that. And it's usually a time of recharge, reconnection with family, adventure and travel. And to then have to go into the start of back to school in-person learning. **And I felt like I didn't have a summer. I felt completely starting a year with an empty tank.** And yeah, I never want a summer like that again. I never want a stretch a time like that again.

Negative physiological, mental, and behavioural responses to work-related stressors

I had a tough group of kids that I was really in charge of. **And I said text me whenever. Text me, call me, message me, whatever.** When you're ready to learn, I'll be ready to help unless it's like the middle of the night. [...] But I did, I mean even in June of 2020, a girl texted me at midnight and she was like, "This work. I need help with this." And so I helped her with it really quickly. [...] But yeah, **I did make myself really available to them.**

Part of it too is that with kids, you leave your baggage at home. **When you're with kids, they are your priority. Their mental health, their physical well-being, their emotional well-being. So if I was stressed, I couldn't let the kids see that because they needed somebody to be rock solid for them every day.** So, put that extra added pressure to kind of bundle it up and eat it. Eat that stress which probably isn't exactly healthy but it's what you had to do to get through each day.

Most educators described signs of burnout or proclaimed to be burnt out

I feel really frustrated with where I work and the job that I do right now, and that hasn't always been true for me. And it's like it's frustrating, that everybody is, running on empty, [...]. Then it's kind of like, "I know, but **everyone's doing the best they can, and we're all just running on empty.**" **And you kind of can't hold anyone to task because everyone's struggling.** So for me, that's caused a lot of frustration because I feel like there needs to be something to be done, maybe there's nothing, maybe we all just have to put our heads down and push through this.

It takes a lot of our energy and then this energy is not used for something else.

Every little thing felt like an earthquake. No matter how little it was, I feel like just, at least for myself. And I know for some of my coworkers, like just no perseverance left. Like no, I guess, energy to brush off the little things that normally are just like okay, that's annoying, but whatever. I'll just check the box and move on just because it felt like there was a thousand boxes and they never ended.

By Christmas time that first year when we went back, I did the same thing as I did for this spring break. I slept for four days straight. I just was like, "Ah, I should watch some TV or have a nap." [...] That was kind of what I did. And **that's how I did that whole entire year back was just push, push, push and keep moving forward because that was all that we could do really.**

I think sometimes **you're burning on fumes, you're doing adrenaline.** But when this is all said and done and it's like, you can relax, what does that look like? Are people just going to fall apart because they didn't realize that they had been running two and a half years, three years, just burning through all of their energy.

These effects were exacerbated during periods of isolation for their families while they had to assume caregiving and teaching roles at home

I definitely had increased anxiety. Yeah, it was stressful. My [partner] is also a teacher and we both work from home and we've [number] of young kids, and it was hard. [...] Yeah, I think I had a lot of increased stress and a big part of it was, if I'm being frank, **I did a few hours a day and then I had to kind of call it a day** [...]. There wasn't a lot that I could do at night after hours. There was some, and I did it, but I can't meet with kids late at night when my kids are asleep.

In my own life, my [kid] was [elementary grade] at this time, and everything was online too. **So, I have all my full day with Zoom.** Sometime that was eight, nine hour, different meeting. Zoom was online all time at my house. I don't have any time to eat sometimes or to have lunch because that was really busy. Busy more than ever. **And my own kid was by herself because we were working.** So, I need to manage her studies.

My [kid], that has been a big stress this year too. He missed a lot of school because of being in close contact. [...] **So trying to juggle, with his mom and myself, who's going to stay home?** We're not supposed to use our regular sick days. We are only supposed to use the special leave day for that situation [...] I don't have a lot of special leave left. I'm afraid I'm going to have to take some days, leave without pay, for caring for my [kids].

And then the other challenges were just managing things when I had to be at home. So I'm really fortunate that my partner was able to work fully remotely. So we didn't have a loss of income or anything like that at the time. And his work was very flexible, but we were ... Seriously, I kid you not, **the department specifically told us we weren't allowed to do childcare during work hours while sending our kids home from school.** Like what?

Conversely, a number of educators reported positive effects on mental health and well-being during the period of at-home learning

I think for me, the fact that what I have really is that I was home with my [kid]. So yes, my mental health was affected, but the fact that I had her here, I was able to spend time with her, to go outside. It was a beautiful time in the Yukon, like March, May, April. So, that really helped me to get through that.

I was having the worst semester of my life. I had a class that was so hard to manage that I would close the door. They were my last class of the day and cry at my desk. I have not done that since my second year of teaching. It was brutal.[...] So I went from having the absolute hardest semester of my life to having the easiest [...]. So I might have had sort of an odd experience there because it was great. **It kept me from having to go on stress leave.**

I held it together. I got, what's the word, because I want to appear to be genuine, because I am, I just saw too many kids wandering the streets and it was supposed to be lock down, stay home, stay away from people. And it was very gratifying or moving that kids were all migrating back to the school. They were really missing school.

I really liked being able to spend more time with my family. Not that much time, that was too much time. But I never saw my kids, I don't even know who they are. I've got no idea what they're doing in their lives most of the time. I go to work and they go to school. So 7:45, I drop them off. A little after 5:00, they come home after school and after school care. I don't get to go to their school and do anything. I'll never get to see a recital or a play or anything. I can barely get to parent conferences. [...] **It was kind of nice to actually get to know my kids and realize how much work had really interfered with that. [Deidentified school] is like a 10-hour day job, which is not, I think, sustainable as a human.**

My relations with my colleagues, they are always the same. **We were always very supportive and to each other, but I think the pandemic help us to know each other, the weaknesses and the strength.** [...] Before pandemic, you work and then you are a big team of educators with different files of face values and you go with that and then you go by affinities, like definitely it's human pandemic at the same time, brought us in another level because we had change our priorities the way we are in our relationships.

3) Circumstances that Mitigated or Moderated Adversities

Individual characteristics affected perceived capacities and proficiencies when dealing with pandemic-related changes

I was home alone in my house. I spent a lot of it thinking about what am I going to do? And so I did a lot of professional development like that whole month of March after spring break. [...] **I'm also very technologically savvy.** So I started to think about like, well, okay, what can I do? How am I going to get work to my kids? What kind of tech things can I use? I sure learned how to use Zoom very quickly.

I think this is really important. I'm not your average teacher. I don't have a classroom of 30 kids. When you look at what a teacher has to do, **I have a real sweet assignment and my life is nothing compared to my life when I lived in [deidentified rural Yukon location].** [...] **I'm in a more privileged position for sure.**

It wasn't right away that they'd made the decision not to open up afterwards. And then they gave us two weeks to transition to having our class materials and stuff like that **online. I felt the timeframe was pretty reasonably slow.** I'm reasonably technologically apt [...]. So it's probably a little bit different, **I didn't have too much of a struggle shifting gears that way.** And I think a lot of the teachers did. For some people, that was my much more difficult. So I felt that the timeline was really friendly.

If this pandemic had hit about 10 years ago where I was as a teacher, without exaggerating, I really believe that I probably wouldn't still be teaching. It would've just been the straw that broke the camel's back. I had already taken some stress leave or sick time because of stress and there were things going on where I was not able to cope and deal well. I basically found myself forced into a position where I needed to make some

changes and **this external extreme stress situation probably would have broken me**, at least professionally. I would've had to leave the profession. And who knows? I wasn't good at dealing with stress in any area of my life. Who knows what it would have done to my marriage or my family life or any of those things too? **I was lucky it hit when it did.**

I don't feel like I experienced the pandemic in the same way as some other people did because we were isolated. Our borders were closed. **Things were kind of business as usual here. It wasn't so bad.**

I keep circling back to some of my friends are teaching too in other jurisdictions. And you ask exposure notices here and stuff and, again, **it's been pretty a pretty fortunate place to be here, in comparison to some of my friends that are teaching down south** and their schools are more students in classes. And just more people, of course, in areas that they're at. I don't know. Again, coming back to with a perspective and just being here.

The physical, social, and psychological work environment influenced perceived roles and responsibilities, impacting work duties and connections with colleagues. Furthermore, the school's climate and culture establish the atmosphere for day-to-day practices

[Deidentified principal name] was very supportive and made me feel self-assured in what I was observing and allowed me to double down on my instincts and really **try to be a community member before being a teacher.**

[...] principal was really encouraging of me using my time to manage my personal health, my physical health, which had the added benefit of feeling supported as a professional in that there wasn't sometimes, some schools, some administrators will say, "Okay, well, your prep time is only for sitting in your room, preparing lessons and marking tests." And I felt personally, at least with this, that he was saying, "You're a professional. You'll manage your time and do your work when you need to do it. And here's the opportunity to use this resource that's here. And so you make your decision. " That's empowering as a professional to realize you're not being micromanaged like that. I had that double pronged benefit of having my health supported and my professionalism feeling like it was supported at the same time, so that was good.

I like more experiential learning, for sure. And more field trips because it's way more fun to get out of the building.

4) Educator-Identified Suggestions Moving Forward

Develop systems and structures to support educators' health and well-being so there is clarity and consistency across schools and classrooms

I think it's really beneficial to sort of **take the pressure off looking at just stats and data, and trying to look at how can we be healthy, and how can we be supportive of each other emotionally for such a heavy job.**

And then I just had to learn, over the years, the balance, what's most important. **The kids are the number one. Well, I'm number one because if I'm not okay, nobody else is okay or I'm not going to be able to support them, so self-care.**

It needs to be somebody's job at the department to advocate for teachers and communities so that they can build better relationships and actually feel they can stay in a community.

The decision-makers need to understand that the impacts of their decisions go beyond politics to people. And it needs to be clear, consistent, compassionate. And it needs to be... They need to do more than pay... I don't even want to say lip service, but it can't always be reactionary. There's too much that's reactionary and not enough... [...] We're still all exhausted because they think that as long as they say, "We understand it's been really hard for you. And you've been working really hard," they think that is acknowledgement. **Words are not enough. They need to do more to make sure that there's actual systems in place. And that the systems that are in place are consistent, accountable, and actually take care of their human resources so that the human resources can take care of the kids. And when we take care of the kids that will ease the stress of the family and will help the community.**

Involve educators from all job positions in decision-making processes related to policies and procedures

That was frustrating because **people, the staff, were not feeling like they were valued. The students were valued but not them.** That's probably equal to the capacity thing, that's a huge thing. People were very annoyed that they didn't feel like they were important enough to get these things.

The most important point I would like that you emphasize, it's to... **to get the people who are taking the decisions to visit schools, to be on the field, to be on the ground, to understand what is the reality, because it's easy to take decisions when you are seated at your computer and when you are not living the reality.**

I would like to not have to fight so much to have to highlight the rural reality. I would like to have real conversations and really be heard and by being heard, not just hearing me, but then acting on that in a practical way, not a policy way. Because how many times **I've heard that that's policy and policy is equivalent to equal, equality is not equity. We know that in our students, it's the same for our schools and the people who run them.**

Find ways to reduce the workload of educators

I think it would be around **recognizing capacities of people**. When these layers get added in to our lives and in our brains, we can't ... there's not much space for extra things. It's actually a time to reduce, I won't say reduce responsibilities but, what's the word? For example, on our PD days, I made sure there was something, like professional developmentally there, but I left it to them to decide if they needed, if they had the capacity to do it or not. If they needed to just do work in their classroom, that's fine. Everybody reported to work. Everybody was doing something. People were talking with each other but they needed, they need time in their day, too, to have space or time within their job. There's a phrase that goes along with that with children, too. I'm trying to remember it. It's like when you reduce the something, you increase the capacity. That's true for all of us, I think.

[There is a need] to strategize days where I was saying we have great holidays, we get all the best stat days and we get summers. But **burnout is super real**. And living in the climate we do when it gets really dark and really cold. So there'll be times where **I'll look towards a PD day where we're not teaching, and I don't have to worry about letting a student down, or having to worry about getting my sub plans in, and just skip it and just have a day of recharge. That's one way I survive**

The one thing I can think of is **being flexible. I mean, you have to be able to be adaptive, and not singularly adaptive to the content that you're teaching, but adaptive to your mode of delivery or your expectations of what you're going to get back**. Because I really don't think that there's much of a difference in that earlier example where I said that you create 14 packages for home and you get two back, there's got to be an alternate method of assessment. So all falls under that flexibility modification of a content assessment delivery.

I think it's just **the lack of human resources up in community and rural schools**. This was an issue before COVID from what I've heard and it's unfortunate that we're getting hit even harder because of COVID. I know Whitehorse is also struggling to find supply teachers and teachers on call, but at least they have some. We're just hit harder being in a rural community.

Administration, but the department and our professional development, they'll talk about self care. The hot topic this year has been inclusion, which that is awesome. Great. But **you can't have an inclusive classroom when you don't have the support for it**. You can't put one teacher and say, "Make the classroom inclusive." That's just not how it works. And so in my mind, you're preaching this self-care, but here's another thing to do, do more with less. And then **it makes me feel that I'm not doing a good job because I can't make it as inclusive as it should be** because there are kids that I cannot spend ... kids that need one-on-one support. I can't do that all the time. It's physically impossible. [...] You just can't get to everything. It's not possible. I do my best. But from what our PD has been, **it makes me feel worse because I can't possibly do these things without support, so why are you preaching this that I should be doing this when it's impossible?** Budgets are being cut and they're talking about getting rid of EAs when they need to be having more EAs, more LATs if they really want to make things inclusive. It's

a great, great theory, but you need supports in place to be able to put into practice, and we don't have that I don't think anywhere in the Yukon at this point to do that. And I've talked to other colleagues who feel the same way and feel it's demoralizing to this be our professional development. But then we did have one speaker that was like, "Well, at this point with how crazy it is, the social wellbeing of the kids is the most important so just showing up is enough." There's so much mixed messaging that it gets super frustrating where it's like, "Just showing up is enough, but make your classroom an amazing inclusive place." Because then it's not just talking about that you're accepting of everyone. Obviously, that part is there, but to actually help all the kids who have higher needs, it's just not possible with one person.

Re-evaluate policies and procedures for sick leave in light of COVID-19-related challenges

When I'm not in school, it's a lot more work because I make a really detailed plan for whoever is going to be in there for me because [...] I want to make sure that whoever is covering for me has, everything listed out in detail, has enough work that hopefully it's extra. I don't want them to come in and have a time where they're like, "Okay, there's 20 minutes left in this block. What do I do?" So it's a lot more work for me. I'd get up days that I would have to stay home. I'd go in at 4:00 in the morning into school, get everything gathered, make my sub plan and then come back home and take care of whoever was home that day.

Consider potential long-term impacts of the pandemic including the notion of collective trauma and plan for ways to support educators

[...] the effects are ongoing. The reality since the onset has changed, but not in a positive way. And that those stressors are still there, the work demands are still there and I don't know, I think for me, too, it's to be cautious of, this is a trauma everybody's enduring students, teachers, principals alike. And it's to **be really conscious of what does that long term look like? And what supports are going to be in place when this is an endemic and we're going back to some normalcy. So how do we make sure that people are being taken care of in all aspects of their life? So, if we're going to preach self-care, what's going to be done to ensure that everybody is actually healthy?** I imagine, there's going to be some form of PTSD for people.

I think the biggest thing is the amount of isolation people probably felt and probably still aren't comfortable in sharing in that feeling of isolation, that lack of connectedness to others that, I can manage it on my own. And for some people, they just couldn't. The long-term effects of that for some people who truly feel as though that they can, but in reality, just can't. I think those types of consequences are going to show up in how many teachers quit the profession. **How many people are done at the end of this year? I think our numbers are going to be pretty high. I think our tolerance level, our breaking point as educators, has never been higher than it is right now.**

I guarantee you, there'll be holes in the Yukon in administration next year. And I mean, I know that there's five positions that we couldn't even fill this past year, not until

probably December. And some were just interim positions. **So that's a telltale sign of the effect of what's been going on here and the effect of COVID, specifically, because there's never been those gaps historically.** I mean, when you're not... You can't even get Yukon vice principals to apply on principal shifts and you can't even get Yukon teachers to apply vice principal shifts, **you got to have a certain time to step back and say, "What's going on and why?"**

We're also trying to teach with less people, and less resources, and spending a school budget on hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies. And not knowing if that budget's going to get refilled or changing. Like it's these small oversights or these just ridiculous oversights that just as like, I guess a window into the systematic problem of how education is structured and portioned out, I guess, implemented. **That you put on the stressors of a pandemic and it's just really highlighting the cracks. It's putting a lot of stress in the cracks. And it's really hard to not think about that crack and watch it become a gully. Like it's worrisome, very worrisome.**

I would say that I had been thinking about this a lot before the pandemic, and then the pandemic really solidified it. [...] **And it's if you don't take care of yourself, you will 100%, this job will eat you up and spit you out.** And the way it's trending in government and where our society's putting money, we're not getting the people in the buildings we need to be in the buildings. And we're seeing that even more this year with people who usually come to be a sub or do part-time work are just not showing up, because schools aren't safe places, and they're not supported. **And the teachers there are getting jaded, and sick, and tired, and not really heard. And it would be like no matter what role you're in, you need to take care of yourself.** So that's what I would say is the biggest learning. I'm definitely considering taking time off. I'm definitely considering taking not full-time just to not get to my weekends and be absolutely gutted, and not even wanting to do anything.

Develop preparedness and disaster plans should an event like this happen again

If you're saying there's a chance we have to pivot, then we do need some time to discuss what pivoting means. And that's not a 90-minute staff meeting on a Wednesday. That is two or three days of real work. The photocopying is already done. It's disaster planning preparedness. It's not pivoting do the best you can. We know what bad looks, like pivoting, it wasn't pivot. There was no education that last term. And I don't think we should even pretend that there was much good out of that.