

# **Early Childhood Education: From a Culture of Compliance Toward a Culture of Professionalism**

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# Overview

- ❖ Where We Have Come From and Where We Are Going
- ❖ Sources of Content for ECE Professional Development
- ❖ Teacher Readiness for Innovation and Reflection
- ❖ Questions and Discussion

# Where We Have Come From and Where We Are Going



# Curriculum

- ❖ Where we were...
  - ❖ “...we’re a High / Scope program...”
  
- ❖ Where we are...
  - ❖ Most classrooms now have a defined curriculum that is actually implemented
  
- ❖ Where we need to go...
  - ❖ Too little high quality research on curricula
  - ❖ Too little teacher involvement in curriculum development research

# Instructional Strategies

- ❖ Where we were...
  - ❖ “...we’re not allowed to teach the alphabet...”
- ❖ Where we are...
  - ❖ Most classrooms now focus on literacy development
- ❖ Where we need to go...
  - ❖ Too little planning based on child interests
  - ❖ Too little intentional intervention to extend and expand learning
  - ❖ Too little data-driven individualized instruction

# Assessment

- ❖ Where we were...
  - ❖ “...can you help us analyze our pre / post Dial-R scores?...”
  
- ❖ Where we are...
  - ❖ “...have you seen what you can do with CC.net?...”
  
- ❖ Where we need to go...
  - ❖ “...we’ve got the data...now what?...”

# Quality

- ❖ Where we were...
  - ❖ “...but I passed my ECERS...”
  
- ❖ Where we are...
  - ❖ We share a much more comprehensive view of quality
  - ❖ Quality in our state is continuing to improve
  
- ❖ Where we need to go...
  - ❖ We still need better measures of quality
  - ❖ Elementary principals need to understand what a high quality ECE classroom looks like

# Professional Development

- ❖ Where we were...
  - ❖ “...I just love that *Mr. Smiley Face...*”
  
- ❖ Where we are...
  - ❖ Statewide coordination and planning
  - ❖ Options, availability, specificity, web-based content
  
- ❖ Where we need to go...
  - ❖ More meat in the sandwich
  - ❖ More credible evaluation strategies:
    - ❖ Reaction---Knowledge---Behavior---Results



# Sources of Content For ECE Professional Development



# The Professionalization of ECE

- ❖ What makes a job a profession?
- ❖ What makes a worker a professional?
- ❖ A profession is a group of people who share a common occupation, have completed educational requirements to enter the occupation, and agree to abide by specified standards of practice.
- ❖ A professional is an autonomous practitioner with specialized knowledge and skills, taking responsibility for their own reflective practice and professional growth.

# The Professionalization of ECE

- ❖ Professions control who enters the field.
- ❖ Professions have licensure or certification standards.
- ❖ Professions have systems of self-regulation.
- ❖ Professions establish standards of practice:
  - ❖ Ethical standards
  - ❖ Minimum standards of acceptable practice
  - ❖ Quality standards.

# The Professionalization of ECE

- ❖ Professions establish guidelines for the roles and responsibilities for its members.
- ❖ Professions recognize excellence.
- ❖ Professions advocate for public policies that:
  - ❖ Benefit those served by the profession
  - ❖ Benefit the members of the profession.

# The Professionalization of ECE

- ❖ Professions have organized systems of support for their autonomous members that include ongoing, high quality, standards-driven professional development.
- ❖ ECE in North Carolina is becoming a profession!
- ❖ ECE in North Carolina is increasingly becoming integrated into the wider education profession.

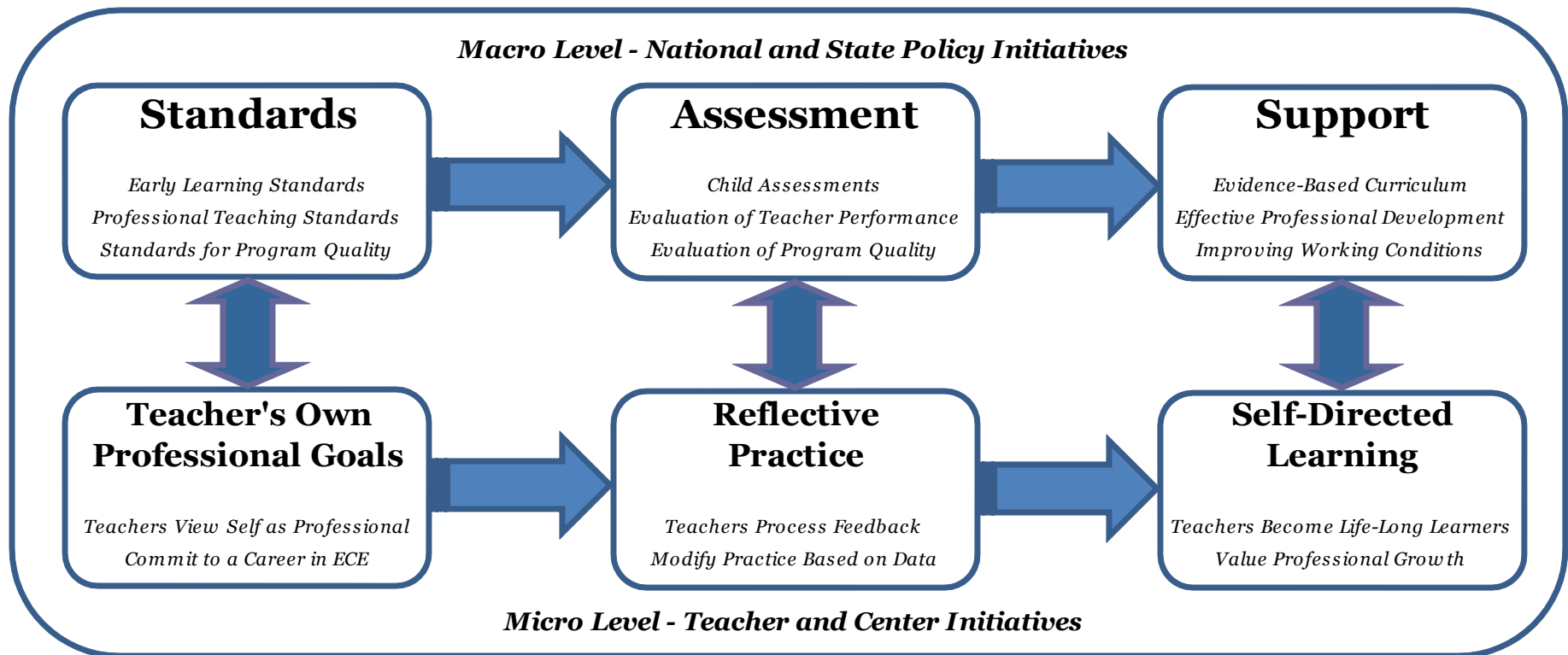
# The Professionalization of ECE

- ❖ ECE is in a state of transition from a culture of compliance to a culture of professionalism.
- ❖ TLU mentors and evaluators are doing important work that is helping our profession with this transition.
- ❖ TLU mentors and evaluators are part of a comprehensive system of support for *More @ Four* teachers that is setting the national standard for early childhood professional development.

# The Professionalization of ECE

- ❖ Comprehensive System of Support for MAF teachers:
  - ❖ Tuition assistance / scholarship program
  - ❖ Salary supplement / health insurance
  - ❖ Birth to Kindergarten license
  - ❖ Teacher Performance Standards for BK teachers
  - ❖ School Readiness / Ready Schools Standards
  - ❖ NC Star Rating System
  - ❖ PKK-TPAI - Evaluators
  - ❖ Data-driven individualized support - Mentors
  - ❖ Group-delivered and individual professional development opportunities in NC expanding all the time

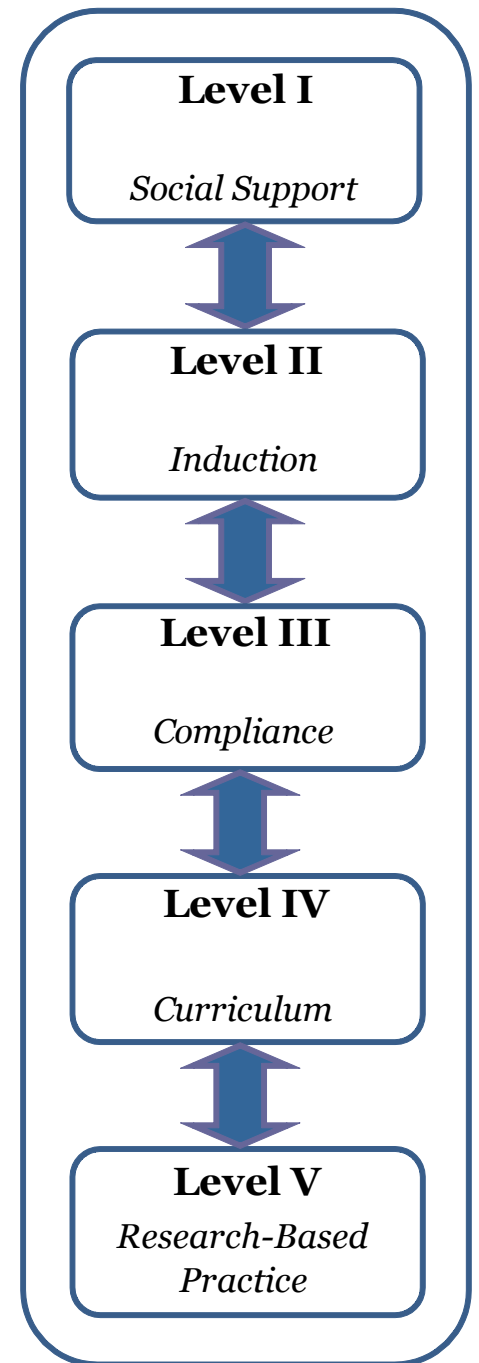
# Sources of ECE Prof Dev Content





# Levels of Content

- ❖ How intentional is the process of welcoming and developing new teachers in your program?
- ❖ Do new teachers feel they are part of a team?
- ❖ Does professional development in your program progress beyond compliance?



# Teacher Readiness For Innovation and Reflection

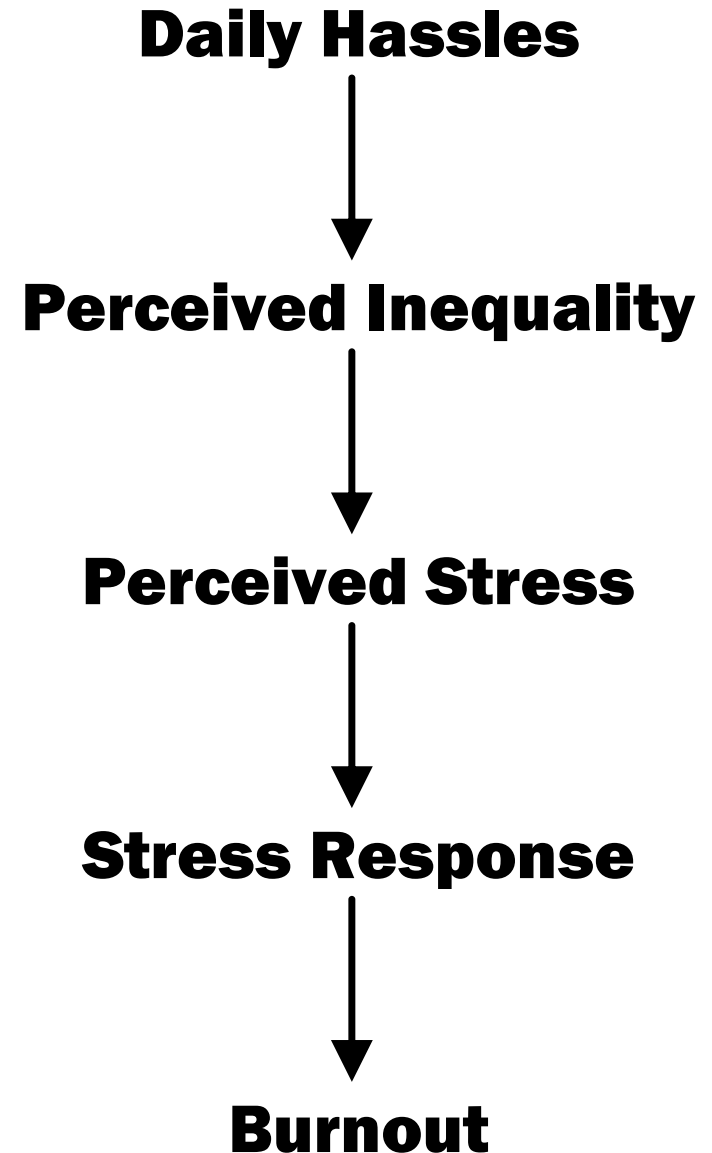


# Stress and Coping Research

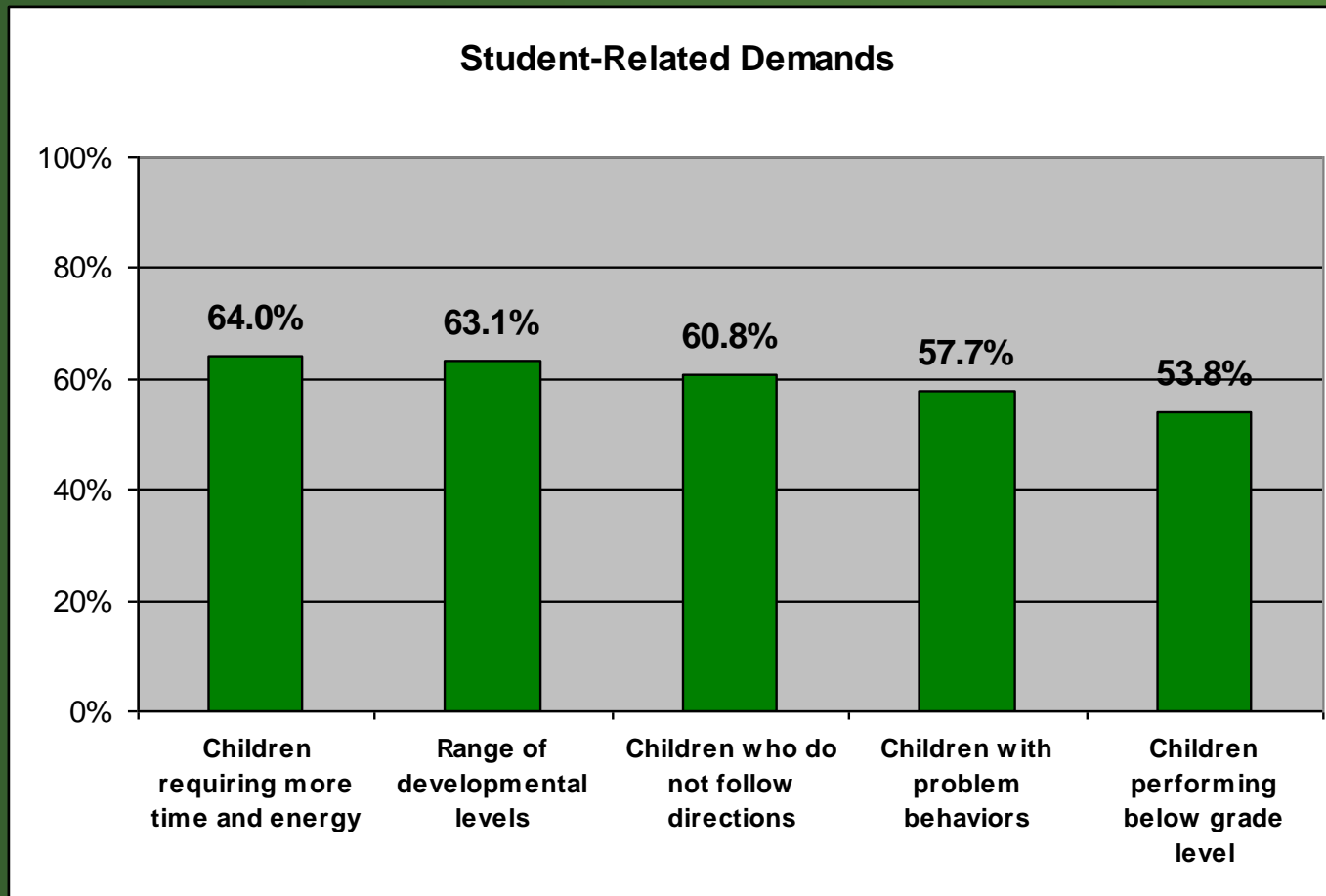
- ❖ We have consistently found that between 25% and 35% of ECE teachers are experiencing occupational stress.
- ❖ Stress leads to burnout, burnout leads to leaving the profession.
- ❖ Stressed teachers focus on survival, on getting through the day.
- ❖ Stressed teachers do not focus on innovation, reflection, and professional growth.

## Pathway to Burnout

- ❖ Context-specific perceptions of inequality between resources and demands leads to stress and burnout
- ❖ Sustained experience of burnout leads to health problems and leaving the profession
- ❖ Burnout Symptoms:
  - ❖ Emotional Exhaustion
  - ❖ Depersonalization
  - ❖ Lack of Prof Accomplishment

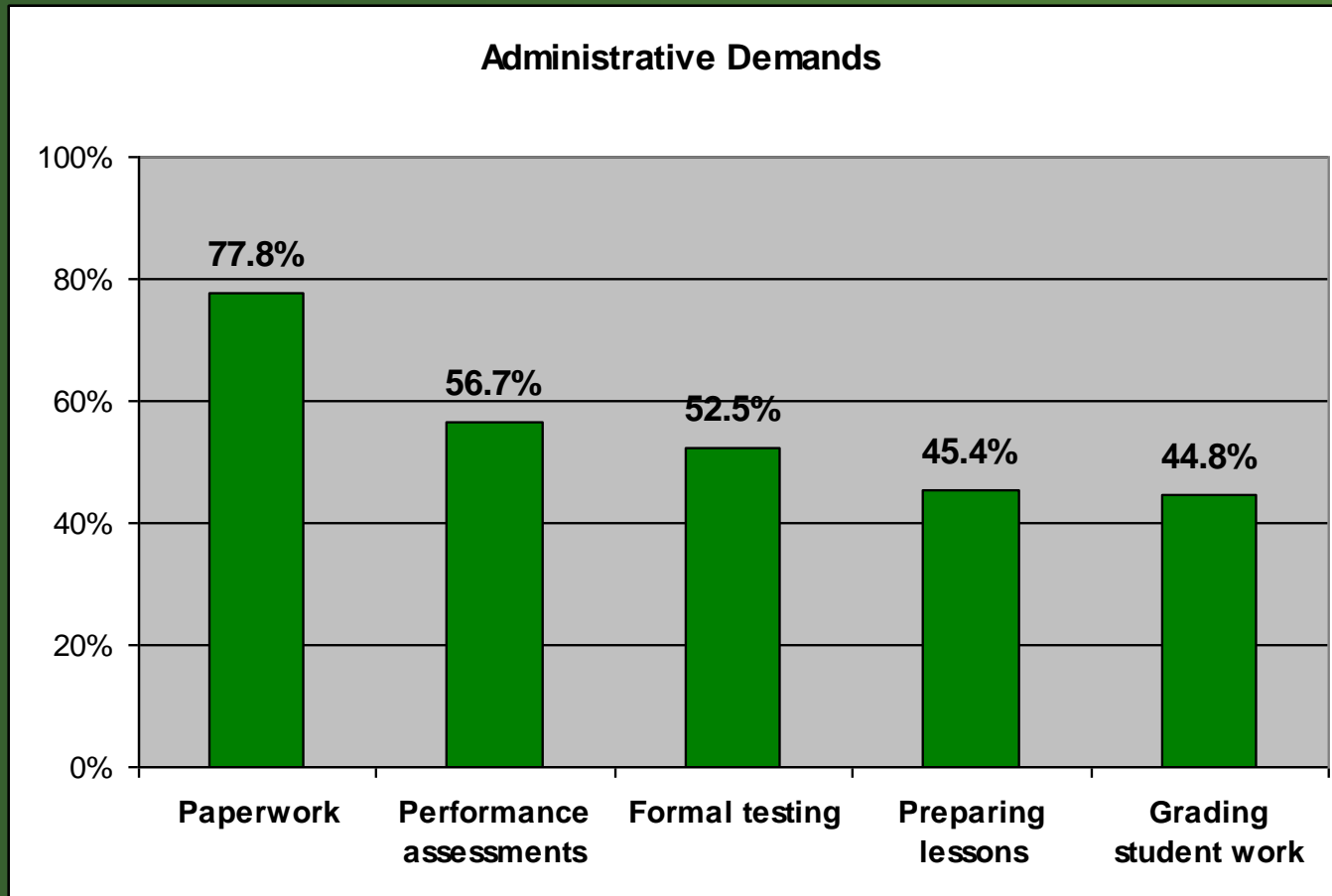


# Most Demanding Aspects of Teaching



Percent of teachers (n=521) who responded "Very Demanding" or "Extremely Demanding".

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# Stress and Coping Research

- ❖ Teachers consistently report the following sources of stress as the most challenging aspects of their jobs:
  - ❖ Challenging child behavior
  - ❖ Lack of administrative support
  - ❖ Lack of parental support
  - ❖ Lack of instructional resources
- ❖ Teaching is widely considered a stressful occupation with significant risk of stress-related illnesses and burnout.

# Stress and Coping Research

- ❖ Teachers have been studied in burnout research more than any other occupation.
- ❖ Stress and burnout create a self-reinforcing cycle.
- ❖ Stressed teachers do not want to reflect on their practice, they simply want to get away from it as soon as the day is over.
- ❖ Lack of reflection, planning, preparation, and engagement in professional growth leads to a more stressful classroom.



# Stress and Coping Research

- ❖ Stressed teachers have less tolerance for problem behaviors.
- ❖ Stressed teachers are less engaged with the children.
- ❖ Children notice the emotional strains of a stressed teacher and interact less with each other and less with the teacher.
- ❖ Teachers reporting intention to leave teaching reported high classroom demands, fewer helpful resources, and higher stress.

# Stress and Coping Research

- ❖ Stressed teachers have a diminished ability to form positive and healthy attachments to children.
- ❖ Stressed teachers show more negative affect.
- ❖ Stressed teachers have lower negative mood regulation ability.
- ❖ Stressed teachers have poorer health.

# Stress and Coping Research

- ❖ We have found that being new to the school or center may be more important than being new to teaching for predicting stress and burnout levels.
- ❖ Teachers who have a strong sense of self and a calling to teach may still benefit from changing scenery.
- ❖ A few strategic changes in one's career can reset the stress and burnout clock.

# Stress and Coping Research

Percentage of Classrooms with At Least One Child with  
Problem Behaviors

	%	Mean
R>D	77.2%	2.49
R=D	88.1%	3.26
D>R	93.5%	4.51

# Stress and Coping Research

Percentage of Classrooms with At Least One Child with an IEP

	%	Mean
R>D	75.3%	2.65
R=D	84.3%	3.01
D>R	93.5%	4.02

# Stress and Coping Research

Mean Number of Children in Classroom with Problem Behaviors

	PS	SA
R>D	1.97	2.97
R=D	2.35	2.80
D>R	3.69	4.23

# Stress and Coping Research

- ❖ No differences in stress levels between teachers in High Poverty and Low Poverty schools.
- ❖ No differences in stress levels between teachers responding in the Fall or Spring.
- ❖ Almost all of the variability in teacher stress levels was within schools or centers rather than between schools.
- ❖ Teacher appraisals of resources and demands are more central to stress levels than the actual environmental conditions.

# Stress and Coping Research

- ❖ New have found that stress prevention is more predictive of psychological, health and wellness, and educational outcomes for teachers than stress coping.
- ❖ Coping refers to strategies we use to restore a sense of equilibrium after a stressor has occurred (self-disclosure, relaxation, problem-solving, etc.).
- ❖ Stress prevention resources allow us to recognize and deal with life demands so as to avoid the experience of stress in the first place.



# Stress and Coping Research

Scale	Subscale
Percieved Control	Feelings of Efficacy Regarding Stress Prevention Feelings of Mastery Regarding Stress Prevention Persistiance
Maintaining Perspective	Maintaining a Flexible Perspective Maintaining Self-Direction Cognitive Restructuring of Perspective Knowing your Limits
Social Resourcefulness	Reciprocity in Relationships Comfort in Relationships Feedback from Relationships Assistance in Relationships

# Stress and Coping Research

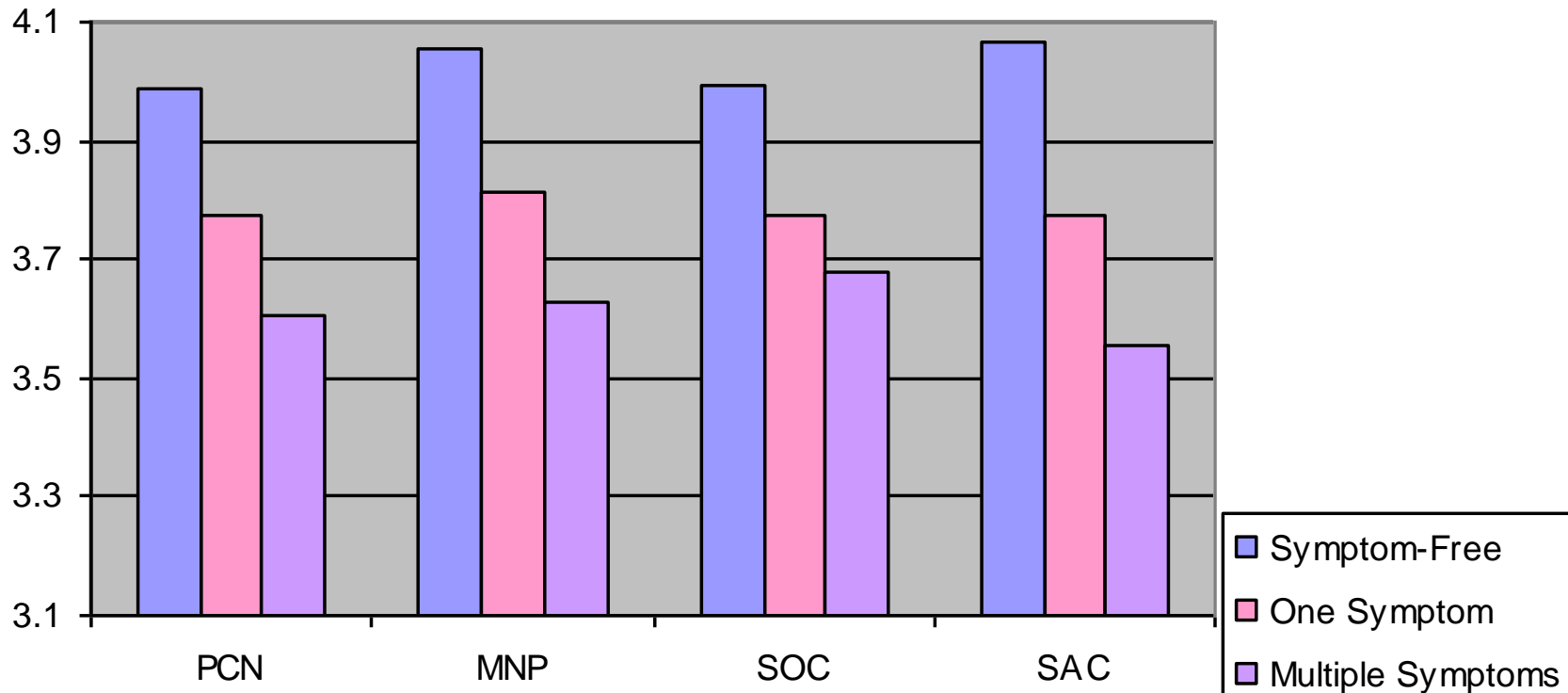
Scale	Subscale
Scanning	Anticipation of Demands Recognition of Opportunities to Prevent Stress Planning Ahead Follow Through
Self-Acceptance	Identify Comfort Accepting Limitations Balance  Tension Release
Preventive Resources	

# Stress and Coping Research

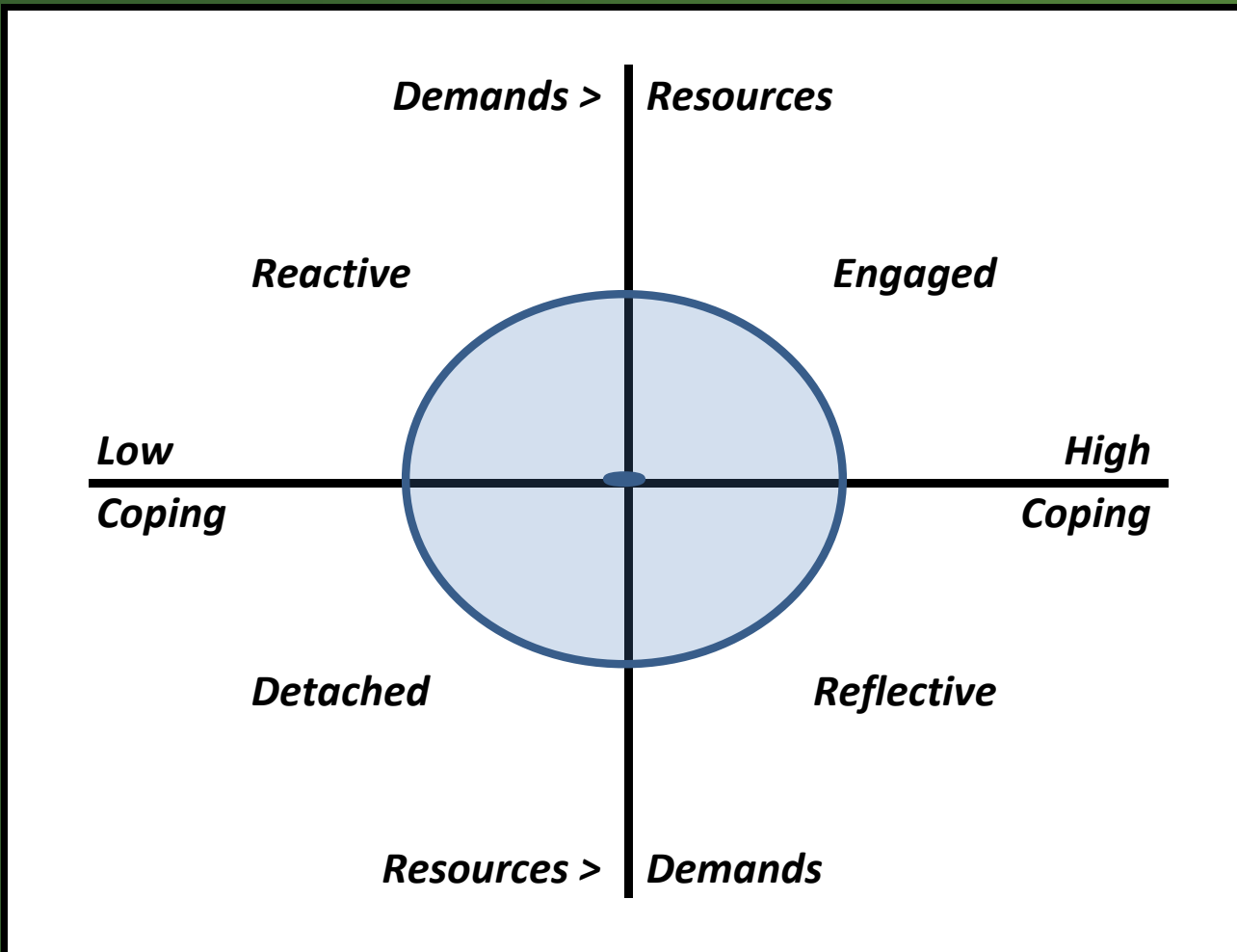
- ❖ Self Acceptance is the most important preventive resource.
- ❖ Self Acceptance indicates a realistic acceptance of your own strengths and weaknesses, and the strengths and weaknesses of your environment including others around you.
- ❖ Self Acceptance implies a strong sense of one's own values and beliefs.
- ❖ Teachers with high Self Acceptance have a sense of calling about teaching and accept all that comes with being a teacher.

# Stress and Coping Research

## Group Differences in PRI Scores



# Stress and Coping Matter



# Attitude Matters

## Stressed Teachers

- Just want to get through the day
- View daily classroom demands as stressors
- Try to cope with classroom stressors
- React to and escalate classroom demands
- Model social conflict for children
- Negatively impact child social development

## Reflective Teachers

- Think about how well the day went
- View daily classroom demands as challenges
- Model resilience and stress prevention
- Redirect, positively reframe, and prevent
- Model social problem solving for children
- Positively impact child social development

# Summary

- ❖ This is an exciting time for ECE in NC as we transition from a culture of compliance to a culture of professionalism.
- ❖ We are becoming more intentional about connecting the content of ECE professional development to both quality standards and individual needs.
- ❖ Continued progress will emerge not only from policy makers, but from individual teachers who commit to a long term growth perspective and a reflective approach toward professional development.

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