What are Teachers’ Main Goals?
The FIT-Choice surveys asked questions about your main goals, and concerns, for those who were teaching, or for those who had taught previously (or were teaching) this section outlines some of the main goals and concerns that you identified.

Your goals as early career teachers were concerned with helping children and adolescents value learning and know how to prepare for the world of work. As you get older, your goals shift to the point where you no longer strive to attain goals for your students. Teaching is unique in that the goals of others (their students) are core to a teacher’s own professional motivations. This is not the case in most other occupations.

What brings satisfaction and a sense of achievement to teachers and makes main goals? This is a question we asked you in the FIT-Choice project, so let me help you study why people choose teaching careers, why they choose to leave teaching, or how they develop in the profession, and what supports and sustains them. We really value the time you have taken to respond to our questionnaires in the past. All of your time has been worth it. This is the only study in the world that has been able to obtain information from this number of beginning teachers across several continents, and over this period of time.

Many countries worldwide have difficulties attracting and retaining teachers, especially in the areas of mathematics, science, and foreign languages, and in rural or remote geographic areas. It is important to determine what factors motivate individuals to teach, which increase the likelihood of staying in the teaching profession, those conditions which are needed to sustain teacher wellbeing, and, the different pathways out of teaching and into other fields.

FIT-Choice is contributing to practical and policy debate for issues including teacher recruitment, retention, effectiveness, wellbeing, work conditions, and hard-to-staff locations. It allows you to express your views about your goals, and what factors motivate individuals to teach, attitudes and policy and represent your views. We welcome your comments anytime.

Take Us With You!
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We hope to hear your thoughts and experiences in an interview (whether you are teaching or not), we are very interested in hearing from you! This 30-40 minute interview allows you to provide more in-depth and detailed information about your experiences and wellbeing.

FIT-Choice Carers About Your Experiences and Wellbeing

If you have not already, and would like to share your thoughts and experiences in an interview (whether you are teaching or not), we are very interested in hearing from you! This is the only study in the world that has been able to obtain information from this number of beginning teachers across several continents, and over this period of time.

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Some of you spoke about what it means to work in supportive school environments characterized by engaged leadership, collegiality, and a strong sense of community.

Unfortunately, not all schools are supportive. Like other workplaces where there are good relationships and respect among staff, this can undermine satisfaction and commitment. This then leads to stress, and lost working days, loss of confidence and perceived competence.

"I think everyone recognises that it's a valuable role teaching profession but... unless you know a teacher really well or have lived with one, for example, you don't necessarily know the 24/7 work that is required to be a real good teacher."

FIT-Choice is working to identify how best to support teachers in their goals, and address their concerns, from the important day you begin teaching.

Policymakers are often most likely to be persuaded by cross-context, large-scale and longitudinal data, such as we are collecting. Thank you for your participation, without which none of this work would be possible!
Exercise releases muscle tension and accumulated adrenalin, and endorphins that are released through the body are natural anti-depressants. Understand more about work stress: what are the sources, it helps you to relax, such as exercising, meditation, listening to music, talking to family, friends or spending time with your pets. Make time for it in your balance plan.

4. Talk to your friends and family: Sometimes the best way to deal with work and personal life conflict, is to make your feelings known to your family or friends. They can offer great advice and support. Establish and use a social support network. Ask for and accept help, cultivate good relationships.

5. Talk to your boss and work colleagues: Making difficulties known at work can help you to obtain support from the people who can do something directly about the problem. If nobody knows you are feeling pressures and stressed, then no-one can help you.

6. Decide what works for you: Some people find that separating work from personal life is best (e.g., don’t check your work emails at home); others find that integrating the two domains helps, depending on your lifestyle (e.g., socialising with work colleagues). Decide which option best suits your individual balance plan.

7. When you have your plan, learn to say “no” to things that aren’t important or that will not improve your existing lifestyle.

8. Do things that you like, such as exercising, meditation, listening to music, talking to family, friends or spending time with your pets. Make time for it in your balance plan.

Recognise and accept your own feelings: express them and be aware of past experiences. Take time to reflect: reassess values, review goals. Use a systematic problem solving approach: define, break down, one step at a time, develop a feasible plan, implement, evaluate, and make a new plan.

Nikula De Alwis: Beginning Teachers & Burnout

Nikula’s research has been involved with FIT-Choice since 2009. Her research focuses on the influence of job stress on work-life balance and work-life conflict, and the buffering role that spirituality can play. Her work with Australian academics indicates that spirituality can significantly contribute to helping teachers deal with the pressures and stress that they face in schools. As a’s role in schools. Working as a Research Assistant in the FIT-Choice project has given Nicula a fantastic opportunity to contribute to Chris for gaining a valuable insight into the experiences and wellbeing of beginning teachers, and to shape his future roles and career path.

Amanda Bell: Work-Life Balance & Spirituality

Amanda works 3 days a week in the FIT-Choice project. Her roles include newsletter development and management of our library of references. As well, she tutors in the preservice teacher education program at Monash University. Her research is focused on the influence of spirituality on work-life balance and work-life conflict, and the buffering role that spirituality can play. Her work with Australian academics indicates that spirituality can significantly contribute to helping teachers deal with the pressures and stress that they face in schools. As a’s role in schools. Working as a Research Assistant in the FIT-Choice project has given Nicula a fantastic opportunity to contribute to Chris for gaining a valuable insight into the experiences and wellbeing of beginning teachers, and to shape his future roles and career path.

Zoe Morris: Professional Identity

Zoe has been a Research Assistant with FIT-Choice since 2008. Zoe’s role is in the project is varied and involves data management and analysis, writing up research findings as well as catalouging our growing library of references. Zoe’s particular interest is in work-life balance and career path. Zoe has been a fantastic opportunity for Zoe to engage with the experiences of beginning teachers.

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Diet is fuel for our bodies; good eating improves performance, cycling and walking. A healthy lifestyle is important to everyone’s wellbeing.

Wellbeing Resources for Teachers

- Medical / Health service
- Counselling service
- www.suicidepreventionfatine.org Tel: 1-800-273-8255
- Mental Health Awareness Week Tel: 0800 968 6642
- Office of the State Employee Service Program http://www.ohiodnr.gov/ohio/603.7,143,603,979,2051--.html Tel: 1-800-521-1377 or 1-872-5663

FIT-Choice Publications

- All downloadable at www.fitchoice.org

All Articles - Learning and Instruction

- DONT’:
  - bottle it up,
  - work through it alone,
  - take work home,
  - be a perfectionist,
  - procrastinate and avoid,
  - squeeze out hobbies,
  - do,
  - delegate,
  - say “no”,
  - take breaks,
  - talk about it.

Tips for Work-Life Balance

1. Prioritise your time: Make a balance plan of how much time you want to dedicate to your personal life and to your work activities each day, week or month. Make sure they are balanced, remember (like a budget), stick to your plan.

2. Learn to say “NO!”: When you have your plan, learn to say “no” to things that aren’t a priority. If important things pop up, make sure you put the time back into the activity you dismissed later on.

3. Use stress management techniques: Unfortunately, work stress and personal stress are often unavoidable, so learn how to cope with them effectively. Understand more about what stress is, what the sources are, it affects you and what you can do. Work out what helps you to relax, such as exercising, meditation, listening to music, talking to family, friends or spending time with your pets. Make time for it in your balance plan.

4. Talk to your friends and family: Sometimes the best way to deal with work and personal life conflict, is to make your feelings known to your family or friends. They can offer great advice and support. Establish and use a social support network. Ask for and accept help, cultivate good relationships.

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6. Decide what works for you: Some people find that separating work from personal life is best (e.g., don’t check your work emails at home); others find that integrating the two domains helps, depending on your lifestyle (e.g., socialising with work colleagues). Decide which option best suits your individual work style.

7. All articles are available at www.fitchoice.org

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FIT-Choice Postgraduate Thesis Supervisions

Effects of gender and gender role orientation on high school students’ teaching perceptions and aspirations in Hong Kong (Wai Shan Ku 2009)

What teachers believe, say and do: A study of the relationship between teachers’ engagement, engagement perceptions and student engagement (Fiona Morrison 2009)

Personality and teachers: A multifaceted approach (Kevin Quinn 2008)

Identifying factors that deter engineering students from pursuing a STEM career as a profession: An exploration of student motivation and engagement (Amy Young 2007)

Indonesian English teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs (Basikin 2008)

Attitudes of university students towards teaching as a career (Amy Young 2007)

Teachers – the next generation: Issues in teacher recruitment (Amy Young 2007)

Zoe Morris: Professional Identity

Bachelor of Applied Science/Social Science (2003), Honours 2004 (School of Business, 2004), Master of Business (by Research), 2010

Zoe has been a Research Assistant with FIT-Choice since 2008. Zoe’s role in the project is varied and involves data management and analysis, writing up research findings as well as catalouging our growing range of resources. Zoe has worked with preservice and secondary teachers, and within the Macquarie teacher education programs, working with preservice secondary teachers in their schools and specifically addressing their career development needs. Zoe recently completed her PhD, investigating the development of professional identities among early career professionals, including teachers, psychologists and medical doctors.
What are Teachers’ Main Goals?  
The FIT-Choice surveys asked questions about your main goals, and concerns, for those who are, or were, teaching. This section outlines some of the main goals and concerns that you identified.

"Motivate them to learn; and engage them in learning. And "good" teaching is about forming the desire to learn. That is the key to good teaching."

Your goals as early career teachers were concerned with helping children and adolescents value learning and develop the skills and knowledge to succeed in society:

"I want to have a positive influence on the lives of the children I work with, and make a difference to my students."

Your goals as mid-career teachers were particularly concerned with professional freedom and autonomy, and with feeling appreciated:

"I want to feel appreciated and valued for the work that I do... and for the work that I do... and... and..."

What brings satisfaction and a sense of achievement for teachers and makes them want to stay in the job? Your comments focused on students and their development, enjoyment of developing and delivering the curriculum, and the intrinsic intellectual and emotional rewards of the challenges of teaching.

In interviews, you talked about wanting to "motivate them to learn" and "engender a love of learning", so that students can "achieve the best that they could do at their own level", as well as to have "confidence in themselves" and in their ability to "be able to learn." This is very important link, because central to the success of learning is to become intrinsically motivated to attain goals for their students. Teaching is unique in that the goals of others (their students) are core to a teacher’s own professional motivations. This is not the case in most other occupations.

... and Main Concerns?

While schools have been given a level of self-managing autonomy, teachers and principals are faced more and more with achievement targets, out-of-class administrative duties, and reporting requirements, that have little to do with the relational work with students, which many teachers continue to see as their “real” work.

Funding of schools is more and more tied to student achievement outcomes, to scaffold and promote students’ motivation, goals and achievement. Problems arise when teachers are unable to attain their goals, which are based on situational constraints and competing demands.

Even though many of you enjoyed teaching, you often acknowledged that work pressures were “intense” and “daunting”, resulting in being “absolutely exhausted” and “stressed out”, with the competing pressures of budget demands of a heavy workload, too little time, and not being able to “leave work at work.”

Your main concerns clustered around issues which impact to interact on job satisfaction: leadership support; time pressure, relating with parents and students; and professional autonomy. A supportive work environment is highly important in decisions about whether to stay in another school, or leave teaching altogether.

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Phase III Progress

From the latest online Phase III survey, we have responses back from 179 of the 152 U.S. participants who initially commenced their teaching degrees. We have found that it is very hard to increase this response rate, and are asking for your help if you are still in contact with others who undertook teacher education studies with you, whether they completed or not. The statistics below are based on the 179 responses we have so far.

Most are currently teaching, followed by lower proportions who are enrolling on a temporary break from teaching, left the teaching profession, qualified but never taught, or did not qualify, and pursuing other studies.

Of those who are teachers, 62% are secondary, 36% elementary, and 4% are early childhood teachers; there are also 19% who have completed the education degree, but left teaching are mainly in careers such as IT (e.g., computer analyst), environmental scientists, stay at home parents, and store managers. Interestingly, several of the professions are quite different from teaching!

People who did not complete their teacher education qualification usually stated reasons such as financial difficulties, being unable to teach, and pursuing other studies.

Some of you spoke about what it means to work in supportive school environments characterised by professional autonomy, and enthusiasm for teaching. In turn influence their students’ motivations and behaviours.

“I think everyone recognises that it’s a valuable, valuable addition for... unless you know a teacher really well or have lived with one, for example, you don’t necessarily know the work. I think you really need to be a really good teacher.”

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