What is this research about?
Adjusting to the demands of inclusive classrooms can be a stressful experience for Ontario teachers (Leithwood, 2006). This study investigated the coping strategies used by teachers in Ontario to manage this stress.

What did the researchers do?
An adapted version of the Inclusive Education Teacher Stress and Coping Questionnaire (Frost & Brackenreed, 2004) was completed by 269 classroom teachers from 4 public school boards and 4 Catholic school boards in northeastern Ontario.

This research article reports on the data collected from section C of the survey, which examined the usefulness of various coping strategies in managing the stress of teaching in inclusive classrooms. 35 Likert-scale questions were included in the survey that asked teachers to rate whether and how much the teachers used particular coping strategies to manage their stress. The questions were linked to 4 overarching categories of coping strategies, that included:

- personal coping strategies (such as, "looking on the bright side", asking a friend for advice, or assuring or physical exercise;
institutional coping strategies (such as discussing one’s stress with a specialist, applying for leave, or resigning);

professional coping strategies (such as drawing on memories of how one managed stressful situations in the past, developing a plan of action, or discussing issues with a student’s parents);

social coping strategies (such as consuming alcohol with colleagues after work or focusing on other interests outside of work).

An open-response section was provided at the end of the survey which provided participants the opportunity to write their own comments.

Responses to survey questions were statistically analyzed while responses to the open-ended questions were examined to identify common themes.

What did the researchers find?
The researchers report teachers found a range of personal, professional and institutional strategies to most useful in managing stress. More specifically, the top five coping strategies were found to be:

1. keeping a sense of humour;
2. drawing on past experience;
3. developing a plan of action;
4. discussing with colleagues;
5. concentrating on what has to be done next.

The strategies considered least effective by teachers were related to leaving the profession or transferring to another school. The researcher suggests that this illustrates that although teachers were experiencing stress, they were determined to continue providing for their students.

Responses to the open-ended questions at the end of the survey revealed that participant teachers felt that more support was necessary and could be provided to teachers in inclusive classrooms, if more funding were available. This included additional Educational Assistant’s and special education materials and resources.
How can you use this research?
The researcher suggests that teachers and administrators may wish to consider the following:

- providing mentors for new teachers to help them develop useful coping strategies;
- providing more opportunities for training and in-service to help reduce the stress associated with inclusive classrooms;
- increasing supports (financial/resources/personal) for special needs programs where possible;
- ensuring that teachers are knowledgeable about the physical and mental health benefits available to them through Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), that could help reduce their stress.

Original Article
To learn more about this research study, we invite you to read the original article:


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Other References

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Teacher stress, coping strategies, inclusive education, teacher training, special needs students.

About this summary
The Ontario Education Research Exchange (OERE) is a project of the Knowledge Network for Applied Education Research, an Ontario network promoting the use of research in education. The OERE’s clear language summaries of academic research aim to support this mandate.

This summary has been adapted from the ResearchSnapshot series developed by York University and ResearchImpact and has been developed according to writing and design principles unique to OERE. For more information about this summary or the OERE network please contact oere.knaer.oise@utoronto.ca.

This summary reflects findings from this study only and is not necessarily representative of the broader body of literature on this subject. Please consult the original document for complete details about this research. In case of any disagreement, the original document should be understood as authoritative.