

## Raising the Volume on Teacher Vocal Wellness: Perspectives from Practicing School Administrators

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### ABSTRACT

Teacher voice health is an important but overlooked issue with consequences for educators, students, and schools. This qualitative study examined administrators' perspectives of teachers' vocal complaints and relevant policies. Focus groups made up of 18 administrators yielded key insights: 1) Reliance on voice amplification, 2) Attitudes and responses 3) Perceived impacts on learning, and 4) Proposed interventions. Findings revealed limited knowledge of vocal health issues and a desire to increase awareness. Concerning reports emerged regarding COVID-19 mitigations worsening student speech and literacy. Further research on the implementation and impact of teacher vocal health programs could be beneficial. This study provides valuable administrator perspectives on policies and practices related to teacher vocal wellbeing. Findings inform efforts to better support educator voices.

### Key Words

voice, health, school, administrators, student learning, teachers

Compared to other professions, teachers experience a disproportionately high rate of voice complaints such as vocal fatigue, voice loss, throat discomfort, hoarseness, and related issues (Cantor-Cutiva et al., 2013; Cantor-Cutiva et al., 2016). These vocal problems negatively impact teachers' ability to effectively teach and their overall wellbeing (Behlau et al., 2012; Nusseck et al., 2018), as well as student learning (Lyberg-Ahlander et al., 2015; Rossi-Barbosa et al., 2016; Roy et al., 2004). These negative impacts can potentially reduce schools' educational efficacy. Although teacher voice complaints are a prevalent issue, prior studies indicate that teachers often lack awareness of resources available to support their vocal health (Houtte et al., 2011).

Developing solutions for teacher voice complaints requires a deeper understanding of the current landscape. While prior quantitative research has documented the high prevalence, risk factors, negative impacts, and potential interventions related to teacher vocal issues, inconsistencies exist across studies (Cantor-Cutiva et al., 2013).

The present study aimed to provide additional qualitative insights into administrators' perspectives and experiences with teacher voice complaints.

Examining these firsthand accounts may elucidate the state of and influences on teacher voice complaints, informing the development of effective solutions. Specifically, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are administrators' experiences with teacher voice complaints?
2. How do administrators respond when teachers have voice complaints?
3. How do school and district policies interact with teacher voice issues?

## Literature Review

Teacher voice complaints are highly prevalent, with up to 71% of teachers experiencing voice-related issues monthly (Cantor-Cutiva et al., 2013). Numerous studies across the globe over recent decades have shown that teachers report significantly more frequent and more severe voice problems compared to other professions (Alarouj et al., 2022; Behlau et al., 2012; Hunter & Titze, 2010; Morton & Watson, 1998; Oliveira et al., 2022; Roy et al., 2004; Sliwinska-Kowalska et al., 2006; Smith, Lemke, et al., 1998). Though some variation exists (Cantor-Cutiva et al., 2013; Mattiske et al., 1998; Williams, 2003), the overall body of evidence highlights that vocal complaints disproportionately impact teachers.

## Risk Factors

Researchers have identified risk factors for teacher voice complaints. While findings have been mixed, several studies have consistently identified the following vocal risk factors: strained voice production or habitual loud speaking (Evitts et al., 2022; Kenny, 2022; Moreno et al., 2022); poor air quality (Evitts et al., 2022); stress (Evitts et al., 2022; Vertanen-Greis et al., 2020); teaching lower grades (Alarouj et al., 2022; Leão et al., 2015; Remacle & Lefèvre, 2021); instructing certain subjects like physical education, art, or performing arts (Alarouj et al., 2022; Cantor-Cutiva et al., 2013; Smith, Lemke, et al., 1998); being female (Feng et al., 2022; Nerrière et al., 2009; Nusseck et al., 2018; Sharp & Cook, 2022); and having more years of teaching experience or increased age (Nusseck et al., 2018; Rossi-Barbosa et al., 2016).

## COVID-19

Several studies have examined the impact of remote work as a COVID-19 precaution on vocal health. Researchers hypothesize teachers may have benefited from avoiding damaging in-person conditions, such as loud noises or

poor air quality (Evitts et al., 2022). Other research indicates slightly reduced vocal discomfort when teachers taught remotely. One study found 34% of teachers reported more voice issues in-person versus remotely, with 15% reporting more vocal problems when teaching from home (Evitts et al., 2022). Another study revealed 71% of teachers experienced voice complaints in-person compared to 44% when teaching remotely (Patjas et al., 2021).

## Impacts

Prior research indicates that teacher voice complaints negatively impact teacher wellbeing, job performance, student learning, and school operations. Studies have found associations between voice complaints and increased teacher stress (Carrillo et al., 2020; Guzy, 2020; Vertanen-Greis et al., 2020), anxiety, depression (Merrill et al., 2011), and long-term physical limitations (Merrill et al., 2011). Teachers with voice issues also report diminished quality of life (Nusseck et al., 2018), difficulty teaching and communicating effectively (Akinbode et al., 2014; Behlau et al., 2012; Smith, Kirchner, et al., 1998), burnout symptoms (Guzy, 2020), and lower work engagement (Nazari et al., 2019). In one study, 11.6% of teachers said their voice issues limit their ability to do their job compared to 3.1% of non-teachers (Roy et al., 2004).

Teacher absenteeism due to voice complaints significantly impairs job effectiveness and student learning (Gadepalli et al., 2019; Houtte et al., 2011; Lyberg-Ahlander et al., 2015; Martins et al., 2014; Nerrière et al., 2009; Rossi-Barbosa et al., 2016; Roy et al., 2004). Research indicates up to a third of teachers miss approximately one day annually owing to voice complaints (Leão et al., 2015). Another study found 24% of teachers were absent because of vocal problems, missing 1.2 days on average (Nusseck et al., 2018).

Studies reveal additional mechanisms by which teacher voice complaints hinder student learning. Experiments demonstrate voice issues and ambient noise impede students' phoneme recognition and text comprehension (Roy et al., 2004; Schiller, 2022).

Limited research exists on the financial costs of teacher voice complaints, but available estimates are substantial. One study suggested voice issues in teachers may be financially burdensome (Cantor-Cutiva et al., 2015). Further analysis estimated the annual cost of U.S. teacher voice complaints approaches \$2.5 billion when accounting for treatment and substitute teacher expenses (Verdolini & Ramig, 2001).

Notably, administrator perspectives remain unexamined regarding the impacts of teacher voice complaints on classrooms and schools. As leaders managing individual teachers and overall school operations, administrators could provide valuable insights. Their experiences implementing policies around teacher absenteeism and managing vocal impairments' effects on learning warrant exploration.

## Solutions

Numerous studies demonstrate teachers lack awareness of voice problems and related resources. Teachers reported minimal vocal health training among pre-service teachers (15%) (Houtte et al., 2011; Schaeffler et al., 2023) and reluctance to seek help (Houtte et al., 2011; Morton & Watson, 1998), with many viewing complaints as an accepted occupational hazard (Gautum et al., 2022). Recognizing this deficit, researchers have assessed interventions including training on appropriate speaking habits and testing, and have shown to improve teachers' vocal health (Cantor-Cutiva et al., 2023; Finn et al., 2023;

Porcaro et al., 2021; Scanferia et al., 2022) or teachers' perceptions of benefits of voice care (Schaeffler et al., 2023).

Some vocal health programs demonstrate limited efficacy for teachers (Greve et al., 2019; Lin et al., 2023). One study found nonsignificant improvements in teacher vocal complaints after basic vocal use training, suggesting that more comprehensive interventions and implementation time may be needed (Lin et al., 2023). Furthermore, compared to other vocally demanding occupations, teachers reported greater barriers to adopting vocal care including time constraints, forgetfulness, lack of confidence, and low motivation (Schaeffler et al., 2023). Overcoming these obstacles through tailored programming and support systems may enhance outcomes.

Research on vocal health interventions also informs best practices for program design, such as maximizing efficiency for time-constrained teachers (Finn et al., 2023; Schaeffler et al., 2023), integrating adequate vocal rest periods (Chan, 1994; Lin et al., 2023; Siqueira et al., 2022), and regular practice and habit formation (Chan, 1994; Lin et al., 2023). As Lin et al. (2023) found, teachers demonstrated the greatest adherence to brief vocal health practices that could be readily incorporated during instruction. By considering teacher time limitations, workload, and learning processes, targeted programs can overcome barriers and promote vocal health skills.

Previous research has also explored voice enhancement systems (VES) as a possible solution to teacher voice complaints. Research on vocal amplification usage yields mixed impacts on teacher vocal health. Banks et al. (2022) found no association between voice amplification and decreased vocal fatigue among teachers. However, other studies indicate benefits, particularly for teachers with

dysphonia (Gaskill et al., 2012; Jonsdottir et al., 2002). The variable effects may relate to study design factors as well as nuances of teacher amplification practices.

There is a gap in research examining how school and district policies interact with voice health complaints among teachers. This study explores teachers' experiences with voice issues, district protocols, and administrator awareness. This knowledge can inform policy improvements and training for school leaders on supporting teacher vocal health.

## Methods

We used qualitative methods to gain a more nuanced understanding of voice complaints in teachers (Creswell & Creswell, 2020) to complement the already present wealth of knowledge collected through quantitative measures. We conducted four hour-long focus groups with 18 administrators. Administrators represented five districts that covered schools in areas ranging from rural to urban. A key for identifying study participants is found at the end of the article.

Focus group discussions were seeded by a set of questions centered on administrators' experiences with and perspectives on teacher voice complaints. These questions were based on current knowledge as found in the literature as well as on preliminary insights gained through previous one-on-one interviews with administrators. With participants' consent, focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim to facilitate in-depth analysis.

To analyze the focus group data, we employed a qualitative coding methodology to identify emerging trends and themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Two researchers independently conducted initial open coding of the verbatim transcripts using NVivo software to identify salient trends and

concepts emerging from the discussions. Following the constant comparative approach, the researchers then collapsed these codes into larger categories based on thematic similarities (axial coding). The two coders met to review their categories, discuss inter-coder reliability, and agree upon higher-level selective codes synthesizing the major themes represented across the groups. Themes were only included for further analysis if endorsed by a minimum of 50% of participants. Through this qualitative coding process, we identified four key themes that provided insight into our research questions regarding administrators' perspectives on teacher voice complaints.

## Findings

Through focus group analysis, four overarching themes emerged relating to administrators' perspectives on teacher voice complaints: 1) administrators' reliance on voice enhancement systems, 2) administrators' attitudes toward voice complaints, 3) administrators' perceived impact of teacher voice issues on teaching and learning, and 4) administrators' proposed interventions. Each of these themes encompassed multiple nuanced sub-categories providing deeper insight. In the following section, we present these key themes and related sub-themes, utilizing illustrative quotes to convey administrators' perspectives from the focus group discussions.

### Administrators' reliance on voice enhancement systems

One major theme that emerged was administrators' heavy reliance on voice enhancement systems (VES) as a primary strategy for addressing teacher voice complaints. Administrators detailed their experiences with procuring and managing VES as a solution for vocal issues. They described the rationale for adoption, typical usage habits, differences based on infrastructure, and the shared responsibility between district and school leaders surrounding these systems.

### VES improves teachers' voices

Administrators observed that voice enhancement systems reduced voice issues among their teachers. One high school administrator (14THA) reflected that 10 years ago, teacher voice complaints were a significant problem, but since installing VES, "it has significantly reduced the number of absences and hoarse voices that are in classrooms." An illustrative quote from a teacher shared by an administrator highlighted the benefits: "I can just talk normally, and the kids can all hear me without me having to shout or feel like I'm always projecting my voice." According to administrators, these classroom systems had tangibly improved teachers' vocal capacity.

### Usage patterns and policies

According to administrators, most teachers in their schools utilized VES regularly based on their observation. An administrator (14THA) described visiting classrooms and seeing that teachers have "made [VES] a priority...and they recognized the need for [VES]." Based on these perspectives, it appears that teachers viewed VES as an essential, normalized component of their regular instructional practice rather than an optional tool.

Administrators largely promoted these systems to teachers as an important classroom tool, as reflected by one rural administrator (4RM): "Whether the teacher uses it or not, it's up to that teacher, but...they all have voice amplification built in. And so that's something that we strongly encourage them to use." Another urban administrator (6CE) echoed this sentiment: "That's always been my take on it for when I presented...Please use your mics." The prevalence of VES usage illustrates that teachers saw these systems as necessary for managing vocal demands. Teachers' perspectives on VES could be a result of administrators' communicated perspectives.



### **Framed with students in mind**

According to administrators, VES are typically encouraged and framed around benefits for students rather than vocal benefits for teachers. As one administrator (17SH) said, "When we got all these sound systems in, it was...for the students, so they can hear better. It was never put as a help to the teacher so that they don't have to speak so loudly or strain their voice." The consensus across administrators was that district and school leaders promote VES installation primarily regarding "student safety, student hearing, student accessibility" (1SE) rather than potential advantages for preserving teachers' vocal health and reducing vocal strain. Though VES may indirectly benefit teachers' vocal health, this benefit is not the guiding rationale communicated for adopting VES.

### **Availability depending on the age of the building**

While most administrators felt VES were widely available for teachers, they noted challenges in obtaining and replacing VES in older school buildings. Some reported being unable to replace antiquated systems, as one elementary administrator (1SE) explained: "I literally couldn't get [teachers] the resources. I couldn't buy them anymore. So, we were all waiting at the doors of schools that were closing to try to get their microphones because our system is outdated." Administrators also indicated limited VES access in decades-old buildings not originally built to support the infrastructure. While VES may be widely available, these perspectives illuminate the unique challenges faced by some schools.

### **District and school policy regarding VES**

While no formal district policies around teacher voice complaints were reported, administrators described district-led efforts to install and maintain VES. Many indicated their district funded and coordinated full VES implementation over a multi-year schedule (up to 5 years) and smaller-scale VES maintenance.

While VES were generally provided by the district, a few administrators described being individually responsible for installing and maintaining their school's VES. One rural middle school administrator (18RM) explained, "I'm looking at the invoice for \$27,324.12 that I paid to just create that audio system...It wasn't until April that we got district funding to make that happen...Any upkeep that I've had to deal with has come from school funds." For this administrator, initial VES procurement and ongoing upkeep costs came from individual school budgets rather than district funds.

### **Administrators' attitudes toward voice complaints**

A major theme that emerged from administrators' comments was insight into their attitudes and perspectives surrounding teachers' voice complaints. Within this broad theme, several sub-topics provide a window into administrators' attitudes: administrators' reactions to voice complaints, their perceived relationship between voice complaints and instruction, and their experience with voice complaints as former teachers.

### **Administrators' reactions to voice complaints**

When asked how they respond to teachers reporting voice issues, many administrators said their first step was referring teachers to use their VES. One suburban administrator (3SE) reflected: "I think that's one of the first things I do look at and point them towards is the sound system...That's probably on me if I don't teach them that." Others reported asking teachers with severe vocal fatigue to take sick leave, though teachers were often reluctant. As one administrator (13SE) explained:

I don't feel like [teacher voice complaints are] something that I can send them home for. Is their instruction as effective when they can't speak? No. But I know that

teachers want to save [sick days] for real emergencies, and in their eyes, losing their voices isn't a real emergency.

This quote suggests that sick day policies may be a possible barrier to addressing teacher voice complaints.

### **Administrators' perceived relationship between voice complaints and instruction**

Some administrators expressed perspectives linking teacher voice complaints to issues with classroom management or instructional effectiveness. As one suburban administrator (3SE) described:

It's symptomatic of how your teachers are doing in the classroom. If they're not able to get their class quiet enough to talk without an elevated voice, and even if they're just talking at their normal voice, it's going to hurt for a full day.

In this view, voice problems stem from teachers' inability to control student behavior and volume. Another administrator (13SE) noted some veteran teachers "might frown upon [VES]. It's almost like they don't feel like they're as effective if they need help in speaking more loudly."

Along similar lines, a high school administrator (14THA) suggested: "We have less direct instruction than we've had in the past, and so I think you have less vocal strain as a result." According to these perspectives, effective classroom management and pedagogy should preclude routine voice complaints, framing such issues as preventable with proper teaching strategies.

### **Administrators' experiences with voice complaints as former teachers**

In addition to observations about teachers, some administrators referenced their own prior experiences

with voice issues as former teachers and in their current roles. One elementary administrator (1SE) described damaging her vocal cords as a physical education teacher:

I actually damaged my vocal cords and had a really strained voice. I went to therapy because of the strain on my voice, and I had to beg my administrators ... to put a microphone system in our gymnasium.

She concluded: "I was completely unaware of it until it happened to me."

Other administrators experienced vocal fatigue after the first days back leading faculty meetings and visiting classrooms. One administrator (7SE) reflected after delivering professional development, "I remember by the end of the day my voice not feeling quite right." Administrators who had experienced voice complaints as a teacher appeared to be more aware of and ready to provide resources for their teachers, suggesting that personal experience shaped administrators' empathy and diligence in addressing this issue.

### **Administrators' perceived impacts on teaching and learning**

According to administrators, teacher voice complaints can impact teaching and learning in multiple ways within their schools. In describing observed effects, administrators noted increased vocal strain at the beginning of the school year, decreased productive instruction, hindering student speech and literacy development, and greater challenges for early elementary teachers.

### **Beginning of the school year**

Multiple administrators described escalated teacher voice complaints at the beginning of the school year. One suburban elementary administrator (5SED) recounted commonly

hearing remarks like, "Oh, I'm getting my teacher voice back,' or 'I'm getting my stamina back'" early in the fall. This increased hoarseness and loss of voice was attributed to the vocal demands resuming classroom duties places on teachers after the summer break. As one administrator (5SED) analogized, teachers' voices are "almost like other muscles. If you don't use it, it atrophies a little bit. But, you know, the more you're using your voice and talking through the day, the more stamina you get, the longer it can last." The intensive vocal effort required to establish routines and procedures was also cited as a factor taxing voices at the beginning of the school year.

### **Decreasing productive instruction**

According to administrators, impaired teacher voices can hinder productive instruction in multiple ways. Some described teachers needing to alter interactive teaching styles to accommodate vocal limitations. One suburban administrator (8SE) described a teacher who lost their voice and even with a portable mic had a "limit[ed] ability to teach the way she wanted to."

Administrators also noted teachers missing work due to voice complaints required reliance on substitute teachers, which was seen as decreasing instructional quality. One administrator (7SE) explained substitutes often utilize "busy activities" rather than delivering substantive lessons. While a couple of administrators observed short-term student behavior benefits from strained teacher voices, the consensus was that impaired vocal ability impedes impactful teaching. As one suburban administrator (12SE) summarized, prolonged teacher absences due to voice issues can "have significant impact."

### **Hindering students' speech and literacy development**

A few administrators speculated about potential impacts of teachers' voice problems on speech

and literacy development, particularly for younger students. One administrator (2CE) suggested strained voices could have "academic implications" for foundational skills. Another administrator (9CH) described observing struggles teaching phonics and reading readiness during vocal issues, especially when a substitute is required: "I think that is just one area that I've observed where instruction is really limited because of [teacher voice complaints]."

One elementary administrator (1SE) noted a significant increase in the number of students referred for speech services after the pandemic. While speculative, these administrators raised thought-provoking considerations about the potential downstream effects of teacher voice problems on beginning learners.

### **Teachers Talk More in Lower Grades**

Administrators commonly reported that lower elementary grade teachers may be more susceptible to voice issues. Some hypothesized this could relate to less preparation time and a greater need for collaborative planning talk during the limited breaks in the day. As one elementary administrator (2CE) compared the 20 minutes per day of preparation time in elementary school to the 90 minutes in high school. With minimal respite for vocal rest built into the elementary schedule, administrators proposed that continual verbal demands contribute to greater voice complaints compared to secondary grades.

### **Administrators' Proposed Interventions**

Administrators generally agreed that teachers are unaware of teacher voice complaints. Interestingly, administrators believed that raising teachers' awareness of this issue would be more impactful in preventing problems than creating a policy. As such, administrators



proposed various interventions aimed at promoting vocal health literacy among staff.

### Unawareness

Administrators expressed a shared lack of awareness of teacher vocal health as an occupational issue. One urban administrator (6CE) admitted: "I don't think that I really thought about it, like, 'Oh, it's an issue that I have a sore throat at the end of the day.'" As one (2CE) reflected, "I'm going into my seventh year as an administrator. I've never...stood in front of my faculty and have talked about teacher vocal health, and yet it's something that exists and something that we need to be cognizant of."

Interestingly, many administrators felt teachers were unaware of voice complaints because administrators did not approach this topic with them.

### Increasing awareness as solution

Instead of policy measures, multiple administrators emphasized raising teacher awareness as a critical first intervention. Simply providing basic information was seen as an important starting point, with one (2CE) suggesting, "Maybe just some information for teachers. Like we have said, they may not even realize that it is a problem until it's maybe too late."

Many argued consciousness-raising would inspire more lasting change than policy mandates. One (5SED) said, that helping people "understand that there are things you can do that are preventative" by "just, 'Hey, be aware of this. Take care of yourself'" was considered more impactful (5SED). Others concurred teacher buy-in comes from explaining "why it's important" so teachers can "solve the problem" (9CH, 12SE). Increasing vocal health literacy was viewed as a critical first step toward cultural change.

### Ideas for raising awareness and preventing problems

In considering potential interventions, administrators proposed raising teacher awareness through education on vocal health issues, preventative best practices, and available classroom technology. They felt providing information could bring this overlooked topic to the forefront and spur proactive behaviors.

Some suggested sharing data on voice problems' prevalence to prompt reflection, with one (17SH) stating, "I think anytime you want to start people thinking about or getting interest or making awareness is sometimes data ... Data is sometime a fun way to say, 'Hey, have you ever thought about this because this is an issue.'" Another (12SE) felt briefly learning statistics was "a game changer" that brought personal relevance.

Many also advocated supplying resources on protective strategies and self-care. One (1SE) recommended sharing information on "how we protect our voice, strategies they can use if they are feeling strain, the ability to use time off...for those type of things." She felt vocalizing support for taking time as needed could encourage help-seeking. Other administrators (7SE) thought teachers would welcome practical "strategies on how to keep your voice healthy."

Additionally, they saw value in educating teachers about VES. One (15SCSD) proposed that rather than mandating use through policy, "this is something about...access and education." Increasing understanding of "what the repercussions of not using this is" could promote voluntary adoption. One (3SE) also noted proper usage training was needed, as "teachers may not be aware what the repercussions of not using this is."

Administrators brainstormed integrating vocal health into existing wellness programs or new teacher training. They suggested sharing tips through wellness initiatives to transfer vocal health knowledge. Others suggested brief modules or slides during annual trainings to cover awareness, prevention, and available supports. Overall, most agreed with one administrator who said (10SE), "we need to educate teachers on this issue. We're educators, we believe in educating, and this is certainly an area that we could do much better in." Administrators viewed equipping teachers with information as a feasible solution for addressing this overlooked issue.

## Discussion

This study examined the perception of the current state of teacher voice complaints from the perspective of practicing school administrators. The aim was to understand how administrators respond to vocal issues and how existing school and district policies address such concerns. Four key themes emerged from the focus group discussions: (1) administrators' reliance on voice enhancement technology, (2) administrators' attitudes toward voice complaints, (3) perceived impacts of voice issues on teaching and learning, and (4) administrators' proposed interventions. These major themes provide insights into the research questions regarding administrators' experiences, responses, and relevant policies surrounding teacher vocal health complaints.

### How do administrators handle situations in which teachers have voice complaints?

Administrators' responses to voice complaints, including sending teachers home and verifying voice amplification use, provide new insights not found in existing research. While prior studies show student learning declines with unexpected teacher absences (Gadepalli et al., 2019; Houtte et al., 2011; Leão et al., 2015; Martins et al., 2014; Nerrière et al., 2009; Roy et al., 2004), how administrators specifically

address vocal issues has been unexamined. Investigating the frequency and efficacy of these management approaches could illuminate best practices.

Encouraging vocal rest aligns with evidence that adequate recovery time supports vocal health (Chan, 1994; Lin et al. 2023; Siqueira et al., 2022). However, explicit links between administrator recommended breaks and teacher vocal outcomes need verification.

This study also reveals administrators' heavy reliance on classroom voice amplification to mitigate complaints. Some previous studies suggest VES can improve teacher vocal wellbeing, especially for those with existing issues (Gaskill et al., 2012; Jonsdottir et al., 2002). However, one study found no association between VES and improved vocal health (Banks et al., 2022). The finding that teachers already experiencing fatigue used amplification more frequently (Banks et al., 2022) mirrors administrators' reports of promoting VES for symptomatic teachers. Examining the efficacy of administrators' approaches is an important direction for better supporting teacher vocal health.

### How do school and district policy interact with teacher voice complaints?

Administrators in this study reported no existing policies on teacher vocal health, despite describing district practices around VES provision. When asked about potential policy approaches, most preferred increasing teacher awareness over formal regulations.

This finding aligns with extensive research indicating teachers lack consciousness of vocal issues (Gautum et al., 2022; Houtte et al., 2011; Morton & Watson, 1998; Nusseck et al., 2018; Schaeffler et al., 2023), thus supporting administrators' belief that bolstering vocal health literacy could be an impactful

initial strategy. As they suggested, existing literature reviews offer resources to inform teachers on this overlooked issue (Cantor-Cutiva et al., 2013; Williams, 2004).

Administrators also emphasized explaining the rationale behind preventative behaviors to motivate action. This echoes research citing limited motivation as a barrier (Schaeffler et al, 2023), and calls for improved understanding of vocal care importance (Yiu & Ma, 2002).

In summary, administrators' preference for promoting awareness aligns with extensive evidence of knowledge gaps among teachers. Formal study of such consciousness-raising

effects could elucidate impacts on reducing vocal complaints.

## Conclusions

Teacher voice health issues can adversely affect both student learning and teacher wellbeing. Administrators may consider educating themselves and staff on the prevalence of voice problems and recommended preventive steps.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) offers recommendations that administrators could share with staff:

- Practice vocal hygiene—stay hydrated, limit irritants like alcohol or smoking, avoid shouting/throat clearing, and rest your voice when ill.
- Plan regular vocal breaks.
- Avoid vocal extremes like yelling or whispering.
- Use amplification devices.
- Learn proper projection techniques.
- Reduce classroom/background noise.
- Employ conscious breathing.
- Use non-vocal cues with students.
- Practice self-care as fatigue and stress affect the voice.
- Heed warning signs like persistent hoarseness, roughness, or discomfort when talking—seek help from a speech pathologist.
- Take sick days for vocal recovery.

Additional research is needed to raise awareness of current policies and administrator perspectives. As one administrator (4RM) aptly stated, "Your voice is your profession. It's how you teach. It's what you do. It's how you engage students...Teaching kids, you need to have a powerful voice."

Amplifying administrator and teacher voices on this overlooked occupational challenge remains critical for informing supportive policies, positive behaviors, and ensuring teachers can fulfill their profession with strong, healthy voices.

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## Appendix

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### Participant Key

School Location	School Type
R – rural	E – elementary
S – suburban	M – middle/junior
C – city	H – high
T – town	A – alternative
U – urban	D – district position