

CITE

Critical Issues in Teacher Education

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Supporting Teachers' Capacity to Explain and to Implement the Process of Digital Storytelling with Elementary Writers

by

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Abstract

Being a teacher means you are constantly adapting to the needs and interests of the generation of students in your classroom; so, as 21st century educators, it is vital to be knowledgeable about how to incorporate technology in a meaningful way that maximizes students' motivation. This can pose a challenge to teachers, especially teachers who also teach writing, due to a lack of preparation in multimodal writing formats. To increase students' motivation to write, multimodal forms of writing, such as digital storytelling, should be considered for use in classroom environments as teachers look beyond the simplicity of typing stories in Microsoft Word and calling it "multimodal." This article addresses a teacher's use of digital storytelling, along with her academic advisor, with her fourth-grade students in learning to produce digital stories.

Lauren, a fourth-grade teacher, noticed a reluctance with several students as they started to respond to writing prompts. After this noticing, Lauren discussed this writing reluctance with her academic advisor (Laveria). Laveria responded to this noticing by informing Lauren that the reluctance she noticed is often a result of students considering writing as just another assignment and find getting their ideas into sentences and on paper to be a challenging task. Since her students often experienced difficulty getting their thoughts on paper, Lauren felt that in addition to basic writing instruction, her students needed to add fun components to their writing, such as oral discussions, group participation, and artistic drawings. She also thought digital storytelling could be introduced to her students to inspire their writing (Kress & Leeuwen, 2001).

In a study conducted with third-grade students to examine the effects of digital storytelling on their writing development, Yamak and Ulusoy (2016) found an increase in the students' willingness to produce written products. In a similar study, Ferit and Abdullah (2016) found evidence of the effectiveness of digital storytelling among students and the importance of preparing teacher candidates and in-service teachers in learning to use digital storytelling in their future and current classrooms. The authors of this article believe embedding digital storytelling into writing instruction could positively enhance student engagement and achievement.

In this article, we share instructional ideas that provide opportunities for students to learn to use digital storytelling to assist them in recognizing they can create interesting written stories that include digital components used to enhance their written products. In the sections that follow, we present a discussion of the related literature, the instructional and multimodal components of digital storytelling used in a classroom setting, and examples of two student-generated digital stories. Multimodal approaches, such as digital storytelling, recognize that meaningful content can be accomplished in a variety of ways (Jewitt, 2008). However, we approached multimodality by creating mini-literacy lessons that explained and incorporated how to develop digital stories in written form that can also include a mix of graphics, audio, music, and art (Matens et al, 2018; Robin, 2008).

Digital Storytelling

Educators recognize technology continues to be at the forefront in K-12 classrooms. Thus, it is increasingly important for teacher candidates and in-service teachers to be adequately trained to include technology tools in their reading and writing instruction—especially for students who are highly motivated by the use of technology. So that students can increase their intrinsic motivation to write, it is vital that teacher candidates and in-service teachers learn to implement practices that move away from the typical pen-to-paper writing format to writing that incorporates multiple modes. According to Lambert (2018), our future generations of students will see the computer screen as their preferable expressive medium. Therefore, writing instruction that embraces a multimodal approach can be implemented through digital storytelling products that incorporate art, oral language exchanges with peers, and graphics. Digital storytelling could become one of the more relevant and engaging methods of teaching writing instruction for future generations of digital learners.

The use of storytelling has been around for thousands of years; from hunters and gatherers telling stories about their hunts and planning their next hunt or meal, to parents passing down generational family stories and stories about their childhood to their children. The concept of digital storytelling was created at the Center for Digital Storytelling by Lambert and Atchley in the early 1990's as a nonprofit community arts project in Berkeley, California. This Center continued to provide opportunities for the public and for educators to learn the craft of developing digital stories. The Center is also credited for establishing the Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling which include encompassing multiple literacy skills, engaging students and teachers, and promoting the 21st century learning skills (Lambert, 2007). Lambert (2018) defines storytellers as “those who can integrate narrative from one silo of context to another” (p.16). Thus, as we turn our oral stories into digital and engaging ones, we are merely recalling and retelling the events in our lives that have been entrenched as being of greatest significance.

So that teacher candidates and in-service teachers are familiar with the process of developing digital stories, it is imperative that they, along with their students in K-12 classrooms, have opportunities to review previously developed digital stories, to practice creating digital stories that can be shared with their peers to receive feedback, and to discuss and orally present their digital stories that will lead to editing and revising. In a study conducted with teacher candidates enrolled in an education class to gain their opinions of their use of digital storytelling, the teacher candidates indicated they were able to engage in this practice by becoming familiar with the implementation of digital storytelling into their instructional practice. Through this process, the teacher candidates found that the capacity to develop these digital stories increased engagement, made lessons more exciting, and enhanced communication amongst themselves and with their instructors (Özudođru & Çakır, 2019). However, their unfamiliarity with the software they were using made it difficult for them in the process; thus, emphasizing the fact that early exposure to these programs as teacher candidates is crucial in order for an easy transition into future implementation (Özudođru & Çakır, 2019).

The Context

In the sections below, we provide demographic data for the students and our school district, a description of the software selected for the students to use to develop their digital stories, the teaching concepts implemented with the students, and an example of two student-generated digital stories. We discuss and share this instructional information to show the potential of multimodal opportunities that can be designed using digital storytelling techniques (Olshansky, 2014).

The school is located in a large urban district that serves an approximate student enrollment of 203,000. The student population consists of 62% Hispanic-Americans, 27% African Americans, 8% Whites, 3% Asian Americans, and a low percent of students that are of mixed-race, Native Americans, and Native Hawaiians. There were 30 students in our context who emulated the demographics of the district and they varied in their academic capacity as documented by their state required assessments.

To begin the process of having the students begin developing digital stories, the students were asked to write a realistic fictional story of their own because they had studied this genre in their reading class. At the beginning of instructing students regarding realistic writing, the teacher noticed the students were ecstatic about the opportunity to create digital stories and to have the opportunity to use multimodal features to make their own digital stories come to life. However, after a day of developing their stories, the teacher noticed many students were beginning to write personal narratives and fantasies and not realistic fictional stories. The teacher noticed an urgency among the students to write stories about themselves and to incorporate their own images, making their work more connected to their own interests and cultural identities which increased their excitement to write stories. So, the teacher quickly realized the students genuinely wanted to be storytellers; but, they had no interest in being confined to a specific genre. Because of the teacher's pre-existing love for incorporating student choice and a discussion with her academic advisor, she removed the constraints and allowed her students to have the freedom to tell their own stories however they deemed fit. This led the teacher and her academic advisor to investigate software that would enable the students to create digital stories.

Selection of the Digital Story Platform

When deciding on the software to use for digital storytelling, it is important to investigate a variety of resources to identify the most appropriate one for your population of students. Some examples of software being used today in classroom settings with students are StoryBird, StoryJumper, GoAnimate, PowerPoint, MovieMaker, and iMovie. Each of these offers students the opportunity to use a range of multimedia tools to enhance their stories and to increase their engagement in the writing process.

We selected StoryJumper to use with the fourth-grade students, which allowed the students to feel like "published authors" with the ability to purchase their digital stories that became a classroom book once the stories were complete. StoryJumper gives students the capability to create their own characters and scenes, insert their own images, discuss and receive feedback from their teacher and peers, add text, audio, and sound effects, collaborate with their classmates, and read and listen to not only their own stories, but also the stories created by their classmates and other students from around the world.

Students Become Authors and Illustrators

My language arts block always includes writing instruction. However, to move into the creation of digital stories, I needed to add a multimodal approach that provided engagement opportunities for my students to communicate through print, oral discussion with their peers and their teacher, art, and sharing of ideas with their peers to create their digital stories. We designed an instructional plan and for six weeks the students learned to use several modes for creating their stories while also frequently conferencing with me for feedback and assessment purposes. In the

section below, we describe our plan used to assist the students in creating their digital stories.

My instruction usually started with a mini-writing lesson that often used a mentor text. A mentor text is used to engage students in discussion about what they noticed authors and illustrators doing well. This noticing by students provides examples of ideas they can use with their own writing. I often read a section of text or ask the students to individually read a section of text. Either way, we discuss selected colorful and exciting vocabulary terms that we also add to our literacy wall for future use, interesting sentences used by the author, colorful and exciting pictures provided by the illustrator, and the overall meaning of the text as a guide to assist my students with their writing. According to Dorfman & Cappelli (2017), mentor texts assist students in becoming aware of how authors and illustrators craft stories. I encourage my students to engage in meaningful group discussions about the perceptions of the mentor texts and illustrations.

Following each mini-lesson, the students use the writing process components to develop their digital story content and illustrations using computers, and upload their stories into StoryJumper. The students are equipped with using each step of the writing process as they brainstorm their ideas orally with their peers and on their individual screens. Once they have an idea for their topic, they draft, revise, peer engage with discussions, edit, draw pictures, and continue to use the writing process to complete their digital stories that can be shared with others and published.

As my students began developing their digital stories, I was enthralled by their creative use of meaningful content, beautiful cover pages that encompassed student-created characters, and scenes as well as real photographs of their families and pets. Their digital stories were beautifully constructed, and I immediately realized that the participation in this activity far exceeded their previous pencil-paper stories.

Once students had access to their StoryJumper accounts and were taught how to use the program, I gave them the freedom to write about whatever they were interested in sharing. My students spent several weeks working on their stories and meeting with me individually at times to conference and worked through the editing and revising process that we had engaged in all year. Each time I conferenced with a student, I would see a smile before I even pulled their story up because of their excitement for me to see their progress. My students wrote about everything from trips with family to devastating losses. They added multiple modes such as audio, images, and music to enhance their stories and to share their stories with invited guests. These multimodal components allowed readers to really feel the emotion in their stories. When one student told the story of their stillborn sister, the raw images and music brought us to tears and told me more about that student than any conversation we had in the past. Other students put their imaginations into action with beautifully crafted fictional stories. Figure 1 is an example of a StoryJumper digital story that was created by a student about an experience at the zoo. Figure 2 is another example of a digital story created about a fairy tale. Both students incorporated multimodal components of writing, colorful art, discussion, sharing, and publishing.

When it came to submitting their final product, all of my students participated. Whether or not they had finished their digital story, every student had started a story, and it was evident that they were invested in this assignment. The day they shared these digital stories with the class, almost every student wanted to share, which was something that had been extremely rare. There were tears, laughs, and claps throughout the presentations. Students commented on how much fun this

writing assignment was as they created their digital stories and wanted to know when they would write another digital story. The parents were also excited about the writing and illustration progress of the students and most parents planned to purchase their child's digital story from the StoryJumper site. During this process, each morning I would have several students ask me if I had noticed their digital story progress on the StoryJumper site. Their attitudes toward writing had taken a complete shift, and the motivation I saw each day was enough validation for incorporating digital stories into my instructional practice more often.

Figure 1. Work Sample from a Student's Digital Story in StoryJumper

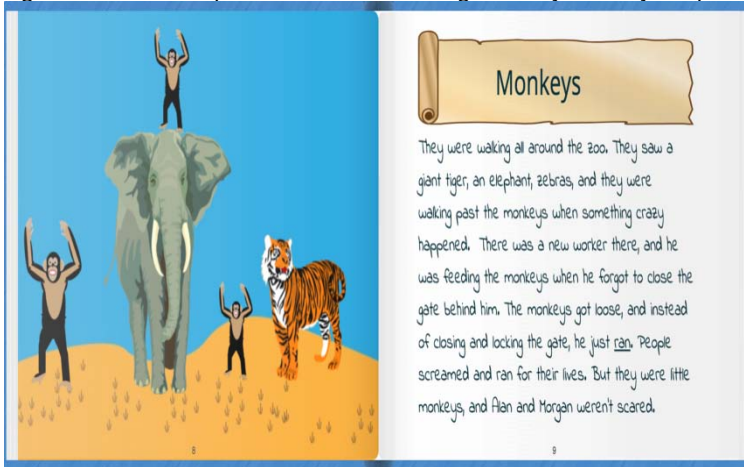


Figure 2. Work Sample from a Student's Digital Story in StoryJumper



Conclusion

This experience changed our outlook on writing instruction. While we understand the need for preparing students to take high-stakes standardized tests, through this writing activity we have seen the benefit of offering choices in mode, and what various types of prompts can do for students' motivation and attitude toward writing. The opportunities for incorporating choices in mode are available; but,

without the knowledge of different software and programs teachers and students can access, writing will remain accomplished through pen and paper products.

In this discussion of multimodal use in classroom settings, educators need to consider the preparation of teacher candidates. Teacher candidates in certification programs should also be offered technology courses and tools that will further enhance their ability to navigate digital spaces so they can integrate this type of instruction with their future students. Digital storytelling has the power to maximize students' intrinsic motivation through its multimodal capacity and the opportunities for students to share stories about their own interests and cultural identities. While research suggests that we are in the midst of a digital turn in literacy (Mills, 2010), the question teacher educators must seek answers for is whether or not pre-service teachers are equipped with the necessary skills and strategies for implementing digital practices such as multimodal writing in their future classroom.

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First-Year Teaching During the Pandemic: Isolation and Resilience

by

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Abstract

The extraordinary challenges wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic had far-reaching effects on beginning teachers. This study explores how six first-year teachers experienced their teaching induction and the role of formal and informal mentoring in that process. A common theme among all first-year teachers was that of isolation, with isolation arising in three different but tangentially related areas: physical isolation, ideological isolation, and collegial isolation. This research contributes to and builds on the existing research on mentoring of beginning teachers and points to ways teacher education programs might better prepare beginning teachers for almost any pedagogical eventuality.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented challenges for families, students, and K-12 teachers. However, one specific group of teachers, first-year teachers, faced a unique confluence of challenges during the 2020-2021 school year. Many underwent compromised student teaching experiences during the previous year and were entering a new school year in which they would be required to meet, teach, assess, and build relationships in virtual settings. Yet, while many of the circumstances and challenges presented by the pandemic were unique, the pandemic amplified long standing issues commonly faced by first-year teachers. In this way, first-year teaching during the pandemic was distinctive, but not an anomaly. In fact, our findings provide insights that can help teacher educators and school leaders better support first-year teachers in the long term.

This paper presents the results of a qualitative investigation into the experiences of six first-year teachers (hereafter referred to as FYTs) who began their careers during the 2020-2021 school year. Knowing most schools moved to remote learning for at least some portion of the year, we were curious about how the pandemic may have impacted the mentoring and supports provided to these FYTs. To contextualize this study, we first provide a review of literature related to mentoring, teacher relationships, and school culture. Then, we share the methods used to conduct our investigation before sharing findings and implications.

The research on mentoring is rich and storied, so a full accounting of this research would be beyond the scope of this article. However, a few key trends are important to note. First and foremost, strong mentoring matters in the overall satisfaction, success, and retention of FYTs (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). The best formal mentoring relationships are often built on a foundation of high-quality induction programs. The more well-resourced a mentoring and induction program is, the more effective and supportive they can be for FYTs (Brady, et al., 2011; Wilkins & Clift, 2007). These resources matter, in part, for the preparation of formal mentors because when mentors receive training, they better their capacity to support teacher growth and engage with FYTs in productive, skill-building ways (Evertson & Smithey, 2009; Flynn & Nolan, 2008; Holloway, 2001). Furthermore, when well-trained mentors are also well-matched with mentees--a factor found to contribute to mentor quality (Hobson, et al., 2009)--mentorship opportunities seem more equitable and successful (Kardos & Johnson, 2010). A good match may also help contribute to the relational aspects of mentoring, including

a sense of partnership, trust, shared expertise, moral support, and balanced communication (Awaya, et al., 2003).

FYTs who receive high-quality formal mentoring report feeling more supported in understanding policy, management, family communication, and curriculum as well as feeling overall more emotionally supported and aware of resources (Andrews & Quinn, 2005). They are also more likely to improve student outcomes (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Fletcher & Strong, 2009) and engage in reform-oriented or ambitious teaching (Wang, et al., 2010)

Even when school-based mentoring relationships are not available, mentoring from an FYT's former teacher preparation program can support their development and retention (Van Zandt Allen, 2013). This makes sense when teacher development is viewed as a continuum over time, gaining in complexity and critical orientation (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Therefore, teacher development should be considered a longitudinal endeavor, with mentorship being continually adapted for teacher needs (Feiman-Nemser, 2003), conducive to relational, supportive, non-judgmental (i.e., non-evaluative) mentoring (Gholam, 2018).

The culture and context of a teacher's mentoring relationships and workplace have clear implications for job satisfaction and retention. Research on organizational characteristics and formal mentoring finds relationships influence teacher beliefs and culture and vice-versa (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004). Furthermore, when an FYT and formal mentor share similar types of students, content or grade level, and teaching assignments, the mentoring relationship is strengthened (Kilburg & Hancock, 2006; Rockoff, 2008). School administrators are an important contributor to school culture, often setting the tone for a building. It is therefore not surprising that school administrator's interactions with FYTs and facilitation of a healthy school climate make a positive difference (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010).

This also matters because when administrative culture is a mismatch with an FYT's values or pedagogical ideals, tensions can arise, and teachers may feel a disconnect between what or how they want to teach and what is expected of them by school leadership (Labaree, 2005). Cultural alignment or overall workplace conditions are particularly important for teachers working in high-need schools; the interpersonal, leadership, and collegial qualities of schools constitute a workplace even more than the resources or technical quality provided (Johnson, et al., 2012). These not only impact a teacher's professional satisfaction, but their capacity to improve student outcomes and persist in challenging teaching positions (Simon & Moore Johnson, 2015). First-year teachers, in particular, need strong relationships with colleagues and other wraparound supports in order to stay satisfied and remain in the field (Johnson, et al., 2004). This is especially true when a school culture is integrated, meaning first-year teachers are provided with sustained, relational support by more seasoned colleagues (Kardos, et al., 2001). In schools where teachers are provided with time and space for interactive, collaborative planning, assessment, and supportive feedback for continuous improvement, teachers are more likely to stay in the profession and even show greater improvements in student achievement (Johnson, 2020). In short, an open, supportive culture emphasizing professional collegiality and teacher growth can make all the difference. Cultures like these may also facilitate the formation of an overlooked but important aspect of supportive culture: informal mentoring relationships.

Among the many formal and informal supports available to first-year teachers, it seems relationships with informal mentors can play a significant role. Here, we use the term informal mentors to refer to mentoring or supportive relationships with more seasoned colleagues not initiated by a formal school or district induction or mentoring program. Due to restrictions on face-to-face schooling

and constraints of the 2020-2021 school year, informal mentoring relationships were an important element of pandemic mentoring. Informal mentoring relationships are under-examined (Coburn, 2001; Desimone, et al., 2014), but are certainly related to the aforementioned, supportive cultural aspects mentioned above. Although formal and informal relationships can serve similar functions, the distinctions between these relationships result in “compensatory and complementary support suggest[ing] novice teachers would benefit from having both” (Desimone, et al., 2014, p. 105). Furthermore, informal relationships may be more supportive of an FYT’s overall sense of job satisfaction and social belonging, particularly when the values, reform-mindedness, or culture of a school do not align with those of the FYT (Wang & Odell, 2007; Wang, et al., 2010). In short, informal mentoring relationships should not be seen as replacements for more structured, formal mentoring relationships, but rather a useful and perhaps necessary supplement. For example, schools may provide a coaching-oriented style of mentorship program in which formal mentors observe and debrief teaching practices of FYTs whereas informal mentoring relationships may not offer the same reliable structure for such interactions.

Proximity and availability of a mentor can have a strong influence on the quality of a mentoring relationship; FYTs may seek informal, supportive relationships from colleagues who are nearby as a means of addressing more in-the-moment concerns or to provide context-specific, ongoing assistance more reliably (Polikoff, et al., 2015). This could relate to the immediacy and context-dependent nature of teaching challenges, but also may reveal a shortcoming of formal mentoring relationships. Formal mentors are often assigned by an administrator or leader of the mentoring/induction program, and interactions may be formally presented (e.g., specified meeting times and topics). This structured nature may constrain the relationship or make it less flexible to meet the impromptu, relational, or day-to-day needs of an FYT. Informal mentoring relationships are more than simply emotionally supportive, however. Hopkins and Spillane (2014) found FYTs sought out informal advice on instructional guidance and advice wherever these opportunities presented themselves. In many cases, these relationships developed because the FYTs had access to these more experienced teachers.

Another theme in literature on informal mentoring was the initiation of the relationship. Although not an explicit unit of analysis in every study on informal mentoring relationships, it seems first-year teachers were the ones who often initiated the informal mentoring relationship (Desimone, et al., 2014; Hopkins & Spillane, 2014; Polikoff, et al., 2015). These relationships can be initiated in virtual environments when in-person opportunities are not readily available. Risser (2013) examined the potentiality of social media networks for the development of an informal mentoring network. This study underscores the importance of connecting with mentors who share similar beliefs. Ease of connections, similarity of beliefs, and reliability of contact are some of the benefits of social media mentoring. Further, the relative anonymity and distance of a virtual relationship may enable an FYT to seek advice in a low-stakes environment. Of particular significance to Risser’s study is the concept of homophily or the tendency of individuals to seek relationships with those they feel are like themselves. Homophily could explain why some formal mentoring relationships fall short, and why informal relationships are often initiated by the FYT as supplemental support.

This research project arose from our discussions regarding the struggles we observed in our network of first-year teachers. In addition to trying to navigate virtual tools for instruction, the first-year teachers were also struggling to establish connections with students through a virtual platform, students they most likely never met in person. We wondered whether the first-year teachers were receiving

mentoring through the schools, and if so, the type of mentoring available in the mostly virtual environment.

Considering our mutual concerns and questions, we set about formalizing our observations and questions in hopes of illuminating findings that could be helpful to other teacher educators and school administrators. To this end, we developed a set of prompts for semi-scripted interviews and received IRB approval to conduct this research from our respective institutions. The interview prompts were closely tethered to our research question: *What does mentoring of first-year teachers look like during a pandemic?*

Semi-scripted interviews were then conducted virtually with six first-year full-time elementary teachers (hereafter referred to by the pseudonyms Amy, Rachel, Brittany, Jeffrey, Claire, and Carmen). All identified as white, and all but one (Carmen) taught in fully virtual or hybrid formats. All but one participant (Amy, Carmen, and Brittany) taught in schools with students that were over 70% white. Brittany's school was over 70% Black; Carmen's students were predominately Asian/South Asian or Russian. The participants represented a convenience sample. We utilized our personal network of FYTs to find participants.

For the interviews, we adopted a responsive interviewing framework (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) so the participants could pursue the topics and questions they found most relevant. We asked stem questions such as, "Tell me about how you're teaching these days – online, in person, or a mix? How are things going for you so far?" and "How would you describe the mentoring you've received so far this year?" The virtual interview platform allowed for audio recording and a live transcription of the interviews. Once interviews were completed, we listened to the audio files and edited the transcripts for clarity and to correct transcription errors. This process gave us the opportunity to listen to the interviews once again to get a sense of semblances and differences between the participants' experiences. From this second reading of the data, we identified emerging commonalities, developed an initial set of codes, defined the codes, and created parameters of the kinds of conversation segments constituting a code match. Thus, we started with the data, which led us to the initial codes (Charmaz, 2006, p. 3).

We then began conducting line-by-line coding of each transcription using these initial codes. We each coded our own interviews independently and then cross-checked one another's coding to ensure some degree of inter-rater and "inter-subjective reliability" (Simons, 2009, p. 130). Through this coding process, we were seeking patterns "demonstrat[ing] habits, salience, and importance in people's daily lives" so we could study these patterns to "solidify our observations into concrete instances of meaning" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 6). We likewise sought to identify further similarities between participants' experiences as well as the frequency of those experiences regarding mentoring (p. 7).

Once we completed the initial coding process, we noticed additional trends emerge from the data, added codes to our code book, and revisited the data sets for an additional, more refined coding process. We discovered participants who had access to some type of formal or informal mentoring often mentioned the physical proximity of the mentors as well as their accessibility. We also identified instances in the data sets in which the FYTs asserted their own beliefs and values in the classroom: They appeared to have a strong sense of self-awareness about what was important to them, so these comments were coded as such. Next, after further examination of the data, we identified an emerging theme of isolation and therefore conducted another round of coding in which we looked for instances in which the participants made comments indicating they felt isolated in some way. While a sense of isolation was like one of our initial codes (i.e., Feeling Disconnected), there was a

nuance to these comments indicating participants believed they had to navigate their challenges by themselves with no outside help.

Our final coding process moved us toward codifying our data. We sought to “arrange things in a systematic order, to make something part of a system or classification, to categorize” our data sets (Saldaña, p. 9, 2016). Therefore, we juxtaposed codes with one another to discover any co-occurring codes and thus “divided, grouped, reorganized and linked” data to arrive at more nuanced understandings of the participants’ experiences (Grbich, 2013, as cited in Saldaña, p. 9). Through this juxtaposition of different codes, we discovered the code of isolation frequently intersected with other codes. Honing in on these co-occurrences of codes, we concluded our participants were experiencing isolation in three broad areas: physical isolation, ideological isolation, and collegial isolation. Thus, our coding process reflected the participants’ general experiences during their first year of teaching, with each type of isolation having relevance in their lives.

Results

Our analysis found the FYTs were navigating many of the traditional challenges of the first year of teaching, yet the pandemic caused distinctive experiences of isolation. It is not unusual for beginning teachers to struggle to carve out their own teaching identities as they begin to enact their pedagogical beliefs. In the continuum of teacher development, the induction year represents the first time teachers have sole control of the classroom where every decision feels consequential and weighty. Indeed, as Feiman-Nemser aptly noted, beginning teachers “have to teach and... learn to teach,” to survive and discover simultaneously during their induction year (2001, p. 1026-7). Furthermore, as beginning teachers build their identities and construct their professional practice, they must make myriad decisions along the way (p. 1027). Yet, as they set about constructing their identities, they often find their deeply held beliefs contrast with those of more experienced colleagues, and this mismatch can at times create a sense of isolation.

For instance, Claire shared an experience in which she raised concerns about her students’ reading difficulties, strongly believing several her students needed interventions (to protect participants’ identities, all names are pseudonyms). Claire earned a reading teacher endorsement through her teacher preparation program and so felt confident in her ability to identify students needing reading intervention. However, the reading interventionist disagreed. Claire said, “She told me that none of them needed reading intervention, and I was like, okay, well, I disagree.” Claire added, “Most of the other teachers and I do not see eye to eye on a lot of teaching practices” noting another teacher came into her classroom on three occasions to “yell” at her students because they were too loud before classes started for the day. These experiences left Claire feeling alone and unseen, so much so that she left her position at the end of the year to find another position representing a better ideological fit.

For Carmen, the challenge was curricular in nature. In observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Carmen created a series of related curricular activities for the students. After reaching out to other teachers in her school asking what they were planning to do in observance of the day, she heard nothing back. “Crickets,” she said. Carmen continued, “I was like, okay, I’ve planned all these things. I’m going to put them up on [the shared electronic bulletin board]. And I recommend everyone uses them. This is a very important day.” Carmen received a similar response when she asked what her colleagues were planning for Black History Month. When the

teachers responded they did not have time to change the curriculum for Black History Month, Carmen said:

It's true. We didn't have time, but [in my classroom] . . . we didn't do a certain science thing and instead focused on that. We didn't do a reading activity because instead I taught literacy through the reading and writing [about Black History Month] that we did.

Similarly, Amy experienced a disconnect between her pedagogical beliefs and those of some of her colleagues. In talking about her mentor, she noted a significant age difference but more importantly, different priorities. She said:

A lot of my teaching practices and teaching beliefs are surrounding social justice, so I don't know if I would feel comfortable being like, "Hey this kid is not getting the help they need, and it's really unfortunate that it's another child of color and somebody who's poor" you know?

Amy's hesitancy to advocate for her student was clear, yet student advocacy was something that was part of Amy's passion and identity; this mismatch created a sense of frustration and isolation for Amy.

However, Carmen, Amy, and Claire all had the advantage of teaching either partially or completely in person and therefore had at least a few opportunities to see other teachers and their students as they negotiated and honed their teaching identities. For Brittany, the situation was different: she was teaching entirely online, asynchronously, so she did not have many opportunities to meet with students. Furthermore, she was not able to shape the rigid, prescribed curriculum to be engaging for students. Bemoaning the content, Brittany said, "I swear to you, one of the questions [in the video curriculum] was, 'What was the color of the God of Ra's eyes?' Like, that's Google-able...that's not important. The system itself...the videos are boring to watch." Not only was the content unengaging, it was also incorrect at times. Said Brittany, "Sometimes they're wrong, which really aggravates us because the kids will be like, 'I know I'm doing it right. I'm getting the correct answer.'"

Brittany expressed her frustration; she then had to report the incorrect content to platform overseers. She said, "It's just a lot. Like, some days it's a lot." Compounding her frustrations with the online platform, Brittany spent much of her time entering student assessment data into the grading platform. Brittany commented, "Then, just constant data entry is just mind-numbingly boring," adding "I do a lot of data input." Brittany observed poignantly, "Some days, it's really difficult to feel like I'm an educator."

Even though Brittany was required to host three online class meetings a week, students were not required to attend, so the meetings did not present Amy with a fruitful way of developing her identity and ideologies as a teacher. When asked how she was feeling about her first year of teaching, Brittany responded saying:

It is hard sitting in a classroom all day with no desks and no children. It is hard trying to get kids to log on to the system and encourage them to do this work when [I] myself, as a twenty-three-year-old grown person, have struggles working through these videos at times.

In each of these examples, the first-year teacher's sense of isolation was clear. While they attempted to become the kind of teacher they hoped they could be, each participant expressed frustration at not having others surround them who could support their decisions and nurture them as they developed their teaching identities and enacted their ideologies.

While first-year teachers' struggles to establish their own identities is a common phenomenon at the start of a teaching career, the physical isolation

experienced by these educators was something entirely new and unusual. Understandably, many schools dispensed with formal mentoring programs in order to channel resources toward more pressing issues like the implementation of virtual platforms for instruction. Yet, the needs of the first-year teachers remained and were even magnified due to physical distancing mandates and the lack of opportunity to establish more informal, supportive relationships with new colleagues.

Our participants were also put into an uneasy conundrum: if they were to connect with other colleagues in person to get the kind of support and guidance they so needed, they had to break school rules and policies prohibiting such encounters. For instance, Jeff acknowledged in order to connect with other teachers, he risked reprimand. He said, “We’re probably gonna’ get in trouble eventually,” but he and his colleagues started eating lunch together in spite of the school mandates against this kind of contact. While Jeff understood the reason for the mandate—if a teacher had to quarantine, there were few substitute teachers who could take their place, resulting in the entire class needing to quarantine—he nonetheless eventually broke the rules in order to connect with his colleagues. As Jeff noted, “We’re supposed to eat in our classrooms, and we’re supposed to eat alone. But it was taking a toll on all of us.” Of these communal lunches, Jeff added, “When we’re at lunch is when we normally are like, man, this is good, this stinks, this person did this.” So while Jeff felt the weight of the district’s expectations and mandates, the toll of not having a relationship with his colleagues became too much, and he and others prioritized relationships over compliance.

Similarly, Brittany and her formal mentor were willing to bend the rules just to create a sense of connection and support. As Brittany said, “My mentor, who’s next door . . . we’re not supposed to do this, but we do: I go sit in her room sometimes and we work on stuff together or we’ll just be in our own little bubbles working.” This type of personal connection helped Brittany feel supported and broke up an otherwise grueling schedule. She said:

There were times and days where I would go home and I just work and work and plan lessons and look up resources and find ways to engage the kids until ten o’clock at night. And then I have to eat and go to sleep, and then I do it again the next day.

Thus, Brittany’s need for support and guidance from her mentor extended into finding a work-life balance.

Carmen, whose assigned formal mentor did not contact her until school was well underway, was nonetheless able to gather a group of informal mentors to support her through her induction. Frustrated by her mentor’s non-response after multiple attempts to contact her, Carmen said, “Over the next few weeks, I stopped trying to go to my mentor with my questions and instead just started going to the in-person team.” She added, “So I lucked out, man, because these four women that I am teaching with are just right down this hall, you know, in second grade.” The proximity of her informal mentors made a huge difference to Carmen. In contrast, Carmen shared the experience of another FYT in the district whose mentor was in a different building; that FYT, she shared, quit her teaching job within weeks, a fact Carmen attributed to the obstacle of the physical distance between the mentor and the first-year teacher. Carmen emphasized she would have likewise quit her job were it not for the informal mentors she found so nearby.

Claire’s school canceled its formal mentoring program because, according to Claire, “we aren’t supposed to go into other classrooms . . . there’s not supposed to be crossing,” as in physical contact with other teachers. Still, like Brittany and Jeff, Claire was willing to break the rules in order to connect with other teachers. She reported, “I eat lunch with some of the other younger female teachers, and

sometimes we have pretty productive things in there [the lunchroom].” Because, according to Claire, teachers were allowed to teach from home during the afternoons, the older teachers left the building prior to lunch, so Claire was left with only other beginning teachers as her support network. Claire even added she was thinking about pursuing an administrative track in the near future because she wanted to ensure “new teachers are brought in and made to feel welcome—made to feel like you can ask questions and it’s okay, because that’s what I wish I had.”

Rachel likewise felt isolated and unsupported through her induction and mentoring program because it focused mostly on helping first-year teachers learn the technical tools they would be using in the classroom rather than on building supportive relationships. Said Rachel, “I barely even knew most people’s names in the building until recently because everything’s been so isolated this year. I feel like just maybe a little more of that [relationship building] in that formal [mentoring] week would have been helpful.” In reflecting on her assigned mentor, Rachel added, “She met with me outside of school, and we had lunch and just had a conversation. But I feel like beyond that, I wasn’t connected to anyone before I started.”

As our conversations and analysis continued, we found a third distinctive type of isolation represented in the experiences of our first year teachers: collegial isolation. We saw collegial isolation as emerging from perceived professional positionality. Participants often felt their particular status as first-year teachers meant their concerns would be judged with extra scrutiny; their questions were specific to their particular stage of professional development, and they may appear too green, exceptional, or singular in their needs. Or worse, they feared they would simply be adding another item on the long to-do lists of their already-overwhelmed colleagues.

For example, Brittany found the condition of collegial isolation to be facilitated or amplified by COVID-19 restrictions. As mentioned above, Brittany was teaching in a fully virtual format, using an asynchronous online curriculum purchased by her district. Because the curriculum was completely self-contained, Brittany simply needed to ensure the students had access and were keeping up with their assignments: no planning, no grading, and minimal synchronous interactions with students. Brittany’s district had purchased this program understanding that students and their families had varying degrees of adult assistance available and internet connectivity for the school day. However, Brittany was struggling to find motivation while teaching alone in an empty classroom. Despite having a supportive colleague nearby, she felt her individual needs were often overlooked, particularly as a first-year teacher teaching in this brand-new modality. To this point, Brittany said:

My building administration is no longer responsible for me in a sense. I report to the person who’s in charge of the virtual platform, a district-level person. I actually don’t know what her official title is. We just call her [Barb].

Brittany’s collegial isolation was facilitated and amplified by her pandemic-era teaching conditions. Were she not teaching with this asynchronous platform, she may not have been quite so disconnected, yet even the district administrator to whom she reported seemed unfamiliar.

Likewise, Claire found herself feeling isolated despite welcoming colleagues. She felt a lack of administrative presence and described a need for “just someone to bounce ideas off with and just talk things out with.” On the surface, this need appeared quite simple, but it illustrated the distinctive challenge of collegial isolation.

Claire illuminated how collegial isolation may co-occur with other forms of isolation, in this case, proximity. Her particular needs as a first-year teacher working to develop curriculum for her grade level and content left her feeling there was no

one quite like her to help. Claire said, "I don't have anyone to compare or to work with. Some of the other teachers have been really helpful and mentoring but, it's really hard to not have someone that's doing the same thing as me."

Amy also found herself struggling to connect with others for support. She had a formal mentor, a co-teacher, and a reading instructional coach at her disposal. Yet, the support seemed difficult to obtain and often outmoded for the particular struggles of virtual/hybrid, pandemic teaching. Amy was worried her colleagues were already under enough stress without having to worry about her needs as well. Her co-teacher, in particular, was a kind and supportive person, but Amy struggled a bit to connect. While explaining her sense of collegial isolation, she let out a big sigh and said:

I feel like [my co-teacher] keeps being like, "If you need help with anything, I can help you." And I heard from somebody that I was supposed to be in the same unit as him ... So I reached out to him today and he was like, "That's not going to happen. ... I'm not entertaining that fairy tale," and I felt like, "Oh, sorry I didn't mean to upset you!" I feel awkward. I don't know if I really want to keep bringing it up like, "Hey I'm kind of out here by myself figuring it out for the first time ever!" So I'm kind of just planning it on my own. On Mondays I just sit on my couch and I just plan by myself and hope that I'm teaching the lessons I should teach and all of that stuff.

Brittany, Amy, and Claire's stories revealed how collegial isolation was specific to the professional, emotional, and developmental needs of first-year teachers. Their experiences of collegial isolation interacted with physical and ideological aloneness brought on by the pandemic to create a sense of isolation.

However, while collegial isolation was often facilitated or amplified by the conditions of the pandemic, the first-year teachers often discussed this type of isolation in more general terms, revealing the perennial importance of relationships and a culture of support.

Jeff described this in terms of social power dynamics. He felt as if he held lower professional status than his colleagues. This perception of professional positionality led Jeff to keep to himself at times, withholding his opinions for fear of rocking the boat while his colleagues discussed tensions created by pandemic-era teaching. As a first-year teacher, he was wary of appearing to complain or gossip, but this made him feel he was in a category separate from his more experienced colleagues. This is best illustrated by the simple example of lunchtime politics:

[Because of the social distancing rules], I ate in my classroom for a solid, like four weeks by myself before I realized that [the other teachers] were eating in the breakroom. They all basically said, "Screw it." They were going to just eat together, and if the administration yelled at them, they yelled at them. So that definitely was isolating for those couple of weeks. When I realized that they were doing it again, I joined them. I don't know, I was just trying to follow the rules.

Jeff's story illustrates how the teachers felt at times too green to reach out to colleagues with whom they did not have close relationships. They shared a sense of needing to "stay in their lane" which prevented them from reaching out as frequently as they needed to. This point was articulated with precision by Claire:

I have a lot of colleagues who have said, "Oh reach out to me if you need anything," but I feel kind of bad because it's not their responsibility to help me. That extra time is uncompensated, so I

have to break [my questions] down into smaller pieces and ask this person this part of it, this person this other part, so I'm not taking too much of anyone's time. So some of the time I just wing it and figure it out [myself], because I don't want to bother anyone else.

Collegial isolation is distinctive in its genesis, often initiated by a first-year teacher's perception of their positionality and then reinforced or amplified by external factors such as differing ideologies or physical realities. However, this is not to say the teachers in this study lacked self-awareness of their positionality, or even the distinctions of teacher culture. As the quote from Amy below illustrates, collegial isolation could also be accompanied by the characteristic fears of being new to the profession, yet no longer a complete novice:

I think [we] teachers are perfectionists and we want to be taken seriously. Like, I'm not an idiot, I did really well in school and I studied hard for this and focused on what I should be doing this first few weeks of my teaching career. But, to be a first-year teacher [and say to a colleague], okay this failed *again* [is not the same as saying that as a student teacher].

Here, Amy was communicating the reluctance she felt in reaching out or making challenges visible to colleagues. She was concerned about how her needs would be perceived by others. There was a sense even though she was new, she should have more of this figured out by now.

For the first-year teachers in this study, it was not unusual to be the only or one among a few new teachers in a school, and mentors were not always able to provide support when or how their mentee needed it. This positioned these nascent teachers as feeling an overall lack of support from colleagues.

Discussion

In looking at our data, we found permeability between the categories of ideological isolation, physical isolation, and collegial isolation, with one at times influencing or intensifying the other. For instance, the physical isolation resulting from the pandemic gave rise to a feeling of emotional distance from other colleagues, thus magnifying feelings of ideological and collegial isolation. Indeed, ideological isolation was intensified by the lack of opportunity to problem-solve and collaborate with colleagues face-to-face. Furthermore, somewhat missing from the day-to-day lives of these participants were the ongoing informal social interactions that, while sometimes mundane, are usually part and parcel of the lives of teachers and key to their professional development. These burgeoning educators were missing out on the in-the-moment and just-in-time kinds of mentoring that creates continuity in teacher education and development. Gone were the chance meetings in the hallway where teachers could share successes and failures; gone were the copy machine conversations in which teachers could commiserate about student challenges (e.g., Is it a full moon?); and gone were the informal classroom chats at the end of the day when teachers brainstorm ways of resolving dilemmas. These seemingly random and unstructured interactions serve as the key ingredient of relationship-building and professional development, and without them, these first-year teachers felt at times isolated and unsupported. Furthermore, the effect of each type of isolation was cumulative; when taken together, the sense of overall isolation felt by these first-year teachers was at times palpable.

Thus, the circumstances arising from the pandemic served to highlight the ways in which these beginning teachers struggled to navigate the myriad challenges of growing into their teaching identities and into the profession. They had few opportunities to interpret and navigate the professional norms of education nor to

engage in the interpersonal and collegial interactions vital to the functioning of a school. They therefore had difficulty navigating their professional positionality in their respective schools. It remains to be seen what the longer-term effects of the pandemic will be on these teachers' identities in the profession of teaching.

While we agree with Feiman-Nemser (2001) that teacher development should be a longitudinal process, we also recognize the continuity of this process has been interrupted by the pandemic, which may serve to illuminate important understandings about mentoring of beginning teachers. In addition to the importance of a good mentor-mentee match (Awaya et al., 2003) and a supportive school culture (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2010; Johnson, et al., 2012), the role of informal mentoring was demonstrated in our research. As Polikoff et al. (2015) noted, beginning teachers seek out colleagues who are physically nearby for those in-the-moment questions and dilemmas. The reliability of these proximal colleagues gives beginning teachers the consistency and support they need, and when support is interrupted, first-year teachers feel less anchored and sure of themselves.

Conclusion and Implications

The interruption of informal induction perhaps raised more questions for us than it answered, but there are nonetheless some important takeaways from our research. For one, we found our participants craved the sophisticated simplicity of relationships. They needed connections with other educators who could serve as sounding boards and who could address their impromptu questions and challenges. Indeed, when formal mentors were unavailable or mismatched, the necessity of informal mentoring was ever clearer. The crucial role played by informal mentors warrants further exploration and development. However, university and school-based teacher educators (e.g., faculty, mentors, coaches, and administrators) can glean actionable implications for their support of first-year teachers. Specifically, school leaders and others should invest intentional effort in the development of strong informal relationships among more experienced teachers and their newer colleagues.

Second, our research points to the need to better utilize the longitudinal process for mentoring, especially when it comes to teacher preparation programs. Our research has illuminated the need for teacher education programs to prepare pre-service teachers to identify their own mentoring needs and then to seek out the mentoring team they will need to support them. In fact, we keenly felt the shortcomings of our own teacher education programs to provide pre-service teachers with this kind of preparation, a realization we came to as we conducted interviews. Indeed, we recognized the "wholly human drama" of becoming a teacher during extraordinary circumstances (Cook, 2009). Thus, pre-work during a teacher preparation program could set these beginning teachers on a better professional trajectory by acknowledging they will indeed require continued support and guidance throughout the career continuum. Teacher preparation programs could likewise equip pre-service teachers with the skills they need to identify a network of mentors--both formal and informal--who can support them and help them meet their professional needs. For example, teacher education programs might embed practices to help beginning teachers learn how to approach a colleague to serve as an informal mentor. Ultimately, whether formal mentors are provided or not, most beginning teachers will need to build their own mentoring team or support network, a conclusion made clear through the extraordinary induction process that arose during the pandemic. While no one could have anticipated a pandemic nor how it has affected schools, our research demonstrates how teacher education programs can

do more to prepare beginning teachers to cultivate professional relationships and resilience for any eventuality in an increasingly unpredictable teaching landscape.

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Teacher Preparation and Strategies for
Supporting Students with Mental Health Issues

by
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Abstract

In today's classroom's, teachers are working with more students with concerns related to mental health. Research in this area provides many practices teachers can use to assist students. Teachers need to understand the correct practices they and school personnel can use to assist students. Teachers have the primary responsibility for identifying students who suffer with mental health issues.

In today's society, a large number of students are dealing with major mental health concerns often related to past traumatic experiences. Teachers, besides school psychologists, often are relied upon to identify these major health concerns (Alistic, 2012). Many of the mental health issues are related to traumatic events such as violence, disasters, and a sudden loss of a loved one. A study noted that 54% of 9 to 13 year olds have been exposed to at least one traumatic event as defined by DSM-IV (Copeland et al. 2007). Teachers who can identify their self-awareness, are often seen as being able to handle stress, and more able to work successfully with students with emotional and behavior disorders (Gold and Roth, 1993). John Dewey (1938) saw the educator being responsible for physical and social conditions which would aid in learner "growth-producing experiences."

The importance of training teachers to work with students with mental health disorders continues to be of major importance. There have been cases where courses in Australia have been developed for teachers to meet the needs of these students who have major problems. Jorm et al., (2008) included the following training practices:

1. Teacher's knowledge about mental health problems.
2. Recognition of depression in a classroom setting.
3. Stigma towards depressed students.
4. Beliefs about treatment of depression which are like those used in mental health professions.
5. Confidence in providing help.
6. Intentions to provide help to a depressed student.
7. Help provided to students.
8. First aid provided to colleagues.
9. School practices and policies.
10. Teacher psychological distress.
11. Recognition of depression in a particular situation.
12. Stigma towards a depressed peer.
13. Beliefs in the helpfulness of school staff for a depressed student.
14. Help received from school staff members.

Teachers who received training had greater gains in knowledge, with recognition of depression being at a high level. Jorm's study (2008) also revealed that teachers had a higher level of confidence for providing help to students and colleagues after being trained. Teachers with training were able to provide mental health information to students. This study raises the question of the importance of teachers supporting

students with mental health issues. As we continue to see an increase in the number of students with mental health concerns, training of teachers to meet their needs is seen as a priority, and should be provided in a number of settings such as a university pre-service training program, and professional development programs at the district level. Students need to also be aware that teachers play an important role in helping these students. Parents can also play a role in this area by also being trained to identify and help their child who suffers from mental health concerns.

Feiman-Nemser (2001) uses the term “educative mentoring” as a model for preparing teachers to address present concerns, questions, and purposes along with long term goals for teacher development. Mentors use their knowledge and expertise to assist new teachers to adjust to the new school environment and student concerns not seen in the pre-service teacher preparation program. Sweeney and Bolt (2000) identified twenty eight states that require teacher induction programs, with additional eight states implementing programs in the future. After many years in the classroom, experienced teachers will state that no college course can teach a new teacher everything that is needed to meet the growing social, emotional, and academic needs of their students.

Another study reviewed the importance of teacher self-awareness, and the role it plays in meeting the needs of students with emotional and behavioral disorders (Richardson and Shupe, 2003). Five key questions were identified to increase teacher self-awareness:

1. Am I taking proactive steps to identify and defuse my own “emotional triggers”? This means that as teachers, we must know and understand who we are, which requires intrapersonal skills.
2. Am I paying attention to what I need to pay attention to? Positive reinforcement plays a major role in classroom behavior. Larrivee (1982) noted that positive feedback to behavior correlates to high student performance.
3. Am I using effective strategies to reduce burnout and nurture my own mental health? Working with students with emotional and behavioral is a major challenge for teachers. Educators must find effective strategies for managing their own stress. Pullis (1992) found that supportive faculty in such situations is one of the most effective coping strategies.
4. Am I using an appropriate sense of humor to build relationships, diffuse conflict, engage learners, and manage my own stress? Webber et al., (1991) observed that teachers who have a sense of humor, are usually happy, fun-loving, relaxed, and reinforcing to others. Other research added that humor is one of the most effective strategies to confront crisis situations.
5. Do I regularly acknowledge significant ways (and others) are making a difference in the lives of students? Bergman, et al., (1977) noted the importance of teacher self-efficacy and how the teacher believes they have the capacity to affect student performance.

Each of these questions need to be considered when working with students with emotional and behavioral disabilities. Much of this work is challenging, and teachers need to take risks and try new teaching strategies which may result in making mistakes.

The teacher’s role continues to be questioned as they ask themselves, “When do I take the role of a social worker or psychologist in the classroom?” (Alisic, 2012). Where teachers draw the line can be a challenge because they are often asked to

wear many “hats.” The major thinking is that tasks should be divided and described more clearly. The term “needs of students” is often used to describe the role of the teacher. These needs should include: child’s needs versus the group’s needs, focus on trauma versus on normal life, and giving extra attention versus creating an outcast position. Alisic (2012) identified the importance of professional knowledge and know-how. Teachers often questioned their lack of confidence. One area which is discussed is how to address traumatic events with students and even parents. Along with this discussion concerns how to create a safe atmosphere in the classroom when discussing emotions. Another area to consider relates to the need for specialized care for the student suffering from mental health issues. Along with this topic is the place to refer students who need mental health care for both the child and often parents.

A major challenge for teachers is the understanding of ADHD students, and what strategies should be employed in the classroom. Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder students often challenges the whole classroom because of disruptive behavior. The American Psychiatric Association (1994) notes ADHD comprises 3% to 5% of the total student population, and little is known about teacher’s practices and understanding regarding the ADHD identification and management. Jerome et al. (1994) observed that 66% of teachers surveyed mistakenly reported that ADHD was caused by dietary intake of sugar or additives, 20% thought it was evenly distributed between boys and girls, and 15% did not recognize it as biologically based. Children with ADHD place a substantial demand on teacher skills and time, and this often suggests that the teacher’s understanding and classroom management options is limited (Cantwell and Baker, 1991). Teacher techniques when working with these students is more reactive instead of proactive. They are not prepared to meet to meet the student demands, and often lack institutional support.

Arcia, et al. (1998) identified a number of interventions for working with ADHD students:

1. Identify and quantify target behaviors.
2. Determine appropriate reinforcers.
3. Deliver reinforcers at sufficiently brief intervals for them to be effective.
4. Support for teachers to design and implement interventions in a reliable and consistent manner.
5. Support for teachers should include the use of paraprofessionals, in-service training, and emphasis on behavioral management. Attention training which can deliver immediate positive and negative feedback to children (DuPaul et al., 1992).

There has been significant questions concerning the use of punishment and labeling, which has seen much debate when working with ADHD students. Fiore et al., (1993) noted that punishment can be highly effective with children with ADHD, but also can be ineffective for teachers who lack information about its appropriate use. Labeling has also seen much discussion. It has shown that labels can help communication between professionals and parents, and helps in understanding the child’s behavior. Labels can assist with treatment options, behavioral interventions, and pharmacotherapy.

There continues to be a need to expand mental health and school-based services for children with emotional, mental, and behavior problems (Hoagwood, 2007). Schools are seen as excellent facilities for identifying students who have mental health concerns, since much of their academic work is also related to these issues. Teachers have the advantage of being able to note academic problems and

behaviors, which may be related to mental health, each day in the classroom, and report students who need additional support.

In a study completed by Reinke, et al. (2011), percentages of teachers reported mental health concerns in the following areas.

1. Disruptive behaviors/acting out	97%
2. Problems with inattention	96%
3. Hyperactivity	96%
4. Defiant behavior	91%
5. Family stressors (death, divorce)	91%
6. Peer problems	87%
7. Aggressive problems	78%
8. Anxiety problems	76%
9. Bullying	75%
10. Victims of bullying	69%
11. Depression	54%
12. Immigration, cultural issues	29%
13. School phobia	18%

In addition to the above concerns, teachers also reported social skills deficits and depression. Family stressors also included parents in prison and mental health concerns. Reinke's (2011) research also included the following strategies needed to be employed by both teachers and school psychologists:

- Screening for mental health problems.
- Implementing classroom behavioral interventions.
- Teaching social-emotional lessons.
- Conducting behavioral assessments.
- Monitoring student progress.
- Referring children and families to school-based services.
- Referring children and families to community-based services.

This study also reported that more than 50% of teachers often feel that children with issues fall through the cracks because: 1. Lack of adequate parent support programs. 2. Prevention programs for students with externalizing behaviors was not available. 3. Prevention programs for internalizing programs was lacking. 4. Staff training and coaching was not available. Additional barriers included insufficient mental health professionals, teacher training not available for dealing with children's mental health needs, and the lack of funding for school-based mental health.

A final topic related to teachers supporting students with mental health concerns is the stressors that often face teachers. Research shows that there are often problems which are not kept at school, but are taken home at the end of the school day. The emotional burden on teachers can be severe and long lasting for them. Teachers may feel that they can only do so much, and parents are often not supportive of their efforts. Another concern raised related to those students who had experienced trauma, and how the teacher could be able to communicate what a normal life looks like in a family setting. Teachers find this especially hard to do since traumatized children are often not exposed to what is considered "normal" (Alisic, 2012). A third factor to consider relates to extra attention given to students in need. Some students will often feel that they do want this extra attention in the classroom and school. Here again, the teacher needs to understand where boundaries should

be placed. This often leads to a very stressful situation for the teacher who wants to do all they can to meet the many needs of their students.

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Developmental Therapists Perspectives and Reflections on Using Live Video Visits in Early Intervention Service Delivery

by
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to gain perspectives of a specific group of early intervention service providers, developmental therapists in one midwestern state, regarding their use of this technology during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 440 Developmental Therapists (DTs) were surveyed and asked a series of questions related to how Live Video Visits (LVVs) have changed their communication with families, the effectiveness of strategies and intervention practices while using LVVs, adaptations and changes to their practices since using LVVs, and the benefits and barriers of using this type of telehealth therapy. Findings indicated that developmental therapists found using LVVs helpful and would continue to use them in their practice under several conditions. They reported communication with caregivers as effective and communication with children less effective using LVVs. The most effective practices were reported along with changes and adaptations in practices and benefits and barriers identified from using LVVs.

The Early Intervention system in many other states, has moved to engaging with children Birth-Three years and their families using Live Video Visits (LVVs) as one of the service delivery options since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. These virtual teletherapy visits have remained along with reinstating the hands-on, face-to-face method that usually occurs when providing assessment and ongoing therapy services to infants and toddlers with delays and disabilities and their families in natural environments which can include homes and day care facilities. Over the past 18 months developmental therapists (DTs), along with other Early Intervention service providers, were tasked with engaging in the assessment process and ongoing delivery of therapy services using LVVs to collect information regarding a child's overall development and provide intervention strategies for enhancing that development. It is important to get an understanding of the effectiveness of using a Live Video Visit (LVV) format from those DTs who were involved in providing these services to children and families in the early intervention system.

Literature Review

Developmental therapists work for the Early Intervention (EI) Services System in one midwestern state, which is authorized under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Illinois Department of Human Services, 2016). They are an important part of the multidisciplinary team that serves children with developmental delays and disabilities and their families. One of their essential roles is to understand the developmental progression of a child from birth to age three years and assess when a child's development strays from the typical path (What is a developmental therapist, n.d.). In this capacity, developmental therapists perform global evaluations and assessments to help determine if a child is eligible for Early Intervention services, and they track their overall development during their time in Early Intervention (Illinois Department of Human Services, 2016). They also assist families in reducing the limitations related to their child's delays in the context of their day-to-day lives. They do this by providing strategies and activities for caregivers to

do with their child, as well as consult and provide training, evaluation, or assistance regarding a specific challenge for a child. More recently, there has been emphasis on the DT to be a “coach” to support families in embedding interventions in their daily routines (Behl, et al., 2017). Given this broad role, developmental therapists complete training and fulfill requirements to make them qualified professionals in the area of infant and toddler development, and work in ways that contribute to positive outcomes for young children and their families (Chen, Martin, & Erdosi-Mehaffey, 2017).

The roles and service delivery of the developmental therapist changed significantly when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the United States. In mid-March, 2020, the state governor put in a stay-at-home order in response to the growing COVID-19 global pandemic (Executive Order No. 2020-10, 2020). The stay-at-home order required all persons who worked jobs deemed non-essential to stay home as a way to keep the virus from spreading. Developmental therapy was included in the non-essential jobs that had to be halted. In early April, 2020, guidelines for Early Intervention in Illinois were released about the approved method of virtual service delivery, known as Live Video Visits (LVVs). The guidelines included information about required trainings, platforms that could be used for therapy sessions and what Early Intervention services could and could not be performed using LVVs (Provider Connections, 2020a). Eligibility evaluations (i.e. the process of determining whether a child was eligible for Early Intervention services) were one of the services that could not initially be completed over LVVs, which slowed the intake process of children and families into the Early Intervention system. In mid- May, 2020, guidelines regarding the implementation of eligibility assessments were released to Early Intervention providers in the state (Provider Connections, 2020b). With these new guidelines, eligibility and most other services were able to be conducted in a virtual way, and developmental therapists began offering their full range of services using Live Video Visits.

Telehealth/Teletherapy is an overarching label that includes methods of service delivery that “use communication technologies for the purposes of enhancing health care, public health and health education, as well as extending capacity and access to healthcare” (Schietz and Wacker, 2020). The use of telehealth has been recommended for physical and occupational therapists since 2013 but used sparingly up until the COVID-19 pandemic (Camden and Silva, 2021). Doctors and therapists from many different disciplines have been using telehealth during the pandemic to provide services while working to slow the spread of the virus. Telehealth includes phone calls, emails, video calls and the use of apps to deliver services (Camden and Silva, 2021).

Early Intervention providers such as teachers of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH), speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, behavior specialists, audiologists, and interpreters utilize teletherapy in their practice (Cason, Behl, and Ringwalt, 2012). Teletherapy has been used in the past by many state Early Intervention programs in order to address provider shortages or deliver services to families living in rural areas, with minimal participation for varied reasons (Cason, 2011). Due to the nature of delivering online therapy services, teletherapy has been slow to be used by Early Intervention providers. For some families and providers, due to their remote location and infrastructure in the region, access to high speed, reliable internet is not an option (Cole, Pickard, and Stredler-Brown, 2019). Also, expressed concerns for utilizing telehealth include security and privacy issues, concerns about quality of services, and lack of evidence to support the effectiveness of telehealth in EI programs. Further, providers were concerned about billing

processes and reimbursement policies when utilizing telehealth (Cason, Behl, and Ringwalt, 2012).

Yet, there is a growing number of studies examining the use of teletherapy that demonstrate teletherapy is a practical option for Early Intervention programs, whether alone or in combination with in-person visits (Cole et al., 2019). Further evidence supporting the use of teletherapy in Early Intervention programs include the acceptance of a teletherapy in the field of speech-language pathology as some findings show a positive correlation to expressive language scores for Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH) children (Behl, Houston, Guthrie and Guthrie, 2010; Cason, Behl, and Ringwalt, 2012). Although there is still much to be learned about the use of LVV in the EI setting, a recent study in *The Journal of Pediatrics* found that parents were satisfied with EI services through telehealth and felt satisfied with the family-provider relationship they were experiencing during COVID-19 (Murphy, Pinkerton, Bruckner, and Risser, 2020). Regardless of the barriers involved in using teletherapy, the Covid-19 pandemic has pushed teletherapy to the forefront and it has become one of the primary service delivery modes in the Illinois Early Intervention program.

Part C Early Intervention services support the development of infant and toddlers with disabilities. Because DTs' therapy is provided in the child's natural environment and requires face-to-face interactions, their work includes directly observing the child's behaviors, interactions with their environment, as well as interactions with their caregivers. Often, the DT is looking for nuanced behaviors that may mask a weakness or that is related to the child's disability. Therefore, using teletherapy, or LVVs as it is commonly referred to in the Early Intervention community, has a direct impact on how DTs' deliver and communicate interventions and strategies in therapy (Keilty, 2016; Edelman, 2020, April 15). During the pandemic, LVVs were the only service delivery mode and DTs needed to change the way they planned and conducted sessions, implemented instructional strategies and interventions during sessions and communicated with the family. Currently, DTs are allowed to co-treat with other Early Intervention professionals, including interpreters via LVVs.

There have been several studies on the impact of Covid-19 and the adaptations to therapy made using telehealth. A recent study examining relational teletherapy is relevant to developmental therapy as it is aligned with the core principles of early intervention involving parent coaching and family engagement. Therapists follow the child's play, reflecting aloud on what is happening, and naming emotions and actions. More family members can be involved, routines can be observed and worked on together and the therapist can narrate what they see and ask for clarification (Burgoyne and Cohn, 2020; Cole, Pickard, and Stredler-Brown, 2019). Finally, in family teletherapy, therapists felt it was easier not to be the focal point. "Some therapists were surprised at how effective and intimate play therapy was via teleconferencing" (Burgoyne and Cohn, 2020). Because telehealth delivery requires more family coaching, it can result in more active family engagement and empowerment and therefore positive child outcomes (Cole, Pickard, and Stredler-Brown, 2019). More recently, there have been studies on parents' perception on teletherapy, provider's use of teletherapy and benefits of teletherapy in EI programs (Murphy, Pinkerton, Buckner, Risser, 2020; Cole, Pickard, and Stredler-Brown, 2019; Wallisch, Little, Pope, and Dunn, 2019). Now, more than ever, it is important to understand therapists' perspectives on the benefits and barriers of utilizing LVVs, its effectiveness, and how Early Intervention programs can use this delivery mode to provide service to families.

The purpose of this survey research study was to investigate the effects of LVVs on the current practices of developmental therapists when working with children and

families in the early intervention program in the midwestern state of Illinois. To get a DT's perspective on using LVVs, the following questions were addressed by a survey distributed to all credentialed DTs in the state:

1. Under what conditions do developmental therapists report wanting to continue using LVVs in their practice?
2. How do developmental therapists rate the effectiveness of establishing their communication process with children and families using LVVs?
3. How do developmental therapists rate the effectiveness of current strategies and practices using LVVs?
4. What adaptations and changes have developmental therapists made in their therapy sessions since using LVVs in their practice?
5. What are the specific benefits and barriers of conducting developmental therapy via LVVs instead of face-to-face visits?

Method

Survey participants included 433 developmental therapists who were registered with Illinois Provider Connections, the state's Early Intervention provider credentialing office. There was participant representation from DTs working across the state with Suburban Chicago having the most DT participants at 52 percent (N=250), followed by Chicago with 24 percent (N=117), central Illinois at 17 percent (N=80) and southern Illinois at 7 percent (N=33). The DT's educational levels ranged from Doctorate Degrees: 1% (N=4); Two or more Master's Degrees: 6 percent (N=26); Master's Degree: 55 percent (N=238); Bachelor's Degree + hours: 21 percent (N=90); Bachelor's Degree: 17 percent (N=75). Development Therapists who participated in this study had a wide range of years working in early intervention that included: 16+ years: 31 percent (N=135), 11-15 years: 18 percent (N=78); 6-10 years: 20 percent (N=86); and 1-5 years: 31 percent (N=133). Most DTs reported being either self-employed and independent: 60 percent (N=260) or employed by a therapy company: 34 percent (N=148). Some DTs selected the "Other" category: 6 percent (N=25). This group reported working as independent contractors for small companies and for themselves. When asked to report about how they were currently serving the families on their caseloads, 349 DTs responded that they were still using LVVs (81 percent). The next most frequent type of service delivery was Face to Face /In-Person with 331 reporting this type of delivery (77 percent). Finally the third most cited service delivery mode of seeing families was a combination of LVV's and In-person (Hybrid) with 227 DTs reporting they used this hybrid format (53 percent).

An 11-item on-line survey was developed to address the research questions set forth in the previous section. Survey items were organized into 5 sections that corresponded with each research question. Section 1 contained the demographics (questions 1-5). Section 2 focused on identifying the conditions that DTs would elect to continue using LVVs in their practice (question 6). Section 3 focused on the overall effectiveness of DTs' communication and practices with children and families using LVVs (question 7 and 8). Section 4 focused on changes and adaptations that DTs made in their practices using LVVs (question 9). Finally, Section 5 asked DTs about the benefits and barriers to using LVVs in their work with children and families (question 10 and 11). This survey developed for this research study was based on a pilot study that was conducted by the first author as part of her Master's Thesis Action Research Project. A small sample of convenience (21 DTs) was used to pilot the survey. Based on data collected from the pilot study, adjustments were made to the current survey. The final version of the survey was available on Qualtrix, a secure on-line survey platform. Table 1 provides a detailed description of the 11 survey items and corresponding response choices.

Table 1. Survey Items and Response Format and Options

Questions	Response format / options
1. Please indicate which region of the state you work in. (Check all that apply)	Chicago/ Suburban Chicago/ Central Illinois/ Southern Illinois
2. Please indicate your highest education level.	Bachelor's Degree/ Bachelor's Degree + hours/ Master's Degree/ Two or more Master's Degree/ Doctorate
3. Please indicate the number of years that you have been practicing as a DT.	0-5 years/ 6-10 years/ 11-15 years/ 16 + years
4. Please indicate how you are employed.	Self-employed and independent DT / Employed by a company / Other
5. Please indicate the number of families on your caseload that you are serving in-person, via LVVs or the combination of both.	Open ended
6. Under what conditions would you use LVVs in your practice in the future? (Check all that apply.)	Family or DT is sick / Distance too far / Family request / Family out of town / Other
7. Since using LVVs in your practice, how would you rate the effectiveness of the following components of communication?	Multiple Components Responses include effective/ineffective/ not applicable
8. In your opinion, overall, how effective are the following strategies and practices during LVVs?	Multiple Strategies Responses include effective/ineffective/ not applicable
9. Below are general statements about your practice since using LVVs. Rate the following statements in terms of how much you agree.	Multiple Statements Responses include agree/disagree/not applicable
10. Below is a list of potential benefits to using LVVs. Please check the most important benefit in using LVVs.	Increased parent involvement/ Flexible scheduling/ Increased parent empowerment/ DT improved parenting coaching skills/ Increase in overall parent coaching & strategies implemented/ other
11. Below are some potential barriers to using LVVs. Please check the greatest barrier to using LVVs.	Internet problems/ Camera issues/ Technology issues/ Limited hands on with child/ Difficulty establishing relationship with child/ other

Upon receiving Institutional Research Review Board approval the researchers obtained a list of all credentialed DTs in the state from the statewide Early Intervention credentialing office. A total of 940 credentialed DTs were emailed a cover letter explaining the study, and a consent to participate in the research document and a survey link embedded in the letter. Ten rounds of survey participation requests were sent out to the 940 DTs across a 6-week time period. For participants who did not respond within 1 week, a follow up email request and survey

were sent out to remaining non-participants. Incentives were not offered for participation. Of the 940 DTs who received a survey invitation to participate in this research study, 433 DTs or 46 percent completed the survey.

After collecting data over a 6-week period, responses were summarized in Qualtrix. Next, basic descriptive statistics were calculated (frequencies, percentages) to analyze responses to closed-ended items totaling the frequency of responses for each response item and calculating a percentage. As the survey contained several multiple response items (Select all that apply) the total percentages exceed 100 percent for responses to multiple response items. Finally open-ended questions with "Other" responses were groups to analyze responses for common themes.

Results

DTs were asked to select all that apply from a list of conditions for continuing to use LVV in their practice. Family Choice/Parent Request was the most frequently selected choice with 26 percent (N=364). Next was the Family/Child/DT is sick with 26 percent (N=360). Distance too far with 23 percent (N=322) was next; followed by Family/DT out of town 19 percent (N=262). DTs were given the choice of "Other" and could then write in their responses here. 6 percent (N=74) DTs wrote in other conditions that they would consider using LVV in their DT practice. These responses included the following: hybrid/tool; bad weather; scheduling conflicts; crime/safety issues; primary use; maternity leave and some said they would not use LVV at all.

DTs were asked about the overall effectiveness of 6 key communication behaviors that they engaged in when working with children and families in their DT practice when using live video visits. These included the following statements: Overall communication with the caregiver: Effective=92 percent (N=364) / Ineffective=8 percent (N=32); Ability to read the caregivers mood: Effective=85 percent (N=340) / Ineffective=15 percent (N=58); Ability to read the child's mood: Effective=84 percent (N=333) / Ineffective=16 percent (N=64); Ability to see body movement, gestures and expressions of the child: Effective=80 percent (N=317) / Ineffective = 20 percent (N=79); Ability to hear sounds and words the child is vocalizing: Effective = 72 percent (N=284) / Ineffective=28 percent (N=111); Overall communication with the child: Effective = 64 percent (N=247) / Ineffective = 36 percent (N=139).

Next, DTs were asked about the overall effectiveness of 7 key practices when engaged in working with children and families using live video visits. These included the following: Caregiver coaching: Effective = 93 percent (N=273) / Ineffective = 7 percent (N=28); Co-treating with 1 other professional: Effective = 87 percent (N=326) / Ineffective = 13 percent (N=47); Working with an interpreter in a session: Effective = 83 percent (N=219) / Ineffective = 17 percent (N=44); Problem-solving a challenging behavior in a session: Effective = 74 percent (N=294) / Ineffective = 26 percent (N=104); Working with an interpreter during a co-treatment: Effective = 73 percent (N=168) / Ineffective = 27 percent (N=61); Modeling: Effective= 69 percent (N=273) / Ineffective= 31 percent (N=122); and Co-treatment with 2 or more professionals in a session: Effective = 56 percent (N=167) / Ineffective 44 percent (N=129).

DT participants were then presented with a list of 15 statements under four areas of their DT practice and asked if they either agreed or disagreed or it was not applicable. The four areas of practice included the following: Establishing rapport and communication with the child and family; Professional skills as a DT; Co-treatments and collaboration; and Scheduling of DT sessions.

In regard to rapport with the caregiver being as good using LVBs as it was in person; 73 percent of DTs (N=296) agreed, 25 percent of DTs (N=101) disagreed, and 2 percent of DTs (N=9) responded it is not applicable. Regarding establishing rapport with a new child being as good using LVBs as it was in person; 71 percent of DTs (N=286) agreed, and 25 percent of DTs (N=102) disagreed and 4 percent of DTs (N=16) responded it is not applicable. When asked about overall communication being better with a caregiver using LVBs 57 percent of DTs (N=230) agreed and 37 percent of DTs (N=148) disagreed, and 6 percent of DTs (N=24) responded it is not applicable. When establishing rapport with a new caregiver 42 percent of DTs (N=171) agreed that it took longer using LVBs and 55 percent of DTs (N=222) disagreed, and 3 percent of DTs (N=11) responded it is not applicable. In regard to rapport with the child being as good using LVBs as it was in person; 33 percent of DTs (N=135) agreed, 61 percent of DTs (N=249) disagreed, and 5 percent of DTs (N=20) responded it is not applicable.

The professional skills of DTs shifted as they utilized LVBs. 81 percent of DTs (N=326) agreed that they now give more details clarifying the purpose of the specific activity they requested the caregiver to attempt with the child since using LVBs, and 16 percent of DTs (N=66) disagreed, while 2 percent of DTs (N=9) stated it is not applicable. When it comes to being a better observer since using LVBs, 81 percent of DTs (N=327) agreed and 16 percent of DTs (N=64) disagreed, while 4 percent of DTs (N=14) stated it is not applicable. In regard to taking more detailed, reflective notes during sessions since using LVBs; 74 percent of DTs (N=300) agreed, 20 percent of DTs (N=79) disagreed, while 6 percent of DTs (N=24) stated it is not applicable. When asked about using toddler interactive screen activities during a LVB session, 35 percent of DTs (N=143) agreed that it was useful and 34 percent of DTs (N=139) disagreed. Many DTs 30 percent (N=122) said that this was not applicable to their practice.

When it comes to co-treatments and collaboration with other Early Intervention professionals, 77 percent of DTs (N=312) agreed that they can still fit in their interventions in the session and 10 percent of DTs (N=41) disagreed with this statement, while 13 percent of DTs (N=52) responded it is not applicable. Regarding collaborating with other professionals, 66 percent of DTs (N=267) agreed it is easier using LVBs than before the pandemic, 24 percent (N=97) disagreed with this statement, while 10 percent of DTs (N=41) responded it is not applicable. When asked about the number of co-treatment sessions increasing since using LVBs, 46 percent of DTs (N=188) agreed, and 37 percent of DTs (N=151) disagreed while 16 percent of DTs (N=66) responded it is not applicable. When asked if children and families benefit from getting more co-treatments 58 percent of DTs (N=233) agreed with this statement and 21 percent (N=82) disagreed while 21 percent of DTs (N=84) responded it is not applicable.

Finally, 80 percent of DTs (N=321) agreed with the statement that scheduling and re-scheduling appointments were easier using LVBs and 15 percent of DTs (N=62) disagreed, while 5 percent of DTs (N=20) responded it is not applicable. DTs were asked if they would mind working some evenings and weekends using LVBs and 68 percent of DTs (N=275) agreed that they would be willing to do this, 25 percent of DTs (N=102) disagreed and 7 percent of DTs (N=29) responded it is not applicable.

Finally, DTs were presented with a list of 6 potential benefits of using live video visits in their DT practice and were asked to select the most important benefit. They were also provided with an "other" category to write in any additional benefits that they felt were associated with using LVBs in their practice. Increased parent involvement was the most mentioned benefit with 33 percent of DTs (N=133)

reporting this. The next most frequently mentioned benefit was an increase of overall parent coaching strategies implemented with 21 percent of DTs (N=82). Increased parent empowerment was the third most frequently mentioned benefit with 18 percent of DTs (N=71) checking this one. Flexible scheduling was mentioned by 13 percent of the DT participants (N=51) followed by improved parent coaching skills with 8 percent of DTs (N=32) and finally improved observational skills with 3 percent of DTs (N=13). Some “other” write in benefits included the ability to reach families with limited access to providers, convenience of not having to travel long distances, and several participants reported that they did not find any benefits to engaging in LVVs at all.

Barriers

A list of 5 barriers to using LVVs was provided to DTs along with an “other” category where they could write in other barriers they encountered using LVVs in their practice. They were asked to check the most important barrier. The most frequently mentioned barrier was technology with 24 percent of DTs (N=97). The next barrier mentioned was limited hands on with the child with 23 percent of DTs (N=93). This was followed by difficulty establishing a relationship with the child with 21 percent of DTs (N=84), internet problems with 20 percent of DTs (N=82) and lastly camera issues with 4 percent of DTs (N=17). Other barriers were written in by DT participants and their responses were grouped into categories that included the following responses: no barriers at all, parents confused/distracted, relationship with family is difficult, and parents do not want LVVs.

Discussion

There were 5 research questions that guided this study. A discussion of the results will focus on each of them. Research Question 1 asked about the conditions under which DTs would like to continue to use LVVs in their practice. As is clearly shown, DTs would like to take their lead from families and when parents request a LVV they would like to be able to service a family using this modality. Using LVVs would also be appropriate if a caregiver, child or DT is slightly sick. DTs reported the value of seeing families using LVVs when weather was bad, when distance was excessive and as a way to reduce family waitlists due to the lack of local therapists in certain areas of the state. They also saw the value of using LVVs when a family might travel out of town so not to have their child miss a therapy session. Finally, DTs expressed their interest in using LVVs as a way to help parents see what a session usually conducted in a day care center looks like. Overall, DTs felt that if it was convenient and beneficial for the family and child, DTs would consider using LVVs. So, it is also clear that most DTs would indeed, continue to use LVVs in their practice when it ensured that families have consistent access to therapy.

Research Question 2 asked about being able to establish good communication with both children and families served in early intervention using LVV's. Developmental therapists rated the effectiveness of communication with the caregivers and their ability to successfully read the caregivers mood as highest using LVVs. It is interesting to note that they also rated communication with the child, the ability to read the child's moods and the ability to hear the actual vocalizations the child was making as being the least effective using LVVs. It would appear that DTs had difficulty being able to see specific body movements, gestures and expressions of the child when using LVVs. They were forced to rely on parent report and descriptions of what a child was doing and saying more consistently when engaged in LVVs. It seems as if the platform of LVVs promoted more parent led sessions and planning collaboratively with the caregiver for the next session. An increase in

communication with parents, via emails, sharing online resources, and reminder texts are giving DTs the opportunity to plan sessions with more parents' input.

Research question 3 asked about effective practices using LVV. DTs rated caregiver coaching as the most effective practice that they engaged in when using LVV. This finding is supported in the literature review that cited several studies on which tele-practice or LVV which promote parent coaching, one of the recommended strategies of the Early Intervention program (Burgoyne and Cohn, 2020; Cole, Pickard, and Stredler-Brown, 2019). The nature of LVV promoted DTs to coach caregivers in every session. With more opportunities to practice, DTs became better at coaching and in turn coached more often and more effectively. Regarding co-treatments via LVV, a majority of DTs stated that co-treating was effective, however, as the number of therapists co-treating increased per session, the rating of communication effectiveness decreased. The number of professionals co-treating is a very tenuous situation, and how that interdisciplinary team communicates and collaborates with the family is essential to the success of LVV. Once 2 or more therapists were co-treating together in a session, the overall effectiveness decreased. Common practice strategies such as modeling or problem solving a challenging behavior with a parent were not as effective when using LVV.

Research question 4 addressed changes in practice of DTs using LVV. The use of LVV as a primary service mode during the pandemic has forced DTs to adapt their practice and make changes in how they deliver services to the children and families they serve. Four key areas of practice were highlighted. These areas included establishing rapport and communication with caregivers and children; professional skill development; co-treatments and collaborations, and scheduling of DT sessions. DTs reported that they felt that their rapport and communication with caregivers using LVV was as good as it was in-person. However, they did report that establishing rapport with new caregivers does take longer using LVV. They also reported that it was more difficult establishing rapport and communicating directly with the child in the parent-child dyad using LVV. The skill development of DTs increased when using LVV as they reported that they more clearly articulated the purpose of activities and gave more details to caregivers on how to implement them. They reported becoming better coaches of parents, better observers of parent-child interactions and took more reflective detailed notes during their sessions. They also reported that they learned to incorporate interactive screen activities with toddlers when engaged in LVV. They increased their collaborations with professionals by increasing the amount of co-treatment sessions they engaged in. They also reported that it was easier to collaborate with other EI professionals using LVV than it was before the pandemic. Finally, DTs reported that scheduling and rescheduling sessions were easier using LVV and this mode of service delivery made it possible for DTs to work more evenings and weekends as it reduced the time it took for traveling to and from a family's home.

Finally, research question 5 asked DTs to identify benefits and barriers to using LVV in their practice. DTs indicated that increased parent involvement and parent empowerment along with flexibility in scheduling were all clear benefits to incorporating LVV into their practice. DTs also indicated they improved their coaching skills and increased parent coaching in LVV sessions. Again, as DTs utilized LVV, parent involvement and child- parent interactions increased, thus empowering parents. As parents become more empowered, the outcome for both the family and child will improve. This is a powerful result! DTs reported several barriers in using LVV. The main barriers were technology issues that included camera issues and internet problems. Another barrier cited was the inability to engage in hands-on modeling of activities with the child. Many parents are visual

learners and this LVV mode of service delivery made modeling difficult for parents to learn certain activities. DTs also reported that LVVs also made it more difficult for them to establish a relationship with the child directly.

Implication for Practice

The results of this study yielded several implications for using live video visits in early intervention practices in the future. First, this review suggests several implications for service providers and families. Use of Live Video Visits by developmental therapists and other Early Intervention service providers could lead to improved child outcomes and increased overall parent involvement and empowerment. Utilizing LVVs in Early Intervention offers many benefits to the DT and family. It can be an option for early morning or evening hours and weekends; enabling more family members to be involved. It could be an option for medically fragile children or could alleviate waitlists for DTs and make therapy accessible to families in rural areas. The addition of LVVs could enable the family to participate in more therapy over the length of time while in Early Intervention as well. This was supported by findings that showed the number of visits and minutes of interventions received were higher in a group participating in tele-practice versus a group that was not (Behl, et al., 2017). This implication for practice is not that LVVs should replace in-person sessions but rather be another tool that DTs and other Early Intervention service providers could utilize as they provide family-based services in the future. The limited, regular use of LVVs should be considered by the Early Intervention Program as an option for some families.

Second, this review suggests implications in the areas of training of Early Intervention providers. In supporting therapists' needs of adapting and embracing the challenge of teletherapy, providers have the opportunity to learn different strategies for coaching families, observing child behaviors and child-family interactions, and improving communication lapses during teletherapy (Burgoyne and Cohn, 2020). However, there will be a need for more extensive provider training regarding how to provide family coaching, as well as how providers can form more collaborative partnerships with families and other Early Intervention professionals when using LVVs. (Cole, Pickard, and Stredler-Brown, 2019). As the results of survey feedback analyzed, some of the individual responses indicated that some DTs would not be a good fit for LVVs. Some still do not have the skills needed to coach, or the desire to use LVVs effectively. Therefore, providing additional opportunities for provider training in utilizing LVVs effectively when delivering EI services to children and families could lead to increased compliance of the Early Intervention philosophy of supporting family members and caregivers in a child's life.

Third, this review suggests that Early Intervention policy guidelines should be established to allow the conditional use of LVVs. These guidelines might include: monthly limits of LVV use per family; required documentation of intervention for targeted routines addressed in the LVV; limiting the number of providers co-treating in a therapy session utilizing the LVV format; utilizing a hybrid model of LVVs and face-to-face visits predicated on mutual agreements between family and providers. Live Video Visits should be utilized with targeted purposes and under specific conditions in an effort to enhance the overall effectiveness of services provided by EI providers to their families.

Limitations and Future Research

There are a few limitations that should be considered when interpreting findings from this survey study. First, this study only focused on developmental therapists perspectives of using live video visits in their DT practices, which means

the results cannot be generalized across early intervention providers of other disciplines. Future research should consider the perspectives of other service providers working in early intervention as they might offer different perspectives due to the scope of their roles and involvement in the Early Intervention program.

A second limitation of this study was that it did not consider the DTs who left the profession due to technology barriers and personal conflicts due to the pandemic. These occurrences may have resulted in sampling bias toward those who have more positive perspectives on current DT practices and may not be representative of the entire range of DTs' experiences.

A third limitation was that this study did not collect separate data on training needs of the development therapy participants. This data might have provided more insight into the specific training needs of the Development Therapy participants. These initial findings and any additional research done on the topic could be used to inform recommended policies and procedures in the case of a future event that would lead to early intervention services returning to a virtual format.

A fourth limitation to the study was the validity of the survey items. Some respondents may have misinterpreted the wording of the questions, which would lead to low internal validity. One way the researchers tried to combat this was to pilot this survey with a smaller group of professionals prior to sending it out to the entire group of credentialed DTs across the state.

Conclusion

The purpose of this survey research study was to investigate the effects of using Live Video Visits (LVVs) on the current practices of developmental therapists when working with children and families in the early intervention program in a midwestern state. There is much to be optimistic about in the overall effectiveness of using LVVs. Developmental therapists have embraced the use of LVVs and have found them to be very effective in achieving many of the child and family outcomes that they addressed when working with children and families over the past 18 months. They have reportedly improved their skills in parent coaching, observation of parent-child interaction, taking more reflective notes about their DT sessions and have increased their overall collaboration with Early Intervention team professionals and families through the co-planning and co-treating process. They have provided a look at some of the barriers to using LVVs along with some possible training and policy implications for the states EI Program to consider. Overall, the results of this DT survey study were to identify some of the benefits of using LVVs in certain situations so that LVVs can be used as a tool in achieving the goal of delivering Family-centered early intervention services (Behl, et al., 2017). It is hoped that the current investigation, along with the work of other colleagues in the field, serve to magnify the voices of Early Intervention providers, specifically developmental therapists, in advocating for continued use of LVVs, as well as identify training needs and policy revisions to accommodate the LVV mode of service provision.

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The Influence of Loyalty on Historical Truth and the Entanglement of Teacher Education

by

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Abstract

This paper invites a dialogue about teacher educators' loyalties to academic organizational priorities, academic truth, and the professional interests of preservice teachers. Intersecting but often in conflict, these interests compete for the loyalties of teacher educators who seek to negotiate them through their pedagogical priorities. Viewed through a patriotic lens, teacher educators can view their positioning and pedagogical approaches as either patriotic maintenance or patriotic challenge to economic and political status quos. We place teacher educators' decision-making regarding these interests into Westheimer's (2015) framework identifying personally responsible citizens, participatory citizens, and social-justice oriented citizens.

Teaching is a social act and a political act (Nieto, 2006). The emotions and social priorities of a country's citizens dictate the nature of skills and knowledge expected of all public schools to instill among its children and youth. Nowhere is this relationship more evident than in the teaching of social studies and related teacher preparations, which witness the calls for change in social studies curricula brought about by events such as the Great Depression, the Second World War, and the Black Lives Matter Movement (Evans, 2004; Holstein, 2016). Historians, educators, lawmakers, and the public have not reached a consensus on what the substance of historical truth teachers should teach in the classroom.

Situated in the realm of higher education, social studies teacher education faces a quandary. Within this context, it embraces an illusionary privilege of academic freedom, such that it experiences the autonomy to explore topics of scholarly relevance in pursuit of *truth*. Consider state legislation allowing students to record college courses and challenges this academic freedom as well as recent legislative decisions to ban study of critical social theories. (e.g., <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/233/BillText/er/PDF>) and the recent rash of legislative efforts to ban critical theory from school curricula. Academics experience the right to express scholarly knowledge in class; however, expressions of unpopular views or views challenging hegemonic historical narratives come at their own peril, and potentially, at the peril of the preservice teachers with whom they explore these views.

In their roles as employees of purposefully chartered learning institutions, academics struggle to practice autonomy against administrative policies and legislative influences (Labaree, 2017). Yet they also experience challenges within the profession, facing intellectual rivalries that yield intellectual truths rooted in self-promotion and power, rather than absolute truth, both in their interfacing with colleagues and in their own decisions (Lagemann, 2000). True objectivity in education research and practice represents a very rare commodity.

Outside the context of higher education but of acute interest to teacher educators are the socio-political contexts in which preservice teachers will ultimately find themselves employed. When compared to their colleagues in college and university settings, PreK-12 teachers face restrictions—legal, political, and cultural—to academic freedom to pursue *truth* through both content and pedagogy. Legislated

mandates and professional and content standards originate from politically driven processes that exclude or discount those voices that counter what passes for the status-quo of the dominant culture (Pinto, 2013; Sabzalian, et al., 2021; Van hover et al., 2010). Acquiescence—whether unquestioned or begrudged—to these standards, detours the profession from the pursuit of truths it claims to espouse.

The profession prepares teachers for practice within a public education system regulated by the mandates, standards, and practices of state legislatures and local school boards designed to perpetuate the commonsense notions of the dominant culture (Tupper, 2008). These conditions provide a professional quandary for teachers and teacher educators alike. How does the profession implement current research-based teaching principles that promote one set of political interests in a system regulated by another set of political interests? Whether or how teacher educators resolve this tension through their approaches to conflicting narratives essentially becomes an expression of loyalty manifested in the interrelated—yet prioritized—influence of institutional pressures, preservice teachers’ professional interests, and the search for *truth*.

Acquiescence to laws and policies imposed through systems of colonialist governance represents an act of adherence to authoritarian patriotism (Westheimer, 2006), aligning with the curricular narratives prescribed by popular representatives. Yet, still seminal philosopher Alistair MacIntyre (1984) pointed out “no institution, no practice, no loyalty can be immune from being put into question and perhaps rejected.” (p. 12). In a professional field devoted to the pursuit of truth, teacher education possesses a right and responsibility to scrutinize the histories, philosophies, and policies and procedures undergirding the environments shaping practice.

When the emphasis on scholarship and the pursuit of truth comes into conflict with this dominant narrative, academics possess the opportunity and responsibility to demonstrate patriotic challenge of the status quo. Teacher education represents an aspect of the settler colonialism (Shear & Krutka, 2019) that resulted from European invaders on the North American continent. A holistic lens informs the principles undergirding the purpose of the profession and the social positioning guiding its implementation. The curricular and instructional visions imposed on teacher education narrow this vision, to fulfill a colonialist agenda. It is, conversely, through tacit and overt adherence to either challenging or conforming to standards and practices that teacher educators demonstrate their conceptualization of patriotism as a maintenance of the status quo or as a challenge to it.

Currently, the most acute manifestation of tension between hegemonic narratives and practices and the search for truth is societal dialogue regarding “true” history. Of obvious interest to social studies teacher educators, a focus of contemporary civil discourse relates to two narratives regarding the teaching and learning of history and patriotism. These narratives relate to (1) what historical narratives teachers in Pre-K-12 settings embrace or avoid and how they demonstrate patriotism as either a maintenance of the status quo or a challenge to it, and (2) their negotiation of narratives suggesting “radical, left-wing indoctrination” in higher education courses that may meet with resistance in their future PreK-12 professional environments. What receives less attention is the nexus between these two narratives in the teacher-education classroom, particularly in Pre-K-12 social studies preparation courses. How or whether teacher education reconcile the scholarly demands to academic truth with preparation expectations to develop patriotic professional citizens represents a critical determinant of its professional identity. The scholarly advent of, and subsequent societal dialogue regarding, counter-hegemonic citizenship topics such as Black critical patriotism and

indigenous sovereignty (e.g., Busey & Walker, 2017; Sabzalian, 2019; Schmitke, et al., 2020) increases urgency in the contemplation of these issues.

This manuscript explores the positioning of social studies teacher educators in the current dialogue regarding conflicting historical narratives and manifestations of patriotism as either maintenance of the historical status quo or as challenge to hegemonic narratives. It asks the professional introspective question; "Where do the intellectual and pedagogical loyalties of social studies teacher educators rest?"

Conceding that social studies teacher educators may provide varying interrelated—and often enmeshed—responses; we explore discrete - yet interactive - influences upon social studies teacher education: teacher education standards; professional interests of preservice teachers and; critical or hegemonic academic narratives. We begin by positioning the social studies teacher educator within the current socio-political context, and then explore these three influences upon teacher-educators. We conclude with questions to nurture professional advancement in the examinations of these loyalties relating to the content and pedagogy of teacher preparations.

Positioning of the Social Studies Teacher-Educator within the Current Sociopolitical Context

Since the turn of the century, the release of revisionist American history accounts to the public have prompted questions and challenges about official accounts of the past, their ideological promotions and selective omissions (e.g., Immawahr, 2020; Loewen, 2007; Reséndez, 2016; Zinn, 2003). These perspectives and narratives disrupt the historical "Truth" that has dominated history textbooks and "content" standards for a long time. The contested Truths reveal the always present but recently acknowledged complexity of the nation's past and influence the teaching of it in the teacher education and P-12 classrooms.

Current legislative efforts in multiple states to ban teaching of critical history, feminism, and critical race theory illustrate the manipulation of truth that occurs to preserve justifications for power. The nature and extent to which the teacher education community engages in this curricular influence represents a passive expression of the basis for its social and political loyalties. As the nexus between the relative academic freedom of higher education and the stricter, context-varied sociopolitical environments in which PreK-12 teachers practice, teacher educators face the challenge of embracing or avoiding professional activities that critically contemplate these legislative efforts.

MacIntyre's (1984) observation "Each of us to some degree or another understands his or her life as an enacted narrative and because of our relationships with each other we have to understand ourselves as characters in the enacted narratives of other people's lives" (p. 16) extends to institutions as well as individuals. To control the truth held by a society represents an exercise in power. As schools serve to transmit the cultural knowledge necessary for civic engagement, limiting the students' sources of social information reduces the possibilities for alternative social ideas, including those which may serve as a society's founding principles.

Crocchio's (2018) observation of differences between school and academic history raises questions about the political purposes driving teacher preparations and their influences on children and future citizens. Informing PreK-12 classroom teachers' selections of narratives, pedagogies, and assessments are teacher-educators tasked with providing educational experiences to grow their professional practices. Here we offer additional attention to the social and political foundations shaping these selections and the resultant loyalties to professional decision-making.

Informing our discussion is Westheimer's (2015) citizen framework identifying three types of citizens; personally responsible, participatory, and social-justice oriented. We place teacher educators' pedagogies into this framework to examine their focus on "...hav[ing] good character...and [are] honest, responsible, and law-abiding members of the community" (Westheimer, 2015, p. 39); "...actively participate and take leadership positions within established systems and community structures." (Westheimer, 2015, p. 39); or "question and change established systems and structures when they reproduce patterns of injustice over time" (Westheimer, 2015, p. 39). While exceptions occur, we perceive the teacher education process as emphasizing the development of personally responsible and participatory citizens. Further, we assert that institutional pressures—manifested through adherence to accountability frameworks— and socio-political realities preservice teachers often face in their future teaching contexts dissuade deep, practiced loyalty to meaningful social-justice oriented pedagogies (Westheimer, 2015). In the following sections, we interpret the patterns of loyalty influencing the teacher education profession and consider how they inform understandings of professional identity.

Loyalty to Standards

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, (CAEP) and the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) have standards requiring demonstration of teacher candidates' knowledge "content". For example, CAEP (2020) 2022 Standard 1 (Content and Pedagogical Knowledge) states:

"The provider ensures that candidates develop, through curriculum and experiences, a deep understanding of the critical concepts and principles of their discipline that integrate equity and diversity throughout candidates' courses and their developmental clinical experiences with diverse P-12 students. Upon completion, candidates can use discipline-specific practices and understand student culture and differing needs to advance learning by all students".

Analog to the "critical concepts" of the CAEP standards are the undefined "disciplinary concepts and facts" of NCSS (2018) standards:

Candidates demonstrate knowledge of social studies disciplines.

Candidates are knowledgeable of disciplinary concepts, facts, and tools; structures of inquiry; and forms of representation.

Element 1a: Candidates are knowledgeable about the concepts, facts, and tools in civics, economics, geography, history, and the social/behavioral sciences.

Element 1b: Candidates are knowledgeable about disciplinary inquiry in civics, economics, geography, history, and the social/behavioral sciences.

Element 1c: Candidates are knowledgeable about disciplinary forms of representation in civics, economics, geography, history, and the social/behavioral sciences. (p. 13)

These standards call teacher educators to provide evidence demonstrating teacher candidates' knowledge of disciplinary facts and concepts. Yet, the facts and concepts selected for emphasis in these processes derive from and inform the historical narratives teacher candidates and their students favor. Aydarova (2021) argued increased focus on outcomes-based measures, including those focused on content knowledge, reduces emphasis on critical analysis of systems maintaining and reinforcing systemic injustices. With disparate "facts and concepts" embedded within their narratives, the 1619 Project (2019) and The President's Advisory 1776 Commission (2021) present teacher educators with both a challenge and an

opportunity when they consider historical truths, the appropriateness of school social studies content, and the marginalization of social studies teacher preparation. How each of these narratives is manifested in standards and licensure gateways remains underexplored. Fundamentally, a teacher educator's approach to each of these conflicting narratives may reflect orientation toward a patriotism of hegemony or a patriotism of disruption.

Loyalty to the Economic Interests of Preservice Teachers

A summary of the history of teacher education would indicate a political design of developing teachers who emphasize principles of discipline, politeness, and obedience to authority. Teacher education prepares candidates to accomplish the tasks set for them, rather than critically think about society and its patterns of injustice (Williams, 2005). Indeed, programs employing screening processes to ensure candidates who possess desirable traits serve to maintain these classroom dispositions and practices. Candidates are valued for their compliance with top-down imposed curricula and praised for leadership traits fitting with the hierarchical educational culture that discourages disagreement with authority and values pseudo community (Lucey & Hill-Clarke 2008). In their present forms, PreK-12 teaching and related professional preparations represent efforts to condition public thinking in manners which support national business and economic needs (Lucey & Lorschach, 2013; Bobbitt, 2002).

The preparation of young women for teaching may limit their critical thinking to professional contexts and exchange intellectual rigor for social demands for economic production (Labaree, 2008). The present environment originates from the 19th century's immense national population growth, which was fueled by corporate development necessitating the mass development of (immigrant) workers to fill labor positions in the factories. Watras (2000) noted the presence of three change patterns in the 1830s which affected schools, adding that population changes affected political conversations.

The first change, the expansion of the population, was rapid and universal...the population growth in the United States reinforced economic development, which was the second change that made the common school campaign appear reasonable...the third social change that encouraged people to take an interest in the education of other people's children was a shift in national politics...Whereas Jefferson wanted schools to select and train potential leaders from all social groups, common school advocates suggested that public education would teach immigrants to adapt American ideas. (pp. 53-55).

Prior to this growth, many elementary teachers were not officially prepared for their profession and received no license or certificate of professional status (Urban, 1990). The 19th century population growth brought about a mass preparation of young women to satisfy the need for classroom teachers required a standard for public schooling (Haberman, 2012).

Between 1870 and 1930, the percentage of women teachers in elementary schools increased from 58 to nearly 90 percent; this situation partially occurred because men left the teaching positions for other forms of employment (Apple, 1985). During this period, society developed a perspective of K-12 education as feminine profession, with media playing a prominent role in associating women's issues with schooling (Lagemann, 2000; Watras, 2000) Lagemann (2000) asserted

The feminization of teaching derived from a tension that has been and continues to be central in all aspects of education in the United States, including its study, practice, and public perception...this tension has

involved...a pervasive, anti-intellectual tendency to discount the complexity of education. (2000, p. 3)

Teacher education was not a process for intellectual development. The Normal schools represented vehicles for ensuring a standardized process for teacher preparations (Labaree, 2008). These environments emphasized teaching and learning experiences stressing memorization and recitation of facts necessary for the responsible lifestyles. Teaching, at the core, was a tool for ensuring social order (Labaree, 2008).

Education processes reinforced the social order at both local and systemic levels. For example, on a local/community level, Maloney-Geregach's (2006) account of the Elgin, Illinois school district's first century conveyed how a small, personalized home environment developed into an educational system through growth in the population. With the development of corporate institutions for commercial production, urban and suburban communities adopted similar structures. As corporate entities, school districts developed corporate allegiances with local corporate employers while also serving college preparatory needs. On an inter-sectional level, Anderson (1988) disclosed the conspiracies between northern industrialists and southern elites to prepare blacks for servile positions. Public schooling developed into a formalized process to condition thinking of the masses for employment by the corporate elite. In tow were teachers who adhered to state and district policies regarding curriculum, assessment, and teacher evaluation.

In the early 20th century, United States President Theodore Roosevelt faced a significant challenge to his leadership. The owners of monopoly corporations threatened to disrupt the national economy unless Roosevelt acquiesced to their policy demands. While President Roosevelt successfully navigated through this political crisis, corporate influence on American policy remained. As Loewen (2007) points out, history textbooks neglect to inform readers about corporate influence on 20th century government policy.

Critical thinking about the system did occur when economic conditions became uncomfortable. For example, Harold Rugg (1921/1996) criticized a district review of its social studies curricular content for its failure to include critical analysis of social institutions. Rugg developed his own set of social studies textbooks for classroom use—published in 1929 and popular through the 1930's (Watras, 2000; Zimmerman, 2003)—during a time of economic challenge in the United States.

The late 20th and early 21st century witnessed the advent of public internet access. Robin Usher (2010) described how early 21st century culture experienced view of consumption reoriented from the past, identifying it no longer as a process of accessing daily needs, but one of establishing identity. According to Usher, corporate control of consumer goods and services defines the identities affecting education by alternating understandings of truth.

...learning becomes instead a response to desire in the pursuit and consumption of a *range* of truths and an involvement in the truth-making practices.... These reformulations may include a desire for truth as revelation, truth as advocacy, truth as resonance as well as truth as correspondents, even truth as the renewed search for foundations⁵. The point is that no one of these truths can claim to speak the *whole* truth, and it is recognized that they cannot, even though many still wish them to do so" (p. 41) (Italics and footnote as in original text).

Indeed, a handful of corporate executives sit on many of boards of companies influencing education policy (Picciano & Spring, 2013). The corporate influence on teaching and learning engages schools in the pursuit of an economic truth designed to reinforce the profit justification for existing social power structures.

In this system, patriotism represents a loyalty to the images representing the United States and reaffirming control of resources by a handful of corporate elites. (Hedges, 2010). One may illustrate the hypocrisy of this influence on teaching and learning by the “donation” of screen technology to enhance student learning from corporations whose executives send their children to screen-free Waldorf schools (Kardaras, 2016). How teacher educators approach these experienced policies and practices with their preservice teachers reflects a consideration for—or challenge of—the economic frameworks guiding current PreK-12 practice. Indeed, dual considerations of the economic policies impacting education practice, blended with the economic consideration of initial and sustained employability of early career teachers, influence how teacher educators approach their craft.

Layered into corporate-interested pedagogies, assessments, and employability beginning teachers are conflicting sociopolitical narratives preservice and in-service teachers must navigate. Further complicating their contexts, these competing historical narratives occur in tandem with often vitriolic community pressure upon school boards. Nested as a fundamental concern of preservice and in-service teachers and teacher educator are the best interests of students. Faced with similar, competing loyalties to standards, mandates, school district practices, and sociocultural landscapes, the social, emotional, cultural, academic, and economic interests of students, and search for Truth, Pre-K-12 teachers face similar quandaries to those of teacher educators but with fewer economic, social, and political safeguards afforded their higher education colleagues.

Education that sacrifices curricular integrity for the professional interests of a small percentage of the population lacks a moral foundation. The corporatization of education, which approaches saturation, stymies critical professional thinking and promotes cookie-cutter approaches to education and teacher preparation rooted in corporate-driven processes (Hedges, 2010; Sidorkin, 2012).

Cumulatively, the landscape of corporate-preferred pedagogies and assessment approaches, merging with multiple *truth* narratives, present preservice teachers with teaching and learning landscapes often conflicting with teacher-educators’ loyalty to *Truth*. If preservice teachers are to be reasonably prepared to obtain and retain employment in their profession, how may teacher educators prepare them to negotiate—and compromise—with conditions counter to the teacher-educators’ pursuit of *Truth*. To what extent are teacher educators demonstrating loyalty to either *Truth* or to the sociopolitical realities the preservice teachers with whom they work, face?

When employing their broad—but limited—cultural and legal academic freedom with preservice teachers who will not enjoy the same latitude as practicing teachers, to what extent do and should teacher educators temper their pedagogies for the economic interests of the preservice teachers with whom they work?

Loyalty to Critical or Hegemonic Academic Narratives (or) Whose History, What Basis, What Loyalty?

In 2019, the 400th anniversary of the beginning of American slavery, the *New York Times Magazine* released the 1619 Project with purpose to “reframe the country’s history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of our national narrative” (Silverstein, 2019, para. 4). In the belief that history is a process of constant revision, the historians, journalists, poets, and political activists behind the project address the marginalization of African-American history and extend the citizens’ sense of the American past—often written by White academic historians. The project seems to cultivate democratic patriots who are outspoken in condemnation of the nation’s

shortcomings (Westheimer, 2006). In 2021, the President's Advisory 1776 Commission released the 1776 Commission Report to honor the 250th anniversary of the nation's founding and "to form a more perfect Union" (p. 1). The report critiqued the creators of 1619 project by asserting they "doubt the humanity, goodness, or benevolence in America's greatest historical figures," and "see only weaknesses and failures, teaching students truth is an illusion, that hypocrisy is everywhere, and that power is all that matters" (p. 36). On May 1 and May 8, 2021, the political blog *Electoral-vote.com* posted correspondences and responses about the New York Times's 1619 project and the nature of history. The managers of the site (one of whom is a professional historian), described the project, the patterns of criticism and drew a distinction between "'good history' and 'advocacy'". A reader subsequently responded that history involves more indefiniteness than do the more concrete disciplines of science and mathematics. Lawmakers in several states attempted to ban the 1619 Project from schools (Rodrigues, 2021).

Teacher education faces the questions of "What is the historical truth?" and "Whose history should be taught?" The answers to these questions, and the manners of their resolution, inform the social foundations undergirding the practice of teacher education. Scholarship (Lagemann, 2000; Mehta, 2013; Picciano & Spring, 2013) documenting the political and profit motives influencing educational research, policy, and technology clearly illuminates the processes of advocacy shaping education and teaching standards. The question teacher educators may ask is not how to implement the standards, but how do the standards reflect professional loyalties and what should teacher education practice look like in the development of social studies teachers given the intersecting and often conflicting loyalties.

Indeed, teacher education's comparatively marginal scholarly status in the views of the academic community compromise efforts to affect substantial policy change. As Labaree (2004) explained,

An important source of this low status is the nature of knowledge produced by faculty members in education, especially its relentlessly soft and applied character. The pinnacles of the academic status order are reserved for the hardest and purest of intellectual pursuits. It is not hard to see why this is so. Hard-knowledge disciplines are able to maintain general respect because their claims to validity are so difficult to refute, while the softer disciplines suffer from having to qualify, temporize, and particularize their claims. (p. 73)

Until teacher education develops clear, irrefutable, body of knowledge, decision-makers may conveniently dismiss teacher education scholarship suggesting changes in direction of education policy.

The Commodity of Truth, History, and Teacher Education

Describing the three loyalties impacting teacher education policies and practices makes clear the imprudence of neglecting to situate the profession within these social influences. On December 20, 2019, the editor of the *New York Times* published a response to criticisms of the 1619 project by well-reputed historians (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/20/magazine/we-respond-to-the-historians-who-critiqued-the-1619-project.html>). While the editors' offered a detailed response to the critics, the underlying conflict relates to questions about professional purpose and its influence on accuracy and authenticity. If, as Loewen (2007) claims, the telling of history serves to convey a political purpose, one may consider the *Times's* effort to retell history as representing an act of political influence, in addition to an act of news reporting. This historic knowledge becomes a commodified good produced through the processing of raw material provided by primary sources, journalists, and select

historians. We perceive the discussion as ultimately representing one about the nature of truth. The revisionist texts mentioned above, and others, provide academic evidence that goes beyond the content presented in the Times's article. The Times' activity does not represent a definitive expression of truth; rather, it represents an interpretation of history based on a limited amount of evidence obtained.

The Times' assertion of a right to challenge the work of historians invokes a discussion about influences on interpretations of the past and the conditions leading to claims of authenticity. Yet, given the social and political influences on public education, the conversation of truth and claims of authenticity has important bearings on teacher education. Broadly absent from these conversations, teacher educators either wallow in ignorance of these conditions, demonstrate implicit loyalty to the corporate influences, or stand at the window looking in upon the dialogue.

Political decisions commonly influence PreK-12 education and teacher preparation policies and procedures motivated through the generation of profits for corporations (such as Apple and Pearson) that promote their goods and services as improving learning and assessment. The conditions raise questions about the influences on truths guiding teacher preparations, the development of standards for education practice, and on learning theories influencing the teaching and learning of children. Society equates the good for the students with the good of the corporate vision of citizenship. Children become valued as contributors to a system of financialization who reinforce this capitalist structure. God Bless America represents a euphemism for "God Bless *Apple*" or "God Bless *Pearson*". Patterns of corporate and political loyalties undergird the values that the standards shaping teacher education and practice. As a field created to prepare educators to facilitate student learning within this environment, rather than pursuit of truth, teacher education depends upon policy for professional direction.

We invite community engagement in a dialogue about the contested nature of historical truths, the appropriateness of school social studies content, and the role of teacher educators in engaging in dialogue regarding conflicting "Truths" of social studies/history content. Teacher education needs a deeper examination of the relevance of political loyalty to the shaping and practice of truth and its relationship to teacher education. An inquiry into the development of the 1619 project and criticisms by the 1776 commission and reputed historians represents an avenue down which to commence this inquiry. The marginalization of social studies education, its influences on the social and historical ignorance of American citizenry concerning its rights and responsibilities represents a critical teacher education concern. Consideration of how this ignorance of social processes affects the teacher education profession and its practices offers the basis for community dialogue. We offer the following questions for further scholarly engagement:

- How do we/to what extent does the profession create a community that empowers preservice teachers to examine narratives shaping the profession and to subsequently teach critically both in field placements and PreK-12 professional practice?
- What teacher education reforms could dispel the corporate illusion governing knowledge in schools?
- Could teacher education grow from the awareness of these imposed loyalties and strive for a more autonomous professional vision?
- Does the potential disjoint between institutions and their surrounding communities bias the nature of truth pursued in the profession?
- Does the basis for founding of teacher institutions influence the ideological loyalties possessed among respective faculty?

Conclusion

Lagemann (2000) described the struggle between Dewey and Thorndike to define education achievement. While Dewey's pursuits offered much promise for the ideal classroom, Thorndike's focus on quantitative precision in measurement received community focus. The situation developed, not because Dewey held invalid views, but that Thorndike's work aligned with the views and agendas of policymakers needing the information. For it to evolve as an academic discipline, teacher education needs to examine its identity as a political profession and consider appropriate processes to engage the policies and procedures that define its practice. Carr (2011) observed that

The relationship between local/national and international events shaping educational debates has long been underplayed in the minds of Americans, yet the newest incarnation of globalization is but another form of interdependency that more explicitly...informs the lived realities of Americans and others (Chossudovsky, 2003; Macedo & Gounari, 2006). (p. 22)

Avoidance of political stances represents an expression of a political stance. Teacher education stands at a critical juncture in its evolving quest for professional identity. For as long as corporately driven standards-driven assessment guides teacher education processes, deeper examination of the patterns for loyalty associated with the creation and compliance with these standards represents an essential part of defining the nature of teacher education and its foundations.

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The Predictability of Success for Minority Students Entering an Educator Preparation Program

by

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Abstract

This article reviews the relationship between factors used for an educator preparation program's (EPP) admissions criteria and successful completion of the Certification Exams in Texas (TExES). Action research was used to review the profiles of approximately 150 students admitted to the EPP at a predominately minority serving institution over a period of five years. Data reviewed included scores on the Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA), Texas Success Initiative (TSI) status, GPA, ethnicity, gender, and scores on the licensing examination based on certification area. The findings indicated that THEA scores were predictors for the content and Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities exams, while TSI status was not a significant predictor for any of the certification exams. Additionally, admission GPA alone was not a predictor. Ethnicity was a predictor of content exam scores with Hispanics performing better, while African Americans performed better on the PPR.

The discourse regarding the identification of quality candidates for educator preparation programs (EPPs) continues to be a national dialogue. There is a struggle to identify quality candidates and, at the same time, prepare a diversified pool of teachers based on the standards that are in place. This research focuses on the relationship between admission requirements, testing scores, grade point average, ethnicity, and gender on the successful completion of licensing exams in the State of Texas. It has been nationally accepted that higher admission standards in teacher preparation programs yield more effective teachers. For this reason, educational organizations as well as States had a continuous dialogue regarding admission standards. Programs in the State of Texas have continuously worked to refine measures used for admission to Educator Preparation Programs (EPP). State requirements include a minimum grade point average and clearly delineated scores on basic skills tests. Prior to January 2017, EPP programs could determine which assessment they would use with the requirement that it included a critical thinking component. More recently, Chapter 227.10 of the Texas Administrative Code requires that an applicant must demonstrate basic skills in reading, written communication, and mathematics by meeting the requirements of the Texas Success Initiative under the rules established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The state requirements include the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) as an assessment of reading, mathematics, and writing along with an application and interview. EPP programs use data to make effective choices in terms of who will be admitted to the program. The results focus on the need for a more effective teacher.

At the same time, increasing the diversity of the teaching force is critical, particularly in the State of Texas. Bailey (2017) reported that the landscape of teaching in Texas is challenging because of the increasingly diverse student population in rural, suburban, and urban settings. The author suggests that special attention is required to maintain quality and excellence of all candidates and to assure a diverse population of students in educator preparation programs. A diverse

teaching force enhances the teaching and learning experience for students and the probability of student success. Education secretary John B. King, speaking at Howard University on March 8, 2016, stated:

Without question when the majority of students in public schools are students of color and only 18 percent of our teachers are teachers of color, we have an urgent need to act. It is important to understand that all students benefit from teacher diversity. There is strong evidence that students of color benefit from having teachers and leaders who look like them as role models and also benefit from the classroom dynamics that diversity creates. But it is also important for our white students to see teachers of color in leadership roles in their classrooms and communities. The question for the nation is how do we address this quickly and thoughtfully?

This discussion, that happens daily throughout education, highlights the need to recruit and retain minority students in teacher education programs. There is no question that improving teacher diversity will improve the teaching field. The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service (2016) has reported, "Teachers of color are positive role models for all students in breaking down negative stereotypes and preparing students to live and work in a multiracial society." Education has long been a chosen profession for minorities; however, minority students attending college and universities currently are often discouraged to major in education because of higher salaries in other disciplines. It is imperative that Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) address these issues to assure that it does not adversely affect their standing and result in a loss of accreditation, that may promulgate mergers of HBCUs. These problems will indirectly determine the ethnic composition of teachers in the future. It is projected that teachers in the future will be from majority populations with Anglo females teaching majority minority students in public schools. Villegas and Irvine (2010) reported that "It is not unusual these days for policymakers and educators to acknowledge that increasing the diversity in the ranks of teachers is a worthy goal. In fact, thirty-six (36) states have adopted policies since the early 1990s that aim to recruit more people of color into teaching." It has also been reported that "evidence suggests that compared to white teachers, educators of color appear to be more committed to teaching students of color, more drawn to teaching in difficult-to staff urban schools, and more apt to persist in those settings" (Villegas and Irvine, 2007). Thus, there is a critical need to recruit university students into educator preparation programs. This article discusses the variables that may influence admission into an educator preparation program and the impact they have on minority students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to examine the role of colleges of education in ensuring student success in passing licensure examinations and obtaining certification to maintain accreditation through state and national agencies. This research provides a review of factors used in Educator Preparation Program admissions and their relationship to successful completion of licensure exams. Data reviewed included admission testing scores in the areas of reading, mathematics and writing on the Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA) and the pathway to meeting the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) status, admission grade point average, gender and ethnicity and the relationship to scores on the licensing examination based on the certification area. The discussion will include strategies for working with African American students in an Educator Preparation Program.

A review of the factors used in EPP admissions and their relationship to successful completion of content examinations and the Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities Examination will be presented. Licensing exam scores were reviewed for the first two times students tested to provide an indication of the institution's status, based on state accountability ratings. These findings can be used in the dialogue to impact decisions made by state and national political leaders.

Methodology

Action research used in this study reviewed the profiles of approximately 150 students admitted to an Educator Preparation Program at a predominately minority-serving institution over a period of 5 years. For this research study, the independent variables included the THEA, as a basic skills assessment used for admission into educator preparation programs and TSI, that replaced THEA as a basic skills assessment used to determine readiness for admission to the university and to the Educator Preparation Program, Grade Point Average, Gender, and Ethnicity. The study looked at student performance on required examinations for each student. All students are required to take a content examination in their field of certification and a pedagogy test. Initially, all content examinations were grouped together because of the required passing score of 240 was consistent for all exams. It was necessary, however, to separate the scores for the EC-6 Core Subjects exam because it is not reported as a single or total score. A passing score of 240 is required for each area to meet the criteria of passing the Core Subjects exam, that includes English Language Arts and Reading, the Science of Teaching Reading, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, Fine Arts, and Health and Physical Education. It was necessary to look at the relationship of each of the subjects included in the Core Subjects exam. Lastly, the data was analyzed for the Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities (PPR) test, required of all students, that is designed to evaluate the student's understanding of pedagogical skills. The dependent variable was measured through the score on the certification examination. The data was analyzed using a regression analysis.

Findings and Discussion

Many Educator Preparation Programs instituted higher requirements than the state to assure that candidates would be successful in the program and be able to achieve the certificate. For example, the institution in this study requires a higher grade point average as well as higher scores on the reading part of the THEA. The required THEA Reading score is 250, while the THEA Math score required is 230 and the THEA Writing score requirement is 220. The score on the THEA Writing was found to be a significant predictor of the score on the English Language Arts and Reading, Social Studies, Science and Fine Arts, Health and Physical Education sections of the Core Subjects exam. THEA Reading was found to be a significant predictor of the score on the PPR and other Content exams (not including Core Subjects). THEA Math was found to be a significant predictor of the score on the English Language Arts and Reading section of the Core Subjects exam and PPR. Admission GPA, THEA Reading, THEA Writing, and THEA Math combined were significant predictors of the scores on the English Language Arts and Reading, Math, Social Studies and Science sections of the Core Subjects exam, other Content Exams and the PPR.

The move to use TSI presents a unique challenge because of the varied use of TSI status. For the purpose of this study, four codes were used to classify a student's TSI status depending on their test scores and/or satisfactory completion of academic work. TSI Exempt students have high school testing scores that exceeded the basic requirement. TSI Initial students passed all three sections on same date

the assessment was administered. TSI Complete Subsequent indicated those students who received completion with TSI scores and developmental course work. TSI Complete Transfer students whose prior institution deemed the student had completed the basic skills requirements and was accepted by the university due to articulation agreements. In this research, most of the students comprised the status of TSI Complete Subsequent. Students who enter the university are already classified in one of the groups that seemingly provides a seamless transition into an educator preparation program.

TSI status was not found to be a predictor for any of the content areas on the Core Subjects Exam, other Content exams and/or the PPR. This presents a major discussion as many educators felt there would be a discrepancy in performance based on this admission requirement. However, the research does not support this. There was no difference in passage of licensure exams based on the students' TSI status.

The university, where the study was conducted, had a requirement of a grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 that is higher than the GPA requirement for the state, that is 2.5. The state, however, does require that the cohort grade point average for an institution be a 3.0. Therefore, the decision made to elevate the grade point average guarantees that the institution met accountability standards. Grade Point Average was not a significant predictor for any of the content areas of the Core Subjects exam, other content area exams, and the PPR.

Grade Point Average, however, was a significant predictor when combined with THEA Reading, THEA Writing, and THEA Math on Core Subjects ELAR, Math, Social Studies, Science, other Content exams, and the PPR. While much attention has been paid to the variables that predict academic success for pre-service students, there is still much debate. It has been argued that high GPAs cannot predict responsive teaching strategies (Miller-Levy, Taylor, and Hawke, 2014). Gender was a significant predictor on the English Language Arts and Reading, Math, and Social Studies areas on the Core Subjects exam. Gender was also a significant predictor on the PPR with females performing better.

The role of ethnicity in predicting academic success has been a highly debated topic. As we seek to increase the number of minority students seeking careers in education, it is imperative that we focus on disparities, that might evolve during the licensure process. The results of this study indicate that ethnicity was not a significant predictor for any of the areas on the Core Subjects exam. However, ethnicity was a significant predictor on the other Content exams with Hispanics performing better. On the PPR exam, ethnicity was a significant predictor with African Americans performing better.

Implications

The research suggests that there are some variables, that provide an indication of student success in completing the licensing exams. However, the literature also suggests that these quantitative variables, that focus on content knowledge, may not serve to predict the quality of teaching ability (Miller-Levy, Taylor, and Hawke, 2014). Accrediting bodies have begun to advocate for qualitative measures such as dispositions and attitudes, that might better serve to identify individuals who will provide quality instruction for students in urban schools. It also places the responsibility on educators to provide pre-service instructors and advisors to ensure that students are knowledgeable about the requirements. Aggressive recruitment and advisement can serve to better prepare students. Barnes and Slate (2011) have suggested, "even though we have had 30 years of national and state educational legislation mandating more rigorous courses, high-stakes testing, and

accountability, little has improved in terms of college readiness." The same can be seen in readiness for admission to educator preparation programs.

Advisors play a pivotal role in assuring that students are enrolled in the appropriate courses. Additionally, colleges of education should guarantee that coursework is aligned with testing competencies. This would make certain that the required content is covered in the pre-service program. Colleges of Education might also provide preparation courses in the curriculum and seminars to assist in meeting the requirements. The testing agency does provide representative tests, that can be used to monitor student readiness to sit for the licensing exam. The target university made extensive use of the representative tests. Students were required to sit for the exams and meet performance measures before permission was granted to take the licensing exam. This initiative led to an increase in the certification rate of students enrolled in the program. Debriefing with student Candidates after the representative test has been taken is critical in preparing students for their exams.

On another level, it is imperative that students who experience difficulty in the process of entering and exiting the program have access to counselors who can assist with career and academic decisions. This individual meets with students throughout the program to assist with personal and academic concerns. Additionally, counselors should be used to assist students with disabilities and/or health related issues, that might create a barrier. A joint effort between administrators, faculty, staff, counselors, and advisors can provide an environment where students can experience success.

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Strategies to Increase Job Satisfaction and Retention of Special Education Teachers

by

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Abstract

Retaining diverse, quality early career special educators is a goal for administrators, teachers, and school districts. Retention is not only cost effective but it enables teachers to develop lasting student relationships and community bonds. This manuscript seeks to increase the retention of special education teachers by disseminating strategies for both early career special educators and their administrators. By providing resources regarding work environments, mentoring and induction programs, stress management strategies, and job design, mitigating the attrition of special educators becomes possible. Utilization of these strategies and resources will help early career teachers when selecting jobs, performing their job, and evaluating job satisfaction, thus leading to retention. In addition, resources for administrators provide suggestions for designing feasible special education roles, creating positive school environments, and facilitating new mentor initiatives to better support their early career special educators.

School districts across the United States are experiencing an extreme shortage of special education teachers (SETs) as the demand for qualified SETs increases (National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services, 2016). Researchers estimate that in the United States there are nearly one million students with a disability not receiving special education services, or receiving services from someone who is not trained in the field due to the demand for SETs (Rock et al., 2016). This discrepancy is even worse in high poverty, urban, and rural areas. Fifty-one percent of all school districts across the United States have difficulty recruiting highly qualified SETs and 90% of high-poverty schools face the same disparity (Hymes et al., 2013; Rock et al., 2016).

One factor leading to this SET shortage is attrition. Zhang and Zeller (2016) reported 9.5% of all teachers leave the classroom within their first year of teaching, contributing to the 40-50% of total teachers that leave within the first five years. Some SET attrition factors include the stress from the workload, the emotional nature of the job, school climate, personal life factors, and SET responsibilities (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Major, 2010; Payne, 2005). Additionally, state budget cuts have resulted in increased caseloads and class sizes for many SETs, leaving 82% of SETs reporting a lack of staff to adequately support students with disabilities (Hymes et al., 2013). Outside of these employment factors, personal factors (e.g., family situations, demographics, and cognitive/affective) as well as career decisions (e.g., transferring schools, or migrating to a different role) also affect attrition (Billingsley, 2004a). Keigher (2010) reported SETs leave the profession at nearly twice the rate of their general education colleagues (12.3%) and are oftentimes migrating to general education settings at higher rates.

These alarming statistics echo the need to identify strategies and supports for both SETs and schools/districts in order to retain special educators. Retention of special educators is important for many reasons. With retention of staff comes a greater commitment to the students, colleagues, school, and district (Billingsley et al., 2020). This commitment and unity can lead to a greater morale between staff members and students when relationships form. For example, team mentality and

deeper rapport within the school community can also lead to school traditions and familial relationships. These connections allow SETs to form strong bonds, realize their purpose as an educator, and strive for positive student outcomes. Furthermore, this group dynamic helps to strengthen academics through vertical coherence and planning, knowledge of learner's abilities and needs, and collaboration among all staff (Billingsley et al., 2020). At the district level, retention of SETs is also more cost effective (Mason-Williams et al., 2020). Funds can be more readily available for investing in educators' continued professional development, students, supplies, learning environments, and technology if recruitment and new training initiative costs lessen.

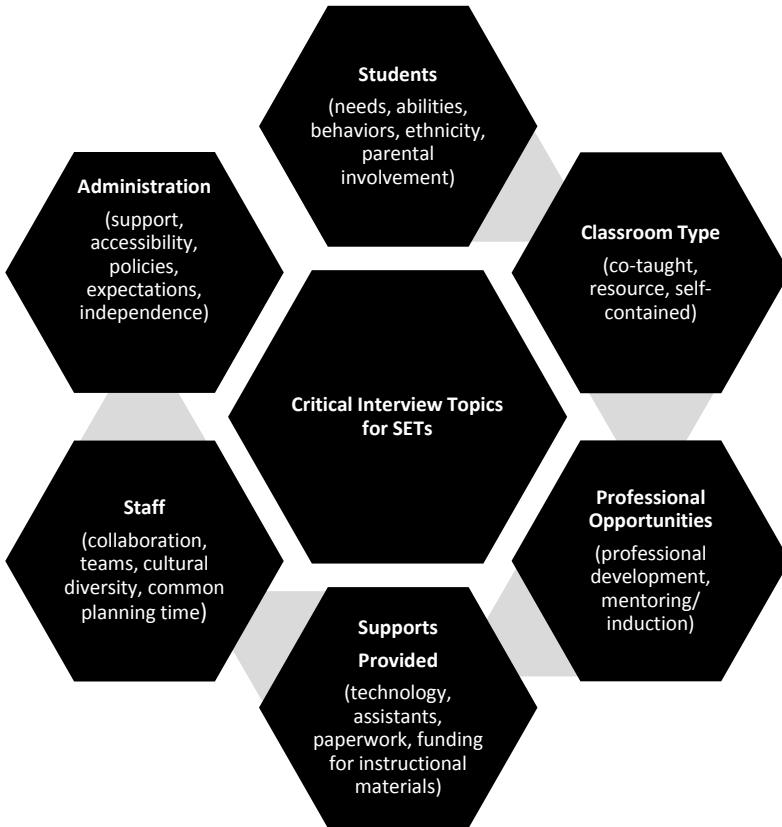
The purpose of this article is to identify strategies and resources SETs and administrators can use to increase SET retention. We combat the issues of attrition and migration by sharing job selection, job performance, and personal health strategies. Specifically, we discuss interview tips, work environment considerations, mentorship programs, coping and resilience strategies, and stress management techniques that can help alleviate some attrition factors within the SETs' control. In addition, administrators at the school and district levels can implement strategies and resources pertaining to school culture, job design, teacher empowerment, and professional growth programs in order to increase retention. While this article focuses on SETs, the strategies are applicable to general educators also.

Resources for Teachers

It is ideal for teachers to be proactive in thinking about their needs and preferences when selecting schools and districts to teach in. Given that all schools provide a different atmosphere, have varying job requirements, and consist of students with diverse backgrounds, SETs should thoughtfully consider the school culture, parental involvement, community connections, work expectations, and supports available when determining where to work. When SETs initially consider these aspects, they will likely increase their job satisfaction.

During the job search process, it is important for SETs to reciprocally interview the schools applied to since SET positions are in high demand (Dewey et al., 2017). This means SETs ask critical questions during or at the end of the interview surrounding specific job aspects (see Figure 1) as well as ask to receive school tours, meet with potential teaching teams, converse with other SETs, observe classrooms, and seek clarity on other individualized job components. Asking specific questions can help ensure long-term retention by carefully matching a SET's skill set and interests with the needs, expectations, and culture of the school. These are all essential components during the interview process that will ultimately help SETs be selective and make an informed decision about their future work environment.

Figure 1. Topics for SETs to discuss when interviewing



SETs are tasked with the miscellany seen within special education such as various classroom types (e.g., co-teaching, resource, self-contained), wide-ranging supports (e.g., classroom assistants, technology, mentor program, professional development), and many different student needs and abilities (Vannest & Hagan-Burke, 2010). Given this, it is imperative to carefully discern the types of environments or supports most likely needed to promote student success and supported by administration (Billingsley & Bettini, 2019). Many states also license SETs to work with students of many different abilities. Thus, finding the population (e.g., students with mild, moderate, or more extensive support needs) that best suits each individual SET is vital for career longevity and personal fulfillment purposes.

Job satisfaction and the work environment have a strong correlation and relate to SET retention (Billingsley, 2004b). If someone is satisfied and enjoys going to work, the likelihood of retention is greater. While SETs should assess the work environment during the interview process, they may find areas in need of

improvement once they start teaching. When this occurs, one strategy is for SETs to take initiative to support their instructional ideas by writing a grant, finding a community sponsor, or using virtual learning websites. Another strategy is for SETs to become an advocate for their students and themselves with their administration (i.e., department lead teacher, principal, or special education director). They might need to advocate for smaller caseloads, funds for instructional materials, time to complete paperwork, time to co-plan with general educators, time to collaborate with teaching assistants, and clearly defined roles as a SET and co-teacher (Zhang & Zeller, 2016). SETs should have confidence in advocating for any realistic changes by being ready to justify the need and provide a rationale that will potentially increase student achievement and job satisfaction. Also SETs should build relationships with school and district administrators (e.g., schedule individual meetings or check-ins, volunteer for committees, be present in the hallways, common areas, and school-wide meetings), so rapport has been developed with them prior to voicing specific ideas.

Some additional factors related to job satisfaction shared by SETs include meaningful professional development (e.g., special education topics, inclusive practices), autonomy in their classroom, coworker relations, and the diverse representation and professional capacity of their coworkers to further promote student learning (Billingsley, 2007). Therefore, all involved should be creative and flexible when developing a work environment that supports student-centered instructional decisions and professional growth to help alleviate chances of attrition.

In addition to a cohesive work environment, another resource SETs should explore is finding a professional mentor (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). If SETs are provided with school-based and special education specific mentors, high-quality mentoring and induction programs, and have an opportunity for leadership roles, retention within the school is more likely (Billingsley, 2004a; Billingsley, 2004b; Payne, 2005). A mentor can be a college advisor, another teacher, or any person who serves as a professional support advancing career development. SETs may even meet their mentor in an induction program or through professional development opportunities. Ideally new SETs should find a colleague in their building or another SET who can provide support for job related tasks (e.g., paperwork, lesson planning) and student specific concerns (e.g., relationship building, academic success, behavior issues).

Mentors can provide early career teachers with valuable support and wisdom, whereas induction programs typically help teachers enhance their knowledge professionally in collaboration with others in their district or school. Participation in induction programs typically begin with an orientation about the district and the school, move to strategies for a successful first year, and then can transform into a professional learning community (PLC). Ultimately, induction programs allow teachers to improve their practice, receive support with events such as parent conferences, curriculum nights, and standardized testing sessions, as well as attend professional development catered to individual needs (Sebold & Rude, 2015). For more guidance, the New Teacher Center released the *2018 Teacher Induction Program Standards* that can help guide the teacher induction process. Mentors will help SETs cope with the difficulties experienced at work, leading to retention (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). As teachers grow professionally, they can start to seek out leadership opportunities and become a mentor themselves.

Coping and Resilience Strategies

It is important for SETs to build a relationship with an ally in their school whom they have a professional friendship, which is slightly different from a mentor. This person provides a safe space to brainstorm ideas and solutions for challenges,

freely express frustrations, and receive emotional support. Finding a professional friend at school provides another individual who will understand the stress from the workload, emotional nature of the job, climate of the school, and SET requirements, more so than outside friends or relatives. Furthermore, Castro and colleagues (2009) suggested new SETs be taught resilience strategies (either in their teacher preparation program or early in career) such as building a support system of friends, finding community resources, learning how to negotiate challenges and seek resources, communicating with trusted colleagues, becoming politically and socially involved in their school, and seeking professional development.

SETs should be self-aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and the ways they manage their work, family, and social life that the field of education often makes difficult to balance due to the demands of the job. In order to retain SETs in their positions, reduction of work-related stress is oftentimes necessary. Stress reduction can help the physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, social, and professional well-being of SETs (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2020). By setting boundaries, limiting the time outside of work that is devoted to schoolwork, and having outside interests, SETs can lead more productive lives. Determining stress reduction techniques and self-care strategies that work best for individual SETs is imperative due to the stressful nature of careers in the field of special education. Researchers found the stress from the workload, emotional nature of the job, school climate, and personal life factors to be problematic for SETs (Major, 2010; Payne, 2005). Sadly, once SETs felt increased stress, their dissatisfaction rose, which eventually led to them quitting if the issues causing the stress were not improved. Thus, reducing the stress SETs often feel is essential to SET retention. The following stress management and self-care strategies, when used proactively, can increase retention (Billingsley, 2004b).

To take care of students, SETs must first take care of themselves. Teaching is a field often comprised of caretakers who are aware of the challenges of their students, school districts, and community, and who have a desire to make a difference (Pratt, 2017). Because of this, many SETs often put their students and schoolwork ahead of themselves. This giving nature makes for an extremely thoughtful teacher, but it is not helping SETs care for themselves. Remembering the importance of self-care as the first step in being able to care for others is vital. In order to be their best self, SETs should strive to make healthy meal choices as often as possible to nourish their body and mind. Likewise, rather than working while students are at lunch, take that time to recharge quietly and eat refueling foods. Taking a walk outdoors to incorporate some movement and exercise, as well as breathing in fresh air, is also beneficial during lunch breaks. Making time in personal schedules for other enjoyable exercises such as yoga, Pilates, dance, running, walking, or swimming creates stress-releasing endorphins. According to Bousquet (2012), endorphins along with adrenaline and cortisol are released into the blood stream during exercise, which helps regulate sleep patterns, mood elevation, cognitive function, and overall health. SETs should get the proper amount of sleep for their body to function fully (Pratt, 2017). Proper sleep, exercise, and diet also decreases the risk of illness, allowing teachers to be present at school and requiring less absences (Bousquet, 2012). Just as a SET may create a schedule for their students, they need to schedule in these self-care components too. It can be beneficial to set boundaries between interactions with students, families, colleagues, electronic use, and over-scheduling. SETs also should set goals and time limits on the different facets of their life to create balance and meet their basic needs.

Mental wellness is another aspect that can be vital to retention of SETs (McLean et al., 2017). Taking care of their mental health is essential because SETs

often encounter stressful situations where they must make quick decisions. To maintain a healthy mind, the following strategies may be worth exploring.

Mindfulness. Mindful SETs are able to manage their own stress and the social-emotional demands of teaching. Mindfulness is a purposeful, nonjudgmental attention one pays to the present moment in a nonreactive manner in order to regulate emotions, reduce stress, and maintain healthy interactions socially with others (Roeser et al., 2012). Researchers have asserted that because teaching (especially in the area of special education) requires educators to deal with uncertainty, unpredictability, emotion, and constant human interaction, mindfulness training is especially pertinent to SETs. Mindfulness training also increases conflict management/resolution, mental flexibility, emotional regulation, reflection, and emotions such as empathy and compassion (Roeser et al., 2012). These traits and abilities are essential as an educator. If teachers are able to manage stress more effectively through mindfulness, they can build and maintain positive classroom environments, as well as relationships with students and colleagues. Likewise, positive and supportive student-teacher relationships affect the engagement and learning of students (Roeser et al., 2012). One mindfulness practice to try is body scans where one becomes more aware of a certain tense area of the body that needs attention. Another mindfulness practice is breath meditation for improved concentration and meditation on feelings, thoughts, body, and health to improve the feeling of being in the present and reduce stress. Sense meditation, where focus on an object through the senses and body's reaction to each sense, can also be helpful for improved mental focus. Lastly, and possibly most needed due to self-doubt, loving-kindness meditation helps to focus on positive self-talk and feelings. In loving-kindness meditation, one repeats positive self-talk statements of affirmation in order to increase positive internal dialogue (Roeser et al., 2012).

Journaling. Journaling is another effective strategy to use when taking note of personal accomplishments and gratefulness. Different types of journaling include gratitude, bullet (Nowak, 2018), and reflective journals which can be paper-based or digital. A gratitude journal is a journaling format where three to five comments are written down daily that show what one is thankful for, proud of, or was accomplished that day. It is a great tool for promoting self-encouragement and to build self-efficacy. It allows one to maintain optimism, focus on the positive, and reflect back on the good in life and at work. Another option is to keep a reflective journal, where thoughts are recorded about situations that occurred and what might be done differently in the future. Bullet journaling has recently gained popularity as a form of combining journaling, list making, goal setting, and planning (Nowak, 2018). In bullet journaling, there are different formats and patterns to follow for organization, list making, and future planning to feel more in control (Nowak, 2018). Overall, the goal of journaling is to provide an outlet for one to reflect, release, and motivate when needed.

Time management and outside supports. Creating goals with an action plan and managing time with schedules, apps, reminders, and accountability partners are key self-care strategies to help keep balance in a SET's life and avoid fatigue. Having outside releases unrelated to being a SET can be beneficial. Relationships with other individuals, such as a support network of family and friends, is important for a balanced life as well. In addition, committing a few hours a week to an outside hobby or volunteer experience can help relieve stress (Pratt, 2017). Some people may need to find an additional stress release through self-care in the form of pampering like massages or manicures. Others may enjoy nature, music, reading, or crafts. SETs may also be interested in spending their free time continuing their education through joining a graduate program, reading professional journals, or

attending professional development conferences or webinars. It is essential for SETs to pursue outside supports and dedicate a certain amount of time weekly to these self-care and enjoyment activities before stress levels become too advanced. SETs will want to reduce their stress early so the stress does not carry over into other areas of life and job satisfaction remains high.

Resources for Administrators and School Systems

Administrators within school systems also must acknowledge the role they play in retaining SETs. We make three suggestions for implementation by administrators in order to increase retention of SETs (see Figure 2). First, be proactive and thoughtful in the supports provided when planning the work environment and job design for SETs. Second, build relationships and empower SETs as stakeholders. Lastly, offer school or district-wide mentoring and induction programs as a proven strategy to increase the retention and professional development of staff (Billingsley, 2007).

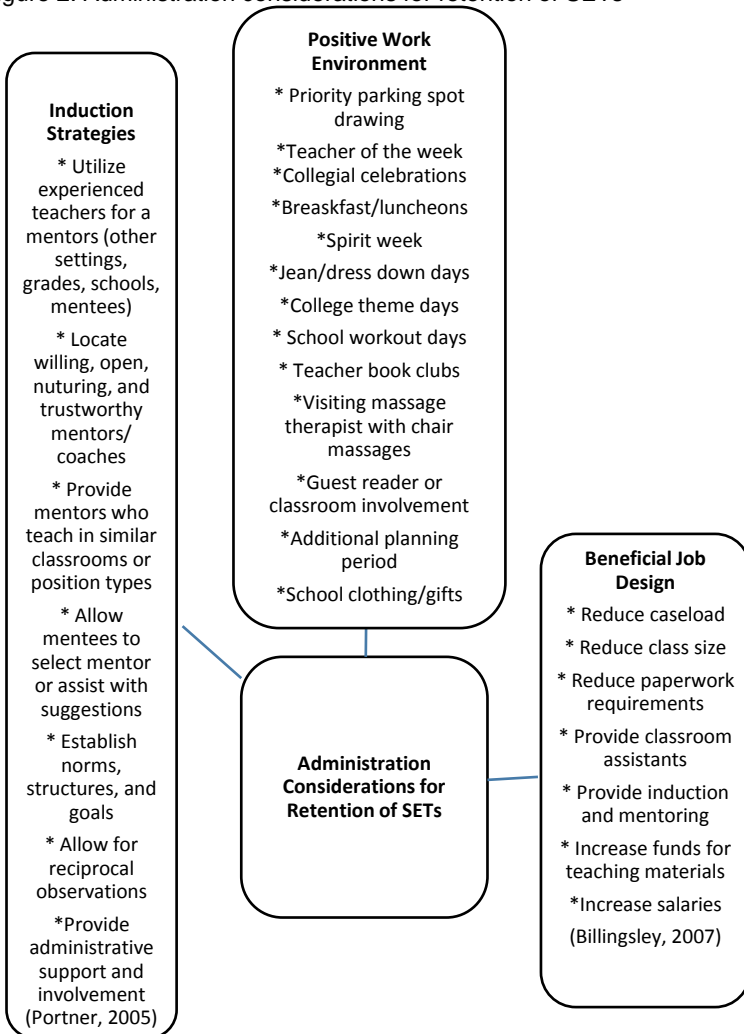
Administrators who provide support for their teachers should have optimistic attitudes and morale, strong leadership, growth opportunities, and a positive school community/culture. These attributes have a direct impact on SET retention and lower levels of stress in the workplace leading to a greater school/job commitment (Billingsley, 2004b; Zhang & Zeller, 2016). Work environments with smaller caseloads and clearly defined roles are environments that SETs typically desire to work in, leading to greater retention (Zhang & Zeller, 2016). Additional ideas school systems or administrators should consider are lobbying for federal financial incentives (e.g., career ladders, hard to staff subjects and schools, retention and recruitment awards) to motivate SETs, and budgeting funds for materials specifically for special education (Springer, 2009). While not always easy to accomplish, research has shown increasing the salary of SETs resulted in increased SET retention also (Billingsley, 2004b; Payne, 2005; Zhang & Zeller, 2016).

Furthermore, administrators can focus on recruiting and retaining diverse SETs by encouraging initiatives that increase and support teacher diversity. Research by Rock and colleagues (2016) found a decline in African American teachers, a cultural mismatch between the approximately 25% of Hispanic students and only 8% of Hispanic teachers, and less than 2% of the teaching workforce identifying as Asian American Pacific Islander. Overall, there is a cultural incongruity between the diverse student populations and the primarily White teaching force (Grissom et al., 2015). Increasing teacher diversity enriches social capital (relationships), and when paired with human capital and capacity building, greater success and accountability can be achieved (Rock et al., 2016). While recruitment is an important first step, administrators must then help cultivate culturally sensitive spaces in their workforce through collaboration and team building efforts in order to retain diverse teachers. A few ways to incorporate cultural sensitivity in a school include the integration of various cultures and customs, bias and privilege training, culturally responsive classroom management training, creating an environment of respect and rapport for open communication, and including materials from different sources and authors representing multiple cultures (Kozleski & Proffitt, 2020).

Administrative and school district support when designing SET jobs can lead to increased retention as well. Billingsley (2004a) reported role clarity for SETs as an area of need as the field of special education has continued to evolve. When administrators are designing each SET's job description and role, they should keep the following role quandaries and designs in mind. Administrators should avoid role ambiguity (not enough information provided to the SET or other teachers about the SET's role), role conflict (inconsistency within schools or across the school year),

role dissonance (SETs expectations differing from others'), and role overload (expecting SETs to accomplish more than possible). Moreover, explanation of roles should be discussed initially when SETs are hired.

Figure 2. Administration considerations for retention of SETs



SETs instructing students with learning disabilities, physical/multiple disabilities, and intellectual disabilities had the highest retention rates. In contrast, SETs of students with emotional, speech, hearing, or vision problems were most likely to leave the field oftentimes because of the lack of administration support (Billingsley, 2004b). Thus, administrators designing jobs should prioritize student needs and instructional supports for teachers to potentially assist in retaining SETs.

Another component of job design that is important for administrators and school systems to consider is the amount of training for classroom teaching assistants or paraprofessionals provided to SETs, as well as the appropriate placement of students receiving special education services in the least restrictive environment. Managing adults in these assisting roles can be difficult, but they are vital to the operations and structures within the classroom when needed for students. Teaching assistants require continuous training in instructional and compensatory supports that benefit students. Furthermore, designing SET jobs that reduced the amount of paperwork or used electronic paperwork when possible showed an increase in retention as well (Billingsley, 2007; Bozonelos, 2008; Leko & Smith; 2010). SETs who left the field reported deficiencies that could have led to their retention if corrected. They stated that if the school would have reduced either their caseload or class size (10% of responses), given them support in the form of classroom assistants (10%), provided administrative support (9%), increased funds for materials (8%), increased salaries (7%), or reduced the amount of paperwork (6%) among others, they would not have left their teaching position (Billingsley, 2007).

Administrators can increase retention of diverse SETs by providing genuine support and growing their knowledge base of special education. This leads to an inclusive climate in their schools for all staff members. When administrators show their support with a listening ear or open-door policy, they establish genuine care and rapport. This encouragement of SETs by their administrators leads to increased retention, with SETs feeling comfortable approaching their administration. According to Nance and Calabrese (2009), just listening to SETs can improve SET attrition. They studied 40 tenured SETs (current or former) and determined that SETs felt unheard by administrators, overwhelmed by state assessments their students take, and pressed for time to support students due to administrative tasks.

In order to combat some of the concerns from SETs, administrators can provide time for collaboration and reciprocity through involvement on committees such as the professional problems committee or the professional personnel leadership committees by both the administration and SETs. Administrators can also consider the amount of responsibilities they ask of their staff, and SETs in particular, to increase positive morale and thus retention. Additionally, administrators should act as an advocate for their school and teachers, while still following state and district policies. By building trust and rapport between administrators and staff, SETs may openly discuss their concerns, seek to change the roles and conditions that may not be working for them, or advocate for the professional development they need rather than leaving the school or district. Major (2010) recommended SET retention through empowerment of SETs by their administrators changing the roles and conditions that may not be working for them and advocate for the professional development they need.

However, not all SET and administrator relationships may be open enough to lead to these conversations. Consequently, it is important that administrators have a strong knowledge base of special education since they must adhere to special education policies and laws. An administrator is the one responsible for the collaboration between support staff, parents, and SETs so a strong knowledge base of all roles involved is beneficial. Because administrators have various educational backgrounds, it is important to work in collaboration with their special education administrators to gain more knowledge on how to meet the needs of all students, including those who require the most support using more intensive interventions. Increasing the education administrators receive related to special education, and the

needs of SETs specifically, would help administrators proactively make and implement changes, which could retain more SETs.

Mentoring and Induction Programs

Bozonelos (2008) identified factors that retained SETs to include offering mentoring and induction programs, professional development sessions, and appropriate work assignments. To support teachers, Bozonelos (2008) also suggested that administrators offer to support teachers emotionally, instructionally, and professionally through professional development, induction, and evaluation. Other researchers suggested that administrators ensure inclusive climate practices in their schools, provide a mentoring and induction program along with ongoing professional development, and have reasonable roles and responsibilities for the SETs (Billingsley, 2007; Leko & Smith, 2010). Billingsley (2004b) found 50% of urban SETs surveyed did not feel they received professional development through their district to improve their craft, resulting in them leaving. Thus, providing professional development in the form of mentoring and induction programs may help to retain SETs.

Conclusion

A healthy work environment and personal well-being makes job satisfaction possible and attainable. By controlling many factors that typically lead to attrition, such as stress from the emotional nature of the job, the school climate, and the many SET responsibilities, administrators and teachers are able to mitigate issues (Major, 2010; Payne, 2005). School administrators play an important role in facilitating a positive school culture and mentoring/induction opportunities. Through the identification and implementation of strategies and supports for SETs discussed above, greater retention of SETs is achievable. With retention of staff comes a greater commitment to the students, colleagues, school, and district, and even cost savings. The Alliance for Excellent Education (2014) reported that teacher turnover costs the school systems in the United States \$2.2 billion annually. Through the implementation of these resources and tools discussed, SETs can increase their retention and districts can use those funds for purposes that are more advantageous. By making informed job selections, participating in professional growth programs, and balancing work-life with self-care time, an increase in SET retention is possible.

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Educational Assessments in the Social Studies: Supporting Instruction and Learning with Classroom Assessments

by

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Abstract

This article presents an exploration of a research case study with social studies educators. The study explores the factors impacting educators' assessment practices to support student learning. Existing literature suggests that despite a significant emphasis on improving assessment practices, social studies educators mostly assess using traditional methods. Therefore, the narrative of this article reports on assessment practices of four accomplished history educators. Results suggest that three main emerging themes of student learning, assessment system, and support encompassed the factors that impact educators' assessment abilities.

The implementation of classroom assessments should, ideally, be in alignment with the educational reforms and updates to current educational policies reflecting the adopted standards to support student learning (McMillan, 2013). Alignment between assessment and updated instructional practices requires establishing diligent coordination between classroom assessments, interim assessments, standardized tests, and, most importantly, student learning in the classroom (Schneider & Gowan, 2011). The persistent challenge reported in existing literature, however, is the lack of reported evidence that successful assessment systems are being implemented (Conley & Darling-Hammond, 2013). This challenge may arise from the complexity of the components and factors playing a role in achieving successful assessments. This article reports how four educators in the area of social studies use assessment practices responsive to student learning while keeping up with contemporary education policies. For this study, the research question addressed is, what personal and educational experiences, as well as other factors, influence educators' perceptions and uses of classroom assessments for social studies?

Conceptual Framework

This study embraces McMillan's (2013) conceptual framework that encompasses several factors impacting student assessments: (1) advances in measurement theory, (2) advancements in learning and motivation, (3) advancements in high-stakes large-scale testing, (4) advancements in formative assessments, (5) advancements in technology, and (6) advancements in standard-based education.

Advancements in measurement theory support the evolution of concepts such as the validity and fairness of assessments. New

conceptualizations of validity emphasize five aspects of assessments "(1) alignment with instruction, (2) minimal bias, (3) an emphasis on substantive processes of learning, (4) the effects of assessment-based interpretations, and (5) the importance of validity evidence from multiple stakeholders" (McMillan, 2013, p. 6). New conceptualizations of the concept of fairness also include the need to use assessment transparency in terms of expectation, equitability for all students, and how student work is evaluated. It is expected that classroom assessments are informed by these updates.

Recent advancements in learning and motivation theory support the assertion that assessment is a process that goes beyond ranking students as the endpoint (McMillan, 2013). Contemporary learning theory shows that learning is a process that requires self-regulation. Self-regulation is a process that involves the establishment of clear goals to achieve, the monitoring of progress toward achieving these goals, provision of feedback, and adjustment of actions directed toward the achievement of the goals.

Standardized testing practices are an essential part of the functioning of school districts as accountability puts pressure on students and educators to succeed on these tests. If students perform poorly, schools are held accountable. Thus, it is essential for schools that their students obtain the highest scores possible. Accountability, then, has led educators to teach to the test and to design classroom assessments in a way that is similar to standardized tests (McMillan, 2013).

Formative assessments have been found to improve monitoring of students' learning and progress towards the desired goals as well as provide accurate feedback for students to improve their learning. As these are desirable features of assessment systems in modern learning theory, the call for the implementation of methods that systematically combine assessment and instruction has increased (McMillan, 2013).

The use of technological assessments has become popular (McMillan, 2013). Online systems have allowed educators to engage students in problem-solving and obtain immediate assessment reports of students' strengths and weaknesses. Thus, technology has made it easier for educators to use systems to deliver immediate feedback and monitor the achievement of skills and learning.

The movement for standard-based education stemmed from the need for a higher level of accountability and improved levels of education (McMillan, 2013). Standards represent the skills and knowledge that students are intended to master. This standard-based movement represents a shift from rote learning and memorization to an emphasis on application, analysis, and use of knowledge and skills.

Within the conceptual framework of classroom assessments, all of these factors previously discussed indicate direct influences for the way assessments are conceptualized, designed, implemented, and analyzed. This study was situated within the conceptual framework in order to explore how social studies educators use assessment processes to inform their instruction.

Literature Review

The role of educational assessments has become a central focus for student learning in North America (Buyukkarci, 2014). Educational assessments define the quality of the education and impact the learning opportunities provided to the students. The educational system is also impacted by external policies and factors (Cooper et al., 2017; Lysaght et al., 2017). These factors impact educators' assessment practices. In social studies the adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) requires that students develop essential skills to be successful in college and beyond (Breakstone et al., 2013; Gerwin, 2014). Despite these policies, there is limited literature addressing whether current assessment practices employed by educators are up to date with the skills demanded by these educational standards.

Assessment Literacies

Research indicates several components are encompassed in assessment literacy. Among those is the knowledge and implementation of formative assessments (Lysaght, et al., 2017; Yao, 2015). The following are key components in assessment literacy.

Formative assessments are tools used to identify the student's current learning and help the teacher adapt their instruction to support the desired learning goals. As a concept, formative assessments are well known. However, it is not uncommon that educators claim to implement formative assessments but their practices do not confirm that (Buyukkarci, 2014; Schneider & Gowan, 2011). Buyukkarci (2014) conducted a mixed-methods study to explore primary school English educators' perceptions of formative assessments. The findings suggest that educators believe that formative assessments improve learning. However, they do not implement this type of assessment in their classrooms. Similarly, Yao (2015) reported that despite some educators suggesting that they employed a wide variety of assessments to check students' progress, senior members of the group reported trusting more in the use of traditional testing assessments.

Educators should, additionally, use statistical packages to make sense of the data from school (DeLuca & Bellara, 2013; Reeves, & Honig, 2015). For example, Dunn et al. (2013) report that when looking at the data from students, educators must be able to look for patterns of performance in students' learning. These patterns can reveal students' strengths and weaknesses relative to the teacher's learning goals. Additionally, Dunn et al. (2013) contend that by looking at students' strengths and weaknesses, educators can adapt their instructional interventions in the classroom. However, participants in the study believed that using statistical packages is a very distinct skill from knowing how to modify instructional practices in an informed manner.

Additionally, educators need to be able to use assessments for accountability purposes (McGee & Colby 2014; Neal, 2013). Assessment practices are being revised continuously to accommodate factors such as accountability, which requires educators to be familiar with the assessment

measures used in the classroom as well as large-scale and standardized measures. According to DeLuca and Bellara (2013), assessments in the classroom should be in alignment with the employed instructional practices in the classroom, the standards, and the learning goals. With this alignment, educators can easily account for the types of learning and activities that occur in the classroom.

The Impact of New Educational Policies

With the implementation of new educational policies, particularly the introduction of literacy standards and the shift from a focus on learning content to a focus on developing literacy skills, the connection between instruction and assessments has to be re-imagined (Cooper et al., 2017; Smith, 2017). In the United States, for instance, the adoption of the CCSS in several states represents not only a shift in the way educators teach their classes but also in the way educators conduct their assessments that should be promoted at various levels of teaching preparation and practice (Ateh & Wingowski, 2015; Breakstone et al., 2013).

One area that has been impacted as a result of the new policies that permeate the public system is teacher preparation programs (McGee & Colby 2014; Reeves & Honig, 2015). According to McGee and Colby (2014), assessment courses in undergraduate teacher preparation programs are scarce. Thus, designing meaningful assessments and communicating assessment results were among the lowest skills that the students had, both at the beginning and the completion of an assessment course.

Understanding how to differentiate learning correctly is one of the most crucial skills for educators to have (Santangelo & Tomlinson, 2012; Watts-Taffe et al., 2012). In a study exploring how teacher educators perceive and use differentiated instruction, Santangelo and Tomlinson (2012), using a cross-sectional survey, concluded that even teacher educators do not show evidence of implementation and use of a comprehensive model of differentiation. This finding is perplexing because it indicates that "...from a modeling perspective, [...] candidates have little opportunity to experience how assessment data can—and should—serve as the core from which decisions about differentiation are made" (p. 323).

Assessment Systems

Another essential concept in the arena of assessment is that of assessment systems. An assessment system is the inclusion of multiple valid assessment tools, which provide information that can be translated into actions to improve student academic performance and achievement (Conley & Darling-Hammond, 2013; Neal, 2013; Rothman & Marion, 2016). The creation and implementation of assessment systems form the notion that traditional methods of assessments, such as summative or open-ended tests, do not capture the new skills and competencies required of students in the 21st century (Conley & Darling-Hammond, 2013). In a recent study, Rothman and Marrison (2016) documented that assessment systems are a promising opportunity to both serve the purpose of accountability and to aid

student learning. Their study shows that locally created assessment systems such as PACE, The Performance Assessment of Competency Education being implemented in New Hampshire, offer great potential in terms of aligning assessments at the classroom, school, district, and possibly state level. According to Rothman and Marrion (2016), in this assessment system there are five layers to ensure quality control: " Professional learning and collaboration, content-area leads, technical review, state review, and data review" (pp. 36-37). Ultimately the researchers recommend that other school districts follow the example of New Hampshire.

Another significant advantage of using assessment systems is that the information gathered from the classroom can be used to serve multiple purposes (Conley & Darling-Hammond, 2013; Neal, 2013). For instance, Conley and Darling-Hammond (2013) argue that assessment systems can provide information for accountability purposes, information useful to evaluate local education programs, and information that can be helpful to inform the teaching practices of educators.

The importance of assessments to improve learning processes is well accepted by scholars (DeLuca et al., 2016; Smets & Struyven, 2018). However, specific aspects of the implementation of assessments tend to be discussed in terms of disciplines. According to Torrez and Claunch-Lebsack (2013), one area that needs a closer look in terms of assessment practices is social studies, specifically history. Breakstone and colleagues (2013), Smith (2017), Ercikan and Seixas (2015), and Gerwin (2014) all agree that history needs reform in terms of the implementation of assessments. For instance, Breakstone and colleagues explained that Common Core, which has been widely adopted nationwide, requires that assessments of rote learning and memorization be updated to assessments of skills. That is why Breakstone and colleagues (2013) created a new system of assessments that are formative and focus on skills. They call their assessments HATs, or History assessments of thinking. The rationale for use of these HATs is their reiterative and formative nature. Perhaps one of the most critical commonalities in the articles explored in this literature is that researchers agree that formative assessments are an appropriate fit and a starting point in the process of meeting the demands of common core and the literacy skills necessary for students to grasp historical thinking skills (Ateh & Wingowski, 2015; VanSledright, 2013). VanSledright (2013) advocates for assessment approaches that highlight and connect directly with the skills necessary for students to acquire. This necessitates not only a formative approach for assessment but also a shift from assessments of content knowledge. History educators need to adopt assessments that can diagnose when problems in learning emerge and why and how learning breaks down.

Methods

This study is situated in the social constructivist paradigm. In a social constructivist worldview, phenomena are negotiated and co-constructed by the individuals and the places where they live and interact

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2002). Additionally, the researcher used a qualitative design as this methodology permits in-depth explorations of the essential factors surrounding a phenomenon. The selected approach to explore the experiences and perceptions of the social studies educators is the case study. A case study is an analysis of one or more cases to explore the complexity of a particular topic of interest (Thomas, 2011).

The participants are four in-service social-studies educators. This study was contextualized in three school districts, two of the four participants in this study work in the same school district, near a mid-west university. School districts of educators in this study are rural schools and have a population from various ethnic and social backgrounds. All school districts have English language learners and students from Hispanic backgrounds. Additionally, some of the school districts are small in terms of professional staff. Some of the schools only have one social studies teacher in the whole district. Thus, the setting of these schools is very unique.

To gather data three methods were used: semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. Interviews were audio recorded by the researcher from which transcriptions for each participant were made. The researcher personally made the transcriptions of the mp3 audio files from each participant. Data were analyzed as follows. From each transcription the researcher used the specific words from the participants to create codes, a process known as in-vivo coding (Saldaña, 2009). Three distinct cycles of coding were used to help the researcher make sense of the data collected. The first round of coding generated a large number of codes. The second round facilitated the creation of categories and clusters as the researcher focused on the connection between the codewords. Then, an additional round was employed to create the themes that emerged to explore the research question. From these generated themes, the researcher wrote a narrative to answer the research question.

Based on qualitative methodology, essential safeguards must be employed to ensure the trustworthiness of the study and its findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). Thus, the researcher employed member checks to ensure the accuracy of the information. Member checks are a mechanism to confirm credibility. Specifically, the researcher conducted narrative accuracy checks. Additionally, member checks were employed with each participant to ensure that the transcriptions of their interviews were accurate. Finally, to ensure confirmability, the researcher used checks and peer reviews.

Findings

In alignment with qualitative paradigm, the results of this study are not to be generalized to other contexts. Instead, they serve as educational insights providing an opportunity for reflection around the area of classroom assessment. Readers and educators may decide themselves if the findings in this study apply to their educational settings. There appear to be three themes resulting from this study that address the research question of, what personal and educational experiences, as well as other factors, influence

educators' perceptions and uses of classroom assessments for social studies?

Theme 1: Student Learning

As a general point student learning is one of the central experiences that drives educators' endeavor to implement assessments to improve student learning. Participants in this study aim to provide a meaningful educational experience that impacts students' lives and transcends rote memorization. Per the experience of social studies educators in this research, history as a class was an educational experience defined by traditional teaching in which listening to lectures and memorizing information was the main endeavor. Summative exams with multiple choice answers were the de-facto assessment employed in this traditional conception of history. Educators described this experience as a "horrible" approach to learning. Ms. D reflects, "I wasn't really a fan of history in high school, I just was kind of taught dry and boring, and you, kind of, had that stereotypical idea of what history is".

Wanting to avoid providing a "horrible" and "white washed" educational experience impacted educators assessment practices. Consequently, social studies educators endeavored to promote student learning responsive to students' needs and the contemporary demands of the 21st century by revamping their classroom assessments to inform their teaching strategies. Ms. M shared the following reflection

I had to rework the way I was assessing and basically reworked my assessments and curriculum not to simply teach to a test, but to teach towards skills. No matter what class you're in with me, you'll definitely be looking at a variety of sources, comparing and contrasting, critical thinking, analyzing.

A factor that influenced educators' perceptions and uses of classroom assessments for social studies is the skill-based education movement. Social studies educators in this study believe the contemporary educational panorama requires that assessments embrace and promote skill-based learning in their classes as the main approach for student learning, Ms. D explained,

"I moved towards a standard and skills more than content knowledge and memorization because I feel like anything that you could google isn't necessarily something you need to assess. Because in today's world, like, they could just they have it at their fingertips, they could find out a specific date or a specific person.

Social studies educators believe that history should mirror educational practices adopted in all other content areas. Fostering the development of literacy skills, historical and critical thinking skills are an educational priority for our social studies educators. Embracing literacies, thus, requires the diversification and implementation of assessments that truly capture the essence of what the students know and can do. To achieve this kind of learning, the need to align curriculum, assessment, and instruction become

apparent to social studies educators. Ms. S, for instance, explains “As a result of the standards, we started looking at assessments differently. Everything changed. The textbook was gone. I never passed out a textbook again.” For social studies educators, assessment and instruction are interconnected to learning in a direct relationship. Any modifications to the curriculum require an equivalent modification of instruction and assessment practices.

Theme 2: Assessment System

Educators in this study believe assessment should be situated as a component of a system that needs to be consistent and coherent toward student learning. In this systemic approach, any change in assessment impacts instruction, and changes implemented in instruction should, in an equivalent manner, be monitored via the classroom assessments. From these educators' perspectives, an assessment system in alignment with instructional practices is essential to make a meaningful impact on student learning.

Educators in this study believe an alignment between assessment and instruction facilitates the use of data-driven instruction. For instance, by analyzing student work educators can gather specific information about what students can do, thereby bringing clarity to determine instructional objectives. Most importantly, an assessment system, as established by educators in this study, permits the use of formative and summative assessments. These two types of assessments can be aligned by designing assessments based on the skills derived from the standards. Formative assessments permit the monitoring of student learning and provide data to inform the nature of instruction, whereas, summative assessments serve to document student learning for accountability purposes. Therefore, having a system of assessment in direct alignment with instructional practice is essential for educators to make evidence-based instruction a part of their approach to improving student learning.

A central factor influencing social studies educators' perceptions and uses of classroom assessments for educators in this study is their knowledge of formative assessments. In our educators' views, within an assessment system for student learning, formative assessment is paramount – that is, formative assessments allow for the establishment of the monitoring system of student learning. Without these monitoring functions, it is challenging to understand the needs of the students and consequently becomes challenging to implement instructional practices responsive to the students' needs. The system for educators in this study includes informal assessment and monitoring tools such as homework, informal discussion, informal questioning, examining the reasoning of students while they interact in a group, and more. These small assessments provide data to educators on student learning. Addressing this particular area, Ms. D explains. “I value the relationships that I create with my students, checking if they feel comfortable, and if they can share, and if they're, you know, learning the big ideas”. In the same line of thinking, Ms.

M explains, "I'm doing formative assessments every time I see them. So, it could be as simple as an exit or entrance ticket, where I just asked one question, it could be a couple of questions about a source". Therefore, knowing the importance of formative assessments for student learning and the establishment of an assessment system is another factor that directly impacts educators' assessment practices, Ms. P reflected about formative assessment, "I understand it's probably one of the most important aspects in connection to teaching. Because if you're not assessing, you don't really know what the students are learning or taking away from your class."

In addition to the use of formative assessment within an assessment system, another factor influencing social studies educators' perceptions and uses of classroom assessments for social studies is summative assessments. All educators in this study characterized summative assessments as end-of-the unit and term assessments. They believe these assessments are meaningful to student learning as long as these assessment devices have been constantly reinforced by formative assessments. This way, students are cognizant that they are ready to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a particular domain. Summative assessments are important for students as they document learning for stakeholders and serve as proof not only for external accountability but for that of students as well.

Educators in this study contend that any assessments that are used in the process of education must be meaningful for the students and the process of learning. Therefore, summative assessments should be designed to reinforce the assessment system for student learning. If summative assessments are disconnected from the process of formative assessments and learning, students cannot experience motivation to learn. Instead, they will try to anticipate summative tests and narrow their learning focus on what they believe such tests will measure. This approach to learning, in the viewpoint of educators in this study, is not meant to ensure that students truly embraced the content, skills, and values they foster in their history classes. This is why educators integrate summative assessments and formative assessment into an assessment system for student learning, Ms. P explains,

I first ask myself what do I want the students to learn as far as knowledge and skills, and then from there, I would design an assessment that would measure that knowledge and skills, then I would, and that would be like a summative assessment. From there, I would build my lessons, my units, using materials, and small formative assessments that would basically help me reach that summative assessment and build up to that process.

Another factor that impacts how study participants design and implement classroom assessment is the consistency of the educational variable of interests that educators promote in their current educational practices. The adoption of the CCSS fosters the attainment of skills such as sourcing, corroboration of sources, citing evidence to support a claim, or

determining the central idea of the passage, etc. These literacy standards are recurrent throughout the academic year and continue in the following years. Therefore, regardless of the content and the unit that students are covering these skills can be revisited at deeper levels of analysis. As such, the level of analysis expected to justify standard one is held to a higher standard for history students in 10th grade than for students in 7th grade.

The recurrence of the skills, thus, provides ample opportunities for history students to become familiar with these skills. Consistent with this premise, social studies educators design and implement classroom assessments based on these pervasive skills. Focusing on the assessment-specific skills and standards during an academic year and beyond is informative for social studies educators as they track the development of their students and understand students' needs.

Theme 3: Support System

The third theme that encompasses educational experiences and factors influencing social studies educators' perceptions and uses of classroom assessments in social studies history is support. All educators in this study believe they could not have developed their current assessment philosophy without a system of support from colleagues and professionals in their schools and communities. The level of support that allows educators to develop and implement their educational assessments is paramount for the contemporary philosophy of assessments that educators in this study hold.

For educators in this study, when school districts become too restrictive in terms of deciding how educators should teach and assess or when there is a specific curriculum which educators must use in their daily instruction, it becomes challenging to make meaningful instructional choices in which educators have a level of ownership and investment. Most of the time, these curricular systems are perceived as an imposition rather than a meaningful resource for educators. Thus, support from several professionals fostered their assessment systems as they are now.

Social studies educators enjoy having positive professional relationships with their school principals. These positive relationships have allowed them to earn the trust of their principals to design and implement classroom assessments. Constantly, educators are allowed to diversify their repertoire of assessments by adopting assessment practices that work best for student learning. Assessment and learning are ever-changing processes. This is why social studies educators do not subscribe to using only a few kinds of assessment. Instead, they constantly diversify their repertoire of assessments based on students learning progressions.

School principals are well aware of educators' assessment practices and trust them to implement these practices. As a result of their collaboration with researchers and specialists in assessment and curriculum development, educators have further enriched and grown their philosophy of assessment for student learning. Having the full support of the school principals is a critical factor that impacted educators' assessment practices that are most suited to fulfill current demands and promote student learning.

Another factor impacting social studies educators' assessment practices is support from an external professional via professional development. According to educators in this research, professional development is paramount to further solidify their motivation to create and implement assessments to promote student learning. Two of our educators have received professional development on the design and implementation of assessments, while the other two educators in this research have become experts in this area so they are now directing professional development with other educators in their schools, other districts, and professional conferences. Therefore, professional support in the form of professional development is a central factor that shaped how educators in this study approach educational assessments.

In this area of professional development, one of the learning experiences that was meaningful to educators in this research is that several of the assessment practices they were implementing in their classroom were consistent with the principles and practices they learned in professional development sessions. Thus, having the confirmation that the practices they learned in their education programs, and that they were implementing in their classroom, were consistent with the professional development was a needed reinforcement for their assessment philosophy. Therefore, instead of creating disequilibrium about assessments practices, professional development served to solidify educators' assessment practices for student learning.

Additionally, another factor impacting social studies educators' philosophy of assessments is support from colleagues. For educators in this study, this support means having a space to discuss their assessment practices and experiences with other colleagues in their schools. It also entails having a wide range of professionals from whom you can request input and share experiences about assessments, instruction, student learning, and more. Ms. S and Ms. D have established a learning partnership that has allowed them both to revamp their curricular materials and approaches to understanding assessments. These educators believe having the input of other educators is a central factor in how they end up designing their assessments. That is, educators in this study listen and adopt assessment practices and suggestions that other educators recommend. If these suggestions are likely to make a difference in student learning, then, educators in this research adopt them to further improve their assessment practices. Another benefit of having support from colleagues is knowing that the endeavor is appreciated and mutually understood by their peers. So, the feeling of being supported is paramount to continuously improving assessment and instructional practices.

Additionally, educators believe their assessment practices are supported by the expertise and experience of their colleagues in other disciplines. For instance, educators in this research can ask about instructional and assessment practices from colleagues in the areas of special education, language learning, and more. The collective expertise of the colleagues is a resource they always have at their disposal. Therefore,

soliciting feedback, suggestions, and ideas to improve assessment practices is a common practice in their educational settings. Ms. M, explains,

Thankfully, there are other teachers I can reach out to if a student is struggling, so if it's just a couple [of students] and they happen to be students of special education or if they happen to be ESL students, I can reach out to their teachers and say, hey, when you have them for resource time, would you be able to read/redo this assignment? You know, look at it, can you look at it with them. And I might give suggestions on how they might try approaching it.

Assessment practices continue to evolve as new best practices are informing student learning. This is why having a supportive environment in the school is a cornerstone so that the expertise of others is shared to improve student learning.

Discussion

Similar to McMillan's (2013) proposed conceptual framework for classroom assessments, several of the suggested components of the conceptual framework such as the advancements in formative assessment, student learning, and standard-based education, and measurement theory play central roles as factors that impact educators' design and implementation of classroom assessments. According to McMillan (2013), formative assessments must be used in the classroom to improve student learning. This notion is also shared by social studies educators. For these educators, formative assessments are the most common type of assessments because of the utility of the data they generate. In the same manner, existing literature on formative assessments shows that this type of assessment foments learning by allowing educators to uncover what students know to master established educational goals (DeLuca & Bellara, 2013; DeLuca et al., 2016; Fulcher, 2012). Despite educators' knowledge of formative assessments, almost no comments were made to several features of formative assessments to benefit student learning. Brookhart (2011) explains that formative assessments are beneficial for student motivation and self-regulated learning. However, these aspects of formative assessments were not referenced in the collected data for this research.

Similar to existing literature and McMillan's (2013) conceptual framework, responses suggest advancements in student learning as another factor that impacted educators' design and implementation of assessments. Existing literature implies that students learn best when they are motivated and engaged in the analysis of information that is meaningful to students (Breakstone et al., 2013; Gerwin, 2014). Results of this study suggest that educators in this study believe that student learning is fostered when assessment and educational practices are meaningful and engaged. This is why all educators embraced an approach to learning that promotes critical and historical thinking skills over rote learning and memorization. In this area educators' assessment practices reinforce existing literature.

Research findings suggest that the standard-based movement is another factor that greatly impacts student learning. Advancements in

standard-based education are also suggested by McMillan's (2013) conceptual framework to impact the design and implementation of student work. Existing literature suggests that standard-based movement tends to narrow the scope of classroom assessments and lead to teaching-to-the-test instruction in general. For educators in this research study, however, focusing on skills from the standards does not narrow the scope and variety of assessment tools. Instead, they serve as educational targets from which assessments and instructional practices stem. In social studies history, standard-based education does not restrict assessment, it promotes assessments beyond rote learning and multiple-choice tests.

Existing literature suggests that establishing an assessment system is beneficial to foment student learning (Conley & Darling-Hammond, 2013; Neal, 2013). This is not predicted by McMillan's (2013) conceptual framework for classroom assessments. However, according to educators in this study, educational assessment tools have to be established within an assessment system. Otherwise, assessment tools become disconnected from one another and these dispensed assessment tools do not generate the appropriate information to support instruction and student learning.

The findings of this study additionally suggest that primary-sourced-based assessments are essential to support student learning in social studies history. This notion is not reported in the literature review or McMillan's (2013) conceptual framework. Therefore, the importance of primary sources as a factor that impacts the design of classroom assessment to support student learning is a factor that appears to be particular to the context of the educators in this research setting.

Finally, while summative assessments are reported to be the de facto type of assessments in history (McGee & Colby, 2014), educators in this research reported that their most common classroom assessments are formative in kind. The use of formative assessments is highlighted within McMillan's (2013) conceptual framework. Formative assessments are, in keeping with existing literature, the most useful kinds of assessments to inform instruction and support student learning.

Conclusion

This research article explored the main factors impacting social studies educators' assessment practices to support student learning. Results suggested that three main emerging themes of student learning, assessment system, and support encompassed the factors that impact educators' assessment abilities. Within these themes, several factors such as support systems, knowledge of formative assessments, employment of assessment systems, skill-based education, primary-source-based assessments, student learning, and the role of history as a class were reported as some of the most important factors that impact educators' implementation of assessment practices in the classroom. Most results of this study support existing literature practices about assessment practices in general. For the specific areas of social studies, however, this study reports rather peculiar results of social studies educators using assessment

systems and practices that not only go against traditional assessment methods but also employ primary-source-based assessments which are a unique form of assessments not usually reported in assessment literature of social studies and in general.

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Review of *Moral Education for Social Justice*,
by Larry Nucci and Robyn Ilten-Gee, 2021.
New York: Teachers College Press, paper, 201 pages.
Review by Thomas Hansen

Thomas Hansen is an Independent Consultant with a variety of roles in Education and Advocacy.

This brand new book is a good combination of theory and practice, in that it provides all the research and background related to topics such as moral education, social justice, critical pedagogy, moral wellness, critical digital pedagogy, character education, and school rules/justice—and then puts them all to use.

This book would be used best in designing teacher education curricula and courses. The wide connections mapped out by the authors take us through traditional and modern notions of moral education and character development. Paulo Freire and other education experts are explained and revisited. Newer notions—such as character education—are discussed in the book, also. Kohlberg and Piaget get a nod—and their inclusion is important—as they are used to help show how students at different stages have very different ideas about what is right and wrong.

The authors make it clear that moral education and social justice are not new concepts. Thinking about moral education and social justice in new ways is something different for educators, however. Linking the above topics from the first paragraph into a new gestalt is also something different—and this linking is what is at the core of the book.

The book could also be used in courses for advanced graduate students and experienced teachers who wish to gain a firm foundation in moral education and put the ideas to use. There is a good deal of technical vocabulary regarding morality, development, domains, and conventions. As in all fields, education provides many interesting and challenging words and concepts with books of the more advanced stages and orientation to be used in suitable levels of courses, research, and application.

Yet another use for the book is review and expansion reading for teacher educators. As guardians of the apple (interesting new charge for us) we as leaders in this subfield need to constantly consider successful past theories and movements and understand brilliant new combinations and mixtures as proposed here by Nucci and Ilten-Gee.

The first couple of chapters contain some dense reading. There is some amount of work needed by the average reader. Because of this, I would not recommend the text in lower level education courses. After the book covers the theories, there is more practical information to the point that writing lesson plans and dealing with student emotions and resistance are discussed.

This brand new book includes brilliant new combinations and mixtures of moral education, character education, social justice, and other notions and theories proposed to help K-12 teachers help guide and shape responsible adults. Nucci and Ilten-Gee are to be commended for collapsing all the theory into one book for more focused access by teachers and by teacher educators.