"Teaching through what they're going through": A case study of first-year teachers' induction experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic

by

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B.S., Kansas State University, 2004
M.S., Kansas State University, 2009

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Curriculum and Instruction
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Abstract

In the immediate aftermath of the WHO's COVID-19 pandemic declaration, school district administrators and teachers hurried to shift their classrooms to alternative modalities. In a matter of weeks, schools across the country transitioned entire components of their institutions to new platforms, with little guidance from state and federal governments (Turner, Adame, & Nadworny, 2020). By April 2020, Van Lancker and Parolin (2020) note that "school closures [affected] the education of 80% of children worldwide" (p. 243). Indeed, the end of the 2020 school year was one marked by loss for teachers, as they came to terms with the significance of an abrupt end to the school year: projects left unfinished, good-byes never uttered, graduations that would not come to fruition—along with numerous other institutional traditions and rights of passages that they would not facilitate or witness. The challenges posed by COVID-19 lingered well past the end of the 2020 school year and have continued to impact K-12 schools. For many teachers, district- and state-level discussions of how/when to reopen schools were marked by fears of falling ill from COVID-19; shifts in COVID-19 protocols at the state and district level; and disruptions in the school year, as districts transitioned between remote, hybrid, and in-person instruction (Goldstein & Shapiro, 2020; Rivas, Shakya, Riegle, Rios, Torres, & Muldofskey, 2020). For first-year teachers who began their careers during the 2020-2021 school year, their induction into the profession would be marked by this new educational landscape—one that looked significantly different from the one they had prepared for in their teacher preparation programs. This case study informs the existing body of research on teacher induction by capturing this unique induction to the teaching profession, specifically through a qualitative examination of how the pandemic affected participants' sense of professional efficacy, as well as their teaching practices.

This research is an extension of a longitudinal case study conducted by researchers from Kansas State University-College of Education (KSU-COE), in meeting the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation's (CAEP) Standard 4: Capturing Completer Impact on PK-12 Students (Kansas State University-College of Education, 2022). Specifically, this present study applies Grounded Theory to a series of five CAEP 4 focus group data, encompassing 17 first-year teachers whose induction into the teaching profession occurred Fall 2020. From this data, a complex portrait of the impact of COVID-19 on their induction emerged. Open coding revealed 47 recurring codes, from which 4 key axial codes emerged in describing participants' experiences as affected by the COVID-19 pandemic: 1) Teaching Practices, 2) Teaching Values, 3) Changes to Teaching Environment and 4) Teaching Challenges. Furthermore, the data offered grounding for the claim that COVID-19 did not merely affect first-year teachers' experiences—it significantly altered the educational spaces and professional dynamics in which first-year teachers found themselves.

This concept was further examined through in-depth interviews with three participants from the original CAEP 4 focus groups. In total, six interviews were conducted, two per participant, in which they shared their teaching induction experiences. After concluding the interviews, each participant shared an additional written reflection pertaining to their experiences in teaching, and how they see their futures in teaching. Theoretical analysis of this data, utilizing Social Cognitive Theory and Critical Spatial Theory, revealed insights into how their induction experiences, as altered by COVID-19, affected their sense of efficacy and their teaching practices.

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Dr. Todd Goodson

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Acknowledgements

As I come to the end of this chapter in my life, I think back to my own father graduating with his doctorate in sociology. The pride that my mother and I felt as he was hooded was one of deep understanding of the sacrifices that were made for that moment. His achievement was also ours, but specifically my mother's, as she supported our family in a multitude of ways so that my father could finish his degree. In many respects, my mother should be a co-author on two dissertations now, as she has been a big part of my support system almost 30 years later, as I come to the end of my doctoral journey. Indeed, I am humbled by knowing that this accomplishment is not my own—it has taken a village to help me get to this point.

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Dedication

To Mami and Papi—Thank you for showing me what is possible.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Personal Story: A Retrospective Timeline of Emerging Crises

I write this on March 10, 2021— the one-year anniversary of when I attended my last face-to-face conference, the 2020 CAEP Conference, set in New Orleans. That evening, two colleagues and I walked through the French Quarters. We window-shopped the storefronts on Pirate's Alley and St. Ann St.; we admired St. Louis Cathedral by moonlight; we explored the varied treasures and trinkets at Marie Laveau House of Voodoo. We shared stories of Flint Hills Writing Projects of the past, and we speculated what our summer study-abroad trip to England may look like in the face of, what was then, a new and rather abstract health threat: Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). On that evening walk, I could not have imagined how much daily life would change in one year's time—the United States, and indeed the world, would be ravaged by this disease, with our sociocultural fault lines exposed in the process.

On March 11, 2020 we boarded a plane to return home, not realizing that it would be the last time any of us would attend a face-to-face conference or take a flight anywhere for the foreseeable future. Yet the true significance of this date is not tied to memories of my last tastes of normalcy— the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the emerging COVID-19 crisis a global pandemic, as it spread and killed thousands throughout the world in the few weeks after the world's first case was confirmed (World Health Organization, 2020). For institutions of higher education across the country, there was a growing consensus that "business as usual" threatened to exacerbate COVID-19's spread in their communities, as they altered plans to welcome back thousands of vacationing students to their campuses after spring break. On March 9, 2020, The University of Washington was the first to announce that it was shifting its spring semester online, following a confirmed case on its campus (Foresman, 2020). Soon after, many

more universities, including Kansas State University, shifted their course offerings online in the hopes of mitigating COVID-19's spread.

As the coordinator of field experiences for our college of education, those first weeks in March 2020 were marked by crisis control for the hundreds of pre-service teachers we had in the field. All practicum placements, defined as field experiences prior to student teaching, were automatically shifted to virtual field experiences. For our student teachers, the immediate dictate was to do as their cooperating teachers did until further notice. Yet, I quickly grasped that "COVID-19 [had] disrupted many of the basic assumptions that frame the student teaching experience," and as such, our student interns were grappling with increased anxieties about their experiences and their futures that required more attention than this simple directive (Meritt & Wertzberger, 2020, p. 535).

On March 17th, 2020, alongside our university's lead clinical instructors, we hosted a zoom call for our student teachers. I started the meeting with the intent of addressing their concerns, as more school districts declared a two-week break to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Their concerns at that time were based on this assumption: Would they graduate on time or would their experiences be extended? When would their work samples be due? Would this two-week hiatus affect their licensure? Yet, 5 minutes into the call, one of the clinical instructors interrupted me and announced, "Eileen, I'm sorry to interrupt, but I'm now hearing that Governor Kelly just announced that all school buildings are shut down for the remainder of the school year."

While I don't recall my student teachers' expressions on the screen, I do remember feeling numb, my own face unable to move from a contorted smile, my eyes wide as I tried to think of the best way to address this news. I caught a glimpse of my daughter, playing in our

living room as she enjoyed what had been, up to this point, an extended spring break. In that glimpse, I felt an overwhelming desire to cry, realizing that my daughter would not return to her kindergarten classroom to play and learn with her friends; that her teacher would not get to say goodbye to her students in anticipation of a well-earned summer break. As I snapped back to the hundreds of student teachers in front of me, I intuitively understood that this pain was theirs as well: they would not return to their classrooms to plan and teach with their cooperating teachers; they would not enjoy the anticipation of end-of-the-year parties and farewells; their classrooms would not serve as reprieves for students who would inevitably endure the effects of COVID-19 on their communities and families.

This is not to suggest that Governor Kelly's decision was wrong. Much like universities who shifted to online learning upon the WHO's declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic, this decision ensured that K-12 schools would not become sources of exposure. Other states would soon follow, closing school buildings and shifting to alternative learning modalities to finish the school year. For our student teachers, this shift brought forth immediate questions about how they would meet K-12 student needs if they were not in schools. In the coming weeks, our student teachers would engage in various teaching modalities, often depending on meeting platforms such as Zoom to deliver instruction. They were also forced to contend with social inequities that made virtual modes of instruction prohibitive for students who lacked access to reliable internet and resources. By the end of their student teaching experiences in May 2020, one fact was abundantly clear: the teaching profession they had spent years preparing for looked drastically different from the teaching profession they were about to enter as first-year teachers.

COVID-19's First-Year Teachers: Purpose of Study

As of March 11, 2021, the United States lost 529,263 lives to COVID-19 (Lutton, 2021). Some of those individuals were, inevitably, family members and friends of the very student teachers who started their careers in the midst of the pandemic. When I think back on our spring 2020 student teachers' semester, I am reminded of Freire's (2000) observation of education and its power to transform us:

> In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation. (Freire, 2000, p. 83)

Despite their fears and personal challenges, our spring 2020 student teachers persevered, alongside their cooperating teachers, through overwhelming uncertainties. Without a clear path forward, they found ways to adapt their teaching practices and curriculum. What emerged was a transformative understanding of the ways in which meaningful learning and connection could occur in the face of crises. By embracing that "the world [is] not a static reality," their teaching practices were able to undergo needed "transformation" (Freire, 2000, p. 83).

Yet, the transition from preservice to in-service teacher is difficult enough without also contending with a global pandemic. This study seeks to capture the experiences of COVID-19's first-year teachers, and to examine how this unique induction into the teaching profession affected their sense of teaching efficacy, identity and practice.

Overview of Issues

Federal and State Level COVID-19 Responses and Schools

At the onset of the pandemic, the federal response was minimal. Initially, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) viewed COVID-19 as a "serious public health threat," that nonetheless posed minimal risk to Americans (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020, para. 2). Yet as the epidemic continued to worsen, there was no notable shift in the federal response, as "U.S. policymakers [did] not revise their prior beliefs about the appropriate role of government or embraced drastic shifts in economic or health policy" (Rocco, Béland, & Waddan, 2020, p. 459). The main form of relief for Americans came through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which offered economic relief to Americans, as well as various sectors of the US economy and infrastructure. The federal government stopped short of providing a cohesive plan for minimizing the spread of COVID-19, ultimately deferring to states to address key measures such as mask wearing and stay-at-home orders (Rocco, Béland, & Waddan, 2020).

The federal response for public schools echoed that of its public health response: states and districts were to create their own plans for curricular shifts due to school closings, and to implement their own safety measures for school reopening (Hartney & Finger, 2020; Storey & Slavin, 2020). The pandemic fundamentally changed K-12 schools, as districts across the United States closed their buildings and transitioned into alternative modes of instruction in March 2020. The reach was expansive affecting "at least 124,000 U.S. public and private schools and … at least 55.1 million students" by the end of the Spring 2020 semester (*Map: Coronavirus and school closures,* 2020, para. 3). Going into the 2020-2021 school year, states offered varying degrees of guidance for school reopening, often delegating those decisions to local districts.

School districts, in turn, continued to struggle with how to reopen schools effectively and safely in the face of mounting pressures from parents and community stakeholders (Olneck-Brown, 2021).

The First Year Experience: Challenges and Protective Factors

The transition from preservice teacher to in-serve teacher is often difficult and marked by a decrease in mental health wellness exacerbated by the challenges that first-year teachers face. These challenges often pertain to "relationships, workload/ time management, knowledge of subject/curriculum, evaluation/grading, and autonomy and control" (McCann & Johannessen, 2004, p. 139). In addition, career-related stressors are often intensified by personal stressors, leaving first-year teachers to experience decreased levels of career optimism, as well as high levels of attrition, with approximately 50% of teachers leaving the profession within their first five years (Bieler, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Ingersoll, 2003; Taylor, McLean, Bryce, Abry & Granger, 2019).

While novice teachers encounter numerous challenges (McCann & Johannessen, 2004), the right types of supports can help them not only address those obstacles, but also serve as protective factors that keep early career teachers from leaving the profession. A key protective factor is formal induction, or the "systemwide, coherent, comprehensive training and support process that continues for 2 or 3 years and then seamlessly becomes part of the lifelong professional development" of novice teachers (Wong, 2004, p. 42). Mentorship is a critical component of formal induction, which allows for experienced teachers to connect with novice teachers and help them work through many of their professional obstacles (Bieler, 2013; LoCasale-Crouch, Davis, & Weins, 2012; Pultorak & Barnes, 2009; Yost, 2006). In addition to

formal induction and mentorship, fostering professional connection through collegial relationships is another particularly important protective factor for early career teachers.

Through formal induction and mentorship, as well as positive collegial relationships, early career teachers are empowered to engage in ongoing critical reflective practice, which in turn, serves as a significant protective factor. Killeavy and Moloney (2010) note that "the ability to reflect, and so to learn from experience" is central to being an engaged "member of a professional community" (p.1070). Indeed, "reflection is necessary [and] vital to good teaching," especially when the nature of that reflection, "includes inward and outward examination of the social context, … [of] issues of equality and social justice" (Zeichner, 1990 as cited in Pultorak & Barnes, 2009, p. 34). For first-year teachers, the ability to engage in reflective practice is a critical step in their ability to take control of their professional identity and environments, which leads to an increased sense of self-efficacy and career optimism (Bandura, 1994; Taylor, McLean, Bryce, Abry, & Granger, 2019).

Teacher Efficacy and Identity

A teacher's sense of efficacy plays a critical role in the trajectory of their professional career. Bandura (1999) defines "perceived self-efficacy [as the] belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (p. 2). Central to this definition is the concept of locus of control or the degree to which a "person perceives that the event [or outcome] is contingent upon [their] own behavior or [their] own relatively permanent characteristics" (Rotter, 1966, p. 1). Bowles and Pearman (2017) note that "efficacious teachers believe they are self-empowered to create learning environments that allow them to motivate and promote student learning" (p. 71). This increased efficacy also informs how key aspects of teachers' practice including the construction and implementation of

curricular decisions, as well as assessment (Bandura, 1997). For novice teachers, the development of a strong sense of self-efficacy has a critical causal relationship with the protective factors that help to sustain them during those early years: protective factors such as mentorship and reflective practice lead to high levels of self-efficacy, which in turn, leads to high levels of career satisfaction and lower levels of attrition (Taylor, McLean, Bryce, Abry & Granger, 2019).

The experiences that novice teachers have in their induction year not only affects their sense of self-efficacy, but also their teaching identity—how they come to a deeper understanding "of the self […] in relation to others" (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p. 178). Defining the concepts of professional identity and teaching identity is complex, and definitions vary widely in the literature (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard, Meijar, & Verloop, 2004; Jonker, März & Voogt, 2018; Schutz, Hong, & Francis, 2018). Yet, Jonker, März, and Voogt (2018) cite four key traits that are consistent in defining professional identity: 1) "professional identity is seen as a dynamic concept; 2) professional identity is the result of "the integration of the personal and professional sides […and] implies a context; 3) "one's professional identity consists of sub-identities;" and 4) the individual plays an active role in defining their professional identity (p. 121). Beijaard, Meijar & Verloop (2004) offer this succinct interpretation of professional identity: "professional identity can also be seen as an answer to the recurrent question: 'Who am I at this moment?'" (p. 108). How novice teachers come to answer this question, and ultimately how they come to define themselves as teachers, informs their sense of agency and practice, while also offering their mentors insights into their needs (Beijaard, Meijar & Verloop, 2004; Schutz, Hong, & Francis, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

In the immediate aftermath of the WHO's COVID-19 pandemic declaration, school district administrators and teachers hurried to shift their classrooms to alternative modalities. In a matter of weeks, schools across the country transitioned entire components of their institutions to new platforms, with little guidance from state and federal governments (Turner, Adame, & Nadworny, 2020). By April 2020, Van Lancker and Parolin (2020) note that "school closures [affected] the education of 80% of children worldwide" (p. 243). In the United States, an initial study documenting the effect of COVID-19 on teachers and districts found that "86% of teachers worried about how children were doing during remote learning," with 76% indicating that they "believed that children 'were falling behind'" (Reich, Buttimer, Coleman, Colwell, Faruqi, & Larke, 2020, p.3). Indeed, the end of the 2020 school year was one marked by loss for teachers, as they came to terms with the significance of an abrupt end to the school year: projects left unfinished, good-byes never uttered, graduations that would not come to fruition—along with numerous other institutional traditions and rights of passages that they would not facilitate or witness.

The challenges posed by COVID-19 lingered well past the end of the 2020 school year and came to define much of the 2020-2021 academic year, with "over 55 million K-12 students [without] in-person instruction" as of November 2020 (Allen & West, 2020). As school districts grappled with the safest ways to reopen schools, new fears and uncertainties prevailed. For many teachers, district- and state-level discussions of how/when to reopen schools were marked by fears of falling ill from COVID-19; shifts in COVID-19 protocols at the state and district level; and disruptions in the school year, as districts transitioned between remote, hybrid, and in-person

instruction (Goldstein & Shapiro, 2020; Rivas, Shakya, Riegle, Rios, Torres, & Muldofskey, 2020).

Moreover, COVID-19 has continued to exacerbate socio-economic disparities and inequities as schools contend with providing quality instruction to student populations with diverse needs and resources (Allen & West, 2020; Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020; Reich, et. al, 2020). For students in particular, one of the most visible inequities has been a lack to digital access, with "40% of African-American students and 30% of Hispanic students in U.S. K-12 schools receiv[ing] no online instruction during COVID-induced school shutdowns, compared to 10% of whites" (Allen & West, 2020). In addition, food insecurity and poverty increased among students and teachers around the world as a result of COVID-19 (Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020). An initial study conducted by researchers at Kansas State University found that Kansas K-12 students and teachers were not immune to these challenges, leading to a lack of student engagement and increased stressors for teachers (Bonella, Lane, Carroll, Martinez, Jobe, McKeeman, Kaff, & Shuman, 2020).

For novice teachers, the first year of teaching is already defined by a steep learning-curve, as they encounter the challenges of the profession. For the first-year teachers represented in this study, the first year is inevitably also informed by the multitude of challenges posed by the pandemic—challenges that not only lingered well past the end of the 2020 school year into the 2020-2021 academic year, but that will pose ramifications for schools and the teaching profession for years to come.

Research Questions

Given the complex set of challenges first-year teachers faced during the 2020-2021 school year in the wake of COVID-19, the aim of this study is to capture this unique induction to

the teaching profession through the experiences of this study's participants. Specifically, this study seeks to examine how the pandemic has affected participants' sense of professional efficacy, as well as their teaching practices. To achieve these aims, the following central question, and corresponding sub-questions, guide this study:

1. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected participants' induction into the teaching profession?

    a. In what ways did participants' induction experiences inform their teaching practices?

    b. How has the COVID-19 pandemic influenced participants' sense of professional efficacy and agency?

Definition of Terms

1. *Induction:* socialization processes, by which novice teachers build collegial relationships, come to understand their roles, and internalize "the core values and norms" of their schools (Pgodzinski, 2012, p. 984).

2. *Novice and First-Year Teacher:* Used interchangeably in this study, novice and first-year teachers are newly licensed, and teaching as such for the first time.

3. *Self-Efficacy:* "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce certain attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3).

4. *Agency:* "the exercise or manifestation" to act (Schlosser, 2019).

Significance of Study

This study builds upon a significant body of research addressing the experiences of novice teachers, as well as the protective factors that decrease the likelihood of early career attrition. Research shows that the induction year is particularly important in setting the trajectory

for a novice teacher's career. The first year of teaching is initially marked by the transition from pre-service to in-service—from student to teacher—and informed by the varied experiences and stressors that novice teachers undergo as they begin to define their teacher identity and develop their sense of self-efficacy. This study seeks to expand this body of research by focusing on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the first-year teachers featured in this study, specifically its effect on their sense of efficacy, their conceptualization of their teaching identity, and ultimately their teaching practices.

Methodology

This research serves as an extension of a longitudinal case study conducted by researchers, including myself, from Kansas State University-College of Education (KSU-COE), in meeting the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation's (CAEP) Standard 4: Capturing Completer Impact on PK-12 Students (Kansas State University-College of Education, 2022). In late February of 2020, we conducted the first in a series of focus group interviews (five in total) with 1st and 2nd year teachers, whose teacher preparation pathways were representative of all KSU-COE's programs. These interviews were followed up with a survey to gather more specific measures of impact. In year one, participants were asked to identify and reflect upon the following:

- How did they identify student academic success?
- What challenges did they face in helping students achieve academic success?
- What measures did they take to address said challenges?
- What three documents/artifacts demonstrate their impact on student-learning growth? How?

The data gathering process coincided with the start of the pandemic, and we found ourselves, alongside our participants, processing the meaning and implications of abrupt school closures, as well as shelter-in-place and social distancing measures. Since then, the research committee has conducted an additional 11 focus groups during the 2020-2021 academic school year: five follow-up focus groups with completers from Cohort 1; and 6 focus groups with Cohort 2—completers who were in their first year of teaching during the 2020-2021 academic school year. These focus groups were conducted from February to March of 2021.

This study consisted of two phases: 1) Focus Groups and 2) Individual Interviews. This study began with an examination of the six focus group interviews from Cohort 2, utilizing Grounded Theory to analyze the data. From this data emerged four axial codes and one selective code, whose central ideas guided my construction of questions for individual interviews. I selected three interviewees from Cohort 2, completing two interviews with each interviewee. These interviews allowed for deeper understanding of the participants' first year of teaching, and how COVID-19 affected their induction and sense of efficacy.

Organization of Study

- *Chapter One* introduces the proposed study examining the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on teacher efficacy, identity and practice. The opening personal account describes the author's own reckoning with how COVID-19 would affect different facets of not only her life, but those of the in-service and pre-service teachers with whom she works. This chapter also includes the purpose of the study, overview of issues, statement of the problem, significance of the study, research questions, definition of terms, and methodology and the organization of the study.

- *Chapter Two* presents a literature review on COVID-19's effect on education in the United States, as well as Federal and State-level responses, as well as teacher induction, teacher efficacy and teacher identity. This chapter also includes an overview of grounded theory and social cognitive theory as two foundational lenses that allow for a more thorough understanding of how COVID-19 affected participants' sense of efficacy and identity, as well as impacted their practice.

- *Chapter Three* outlines the study's methodology, including: a review of the research questions, research procedures, selection of participants, the researcher's role, data collection procedures, data analysis, research timeline, and trustworthiness.

- *Chapter Four* presents the data collected, as well as present key themes that emerged from the data.

- *Chapter Five* describes theoretical analysis and findings.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

COVID-19 has fundamentally changed our daily lives. It has ushered in new sorrows and anxieties that were unimaginable for many Americans just a few months prior to March 2020. This chapter offers a broad overview of the literature that informs what we already know about novice teachers and the challenges they face during their induction years. This research seeks to add to this body of knowledge by examining the effect of COVID-19 on the efficacy of first-year teachers—to better grasp how this unique induction into the teaching profession has shaped their beliefs about their own abilities as educators.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section, "The United States' Response to COVID-19," offers a general overview of the federal and state governments' responses to COVID-19 and the status of schools. The second section, "The First-Year Teacher Experience," is divided into two subsections: "The First Year: Challenges and Realities" and "First-Year Teachers: Protective Factors for Positive Career Outcomes." These two subsections examine both the challenges first-year teachers face, as well as protective factors that mitigate the impact of these challenges on their likelihood to leave the profession. The final section, "Social Cognitive Theory and the Development of Teacher Efficacy," explores the theoretical underpinnings of self-efficacy. Divided into two subsections, "Theoretical Foundations: Social Cognitive Theory" and "Defining Self-Efficacy," this section positions teacher self-efficacy within the framework of Social Cognitive Theory.

The United States' Response to COVID-19 and Schools

Federal Response

While the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) declared that COVID-19 posed "a public health emergency" at the end of January 2020 (Storey & Slavin, 2020), the initial preparation-response at the federal level was insufficient in preventing the spread of the virus (Harris, Miller, Dawsey, & Nakashima, 2020; Wallach & Myers, 2020). On January 31, 2020, HHS Secretary Azar noted in his public health emergency declaration that "while this virus poses a serious public health threat, the risk to the American public remains low at this time, and we are working to keep the risk low" (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020). Over the subsequent months, cases and death rates continued to rise beyond the initial risk assessment, and by January of 2021, COVID-19 had usurped heart disease as the leading cause of death in the United States (Impelli, 2021).

Yet as the epidemic continued to worsen, there was no notable shift in the federal response, as "U.S. policymakers [did] not revise their prior beliefs about the appropriate role of government or embraced drastic shifts in economic or health policy" (Rocco, Béland, & Waddan, 2020, p. 459). President Trump and his administration's rhetoric often underscored the severity of the virus on public health (Keith, 2020), rather focusing on increased pressures for state and local officials to "'reopen' their economies, even as case-fatality rates climbed" (Rocco, Béland, & Waddan, 2020, p. 459). While the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act offered economic relief to various sectors of the US economy and infrastructure, there was no notable federal plan for a cohesive pandemic response. Thus, President Trump's administration left states to orchestrate their own emergency plans, often working against each other for resources (Estes, 2020).

The federal response to public schools echoed that of its public health response: states created their own plans for safety measures and reopening of schools. The United States Department of Education (ED) framed the reopening of schools as a matter of local control, offering minimal guidance and resources, while insisting that K12 schools must reopen (Camera, 2020). In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also framed school reopening from the perspective of local control, noting that "implementation should be guided by what is feasible, practical, acceptable, and tailored to the needs of each community" (Sadeghi, 2020, para. 7). That said, the CDC provided states and local governments guidelines for how to reopen schools, albeit the degree of fidelity to which they were implemented varied greatly across the country (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

The CARES Act became the key piece of legislation that supported schools in their educational efforts. The CARES Act allotted $2.2 trillion "to provide fast and direct economic aid to the American people negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic," (US Department of Education, 2021, p. or para. 1) of which $31 billion was allocated to support public education institutions (Scott, 2020). In an informational "Fact Sheet," the Committee of Education & Labor shares the various uses for this funding (Scott, 2020):

> This funding would cover a wide range of activities, including cleaning and sanitizing schools, purchasing educational technology such as laptops and hotspot devices, training educators to use online learning tools, ensuring access to education for students with disabilities, and providing students emergency funding for food, housing, and other basic essentials. (p. 1)

While the CARES Act offered school districts funds to address the immediate needs brought forth by the pandemic, this federal legislation fell short on offering states a cohesive plan or

blueprint on how to effectively handle the logistics of meeting these needs effectively, let alone equitably.

State and Local Responses to COVID-19 and Schools

The pandemic fundamentally changed K-12 schools, as districts across the United States closed their buildings and transitioned into alternative modes of instruction in March 2020. The reach was expansive affecting "at least 124,000 U.S. public and private schools and … at least 55.1 million students" by the end of the Spring 2020 semester (*Map: Coronavirus and school closures,* 2020). Going into the 2020-2021 school year, states offered varying degrees of guidance for school reopening, often delegating those decisions to local districts (Olneck-Brown, 2021). School districts, in turn, continued to struggle with how to reopen schools effectively and safely in the face of mounting pressures from parents and community stakeholders (Olneck-Brown, 2021). The National Conference of State Legislatures note the challenges facing schools (Olneck-Brown, 2021):

> Operating schools in-person presents logistical dilemmas in containing the spread of COVID-19, such as universal mask use, screening for symptoms, and social distancing in the classroom and on school transportation. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates the cost of mitigation strategies may rise as high as $442 per student. (para. 2)

These challenges were compounded by systemic social inequities. The American Medical Association (2020) conducted a study that found that due to "non-White and indigent populations generate lower revenues," their healthcare facilities "received less relief [through the CARES Act] despite confronting a greater burden of COVID-19" (p. 1). Indeed, the case and

death rates for people of color were higher than their White counterparts—a reality that consequently affected the well-being of students of color.

Additionally, the educational needs of students of color were disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Allen and West (2020) cite:

> A McKinsey analysis that 40% of African-American students and 30% of Hispanic students in U.S. K-12 schools received no online instruction during COVID-induced school shutdowns, compared to 10% of whites. These gaps in access to online education and digital services widen the already substantial educational inequalities that exist, [and] push them to new heights. (para. 7)

The lack of equitable resources and educational opportunities resulting from the pandemic have exacerbated a social and economic gulf that, while always present, is now far too apparent.

The First-Year Teacher Experience

The First Year: Challenges and Realities

For many first-year teachers, the exhilarating anticipation of their first classroom is quickly tempered by the many challenges they encounter. According to McCann and Johannessen (2004), novice teachers face hardships pertaining to "relationships, workload/ time management, knowledge of subject/curriculum, evaluation/grading, and autonomy and control" (p. 139). These hardships are often cited as reasons for the rate of novice teacher attrition, with an "astonishing 50% of teacher[s]" leaving the profession "within the first five years of teaching," often due to these stressors (Bieler, 2013, p. 23; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Ingersoll, 2003). Furthermore, the attrition rate of novice teachers is higher in "high-poverty, high-minority schools," leaving students in these schools with a revolving door of teachers,

many of whom "are underprepared, inexperienced, or teaching outside of their licensed area" (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017, p. 265).

For those that remain, their first year is marked by "the two-worlds' problem"— the process of reconciling their teacher preparation training and their lived realities in the classroom (Feiman-Nemser & Buchman, 1985, as cited in Thompson, Windschitl, & Braaten, 2013, p. 575). During their teacher preparation programs, first-year teachers develop "preformed beliefs of what it means to *be* a teacher" (Friesen & Besley, 2013, p. 23)—beliefs and expectations that are often tested and challenged as they navigate and negotiate the socio-political landscapes of schools (März & Kelchtermans, 2020 Thompson, Windschitl & Braaten, 2013). Thompson, Windschitl and Braaten (2013) note (p. 575):

> Often novice teachers transition from preparatory settings, where coursework and other experiences are based on a learning-centered reform vision of instruction, to public school classrooms where… the prevailing institutional discourses may work against such innovative practices (Anagnostopoulos, Smith & Basmadjian 2007; Kennedy, 1999; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981).

The tension between theory and practice is further exacerbated by the realization that the support systems that sustained first-year teachers during their teacher preparation often ebb, leaving them to "feel isolated, experience closed-doors, and a lack of collaboration" (Wexler, 2019 p. 167). These observations speak to a larger chasm that exists between theory and practice—one on which first-year teachers build their teacher identities and reconstruct their teaching philosophies with varying degrees of support.

In the midst of this transition from university to K-12 classroom, first-year teachers also contend with "the didactic and pedagogical relationships" that define the most challenging

aspects of their practice: "classroom management, students' motivation, evaluation and dealing with different pupils" (Stenberg & Marranen, 2021, p. 10). Indeed, it is often the relational aspects of teaching that are cited as significant stressors for novice teachers (McLean, Abry, Taylor, & Gaias, 2020; Taylor, McLean, Bryce, Abry, & Granger, 2019; Stenberg & Marranen, 2021). van der Wal, Oolbekkink-Marchand, Schaap, & Meijer (2019) make the following observation on the effect of these stressors on novice teachers (p. 60):

> Many early career teachers experience tensions leading to feelings of stress and uncertainty, often caused by various difficult situations, such as conflicts with student or colleagues, frictions between their own view of the teacher who they are and want to become, and actual in-class experiences…. These tensions can cause initially motivated, well-educated teachers to experience anxiety, stress or even to leave the profession (Hong, 2010).

For first year teachers, these career-related stressors are often compounded by personal stressors such as "[personal] relationships, household responsibilities, [and] finances" (Taylor, McLean, Bryce, Abry, & Granger, 2019, p. 2). The cumulative effect of such stressors often dampens first-year teachers' career optimism, as well as their resolve to stay in the profession (Taylor, McLean, Bryce, Abry, & Granger, 2019).

First-Year Teachers: Protective Factors for Positive Career Outcomes

Institutional supports: Participating in formal induction.

While novice teachers encounter numerous challenges (McCann & Johannessen, 2004), the right types of supports can help them not only address those obstacles, but also thrive in the face of them. Participation in a formal induction program can serve as a protective factor for novice teachers. Formal induction is defined as "a systematic, organized plan for support and

development of the new teacher in the initial one to three years of service" (Bartell, 2004, p.

381). Smith and Ingersoll (2004) warn that formal induction should not be confused for pre-

service, in-service training or general professional development; rather, the design of formal

induction should be intentional in preparing novice teachers to successfully make the transition

between these two worlds. Studies show that formal induction, as *a component* of professional

development, can lead to positive outcomes for novice teachers including higher levels of job

satisfaction and increased efficacy (Hellsten, Prytula, Ebanks, & Lai, 2009; Killeavy, 2006;

Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wong, 2004). The opposite, however, has also been found to be true:

poorly designed or "haphazard induction experiences have been associated with higher levels of

attrition, as well as lower levels of teacher effectiveness" (Weiss & Weiss, 1999). Thus, as a

protective factor, the quality of the formal induction program is of particular significance in

determining its effectiveness in helping novice teachers transition from pre-service to in-service

practice, and remain in the profession (Hellsten, Prytula, Ebanks, & Lai, 2009; Smith, &

Ingersoll, 2004).

Induction programs vary across districts, and often reflect the novice teacher's teaching

context, including the classroom setting, as well as the social, political and cultural norms of the

school and community (Bartell, 2004; Marent, Deketlare, Jokikokko, Vanderlinde, &

Kelchtermans, 2020; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Bartell (2004, p.635) outlines needs typically

addressed in induction programs, delineated by category and examples (replicated in Table 2.1):

Table 2.1. New Teacher Needs Addressed in Induction Programs

Category	Examples
Procedural	Familiarity with school and district procedures and expectations for personnel
Managerial	Classroom management strategies; time management; setting up the classroom; getting materials and supplies; scheduling; taking attendance; grading practices; keeping records

Category	Examples
Psychological	Managing stress, gaining self-confidence; handling challenges and disappointments; transitioning from student to teacher role; attending to physical and emotional well-being
Instructional	Grade-level curriculum standards and expectations; lesson planning; instructional resources; assessing student progress and using results to shape instruction; using a variety of instructional practices; adapting instruction to meet individual student needs
Professional	Teaching norms and practices; appropriate boundaries and relationships between faculty and students; legal issues; the role of professional organizations; professional development opportunities
Cultural	Developing rapport with students and parents; understanding and appreciating environment; using community resources; valuing diversity; developing cultural proficiency
Political	Getting to know colleagues; contributing to extracurricular program; building relationships with colleagues, staff, and administrators; understanding the broader context of teaching and reform efforts

Table 2.1. From *Cultivating High-Quality Teaching Through Induction, p. 635*

This table illustrates the unique challenges that novice teachers face as they transition from their teacher education programs into their first year of teaching. Effective formal induction programs differentiate their approaches and content in response to their teachers' needs, often implementing a range of activities such as, "classes, workshops, orientations, seminars, and especially, mentoring" (Bartell, 2004; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004, p. 3). Regardless of the activities, a comprehensive study of induction programs in five different countries that these programs had three common characteristics: 1) "highly structured, comprehensive, rigorous, and seriously monitored" in order to provide targeted support and enrichment to novice teachers; 2) focused on "professional learning, and delivering growth and professionalism to their teachers;" and 3) collaborative in nature, and "collaborative group work is understood, fostered, and accepted as part of the teaching culture" (Britton et al., 2003 as cited in Wong, 2004, p. 46).

Mentorship is cited as one of the most important components of formal induction; indeed, in some instances, mentorship becomes the default form of formal induction offered to novice teachers (Bieler, 2013; Feiman-Nemser, 1996; Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wong, 2004). Ingersoll and Kralik (2004) broadly define teacher mentorship as the "personal guidance provided, usually by seasoned veterans, to beginning teachers in schools" (p. 3). Norman and Feiman-Nemser (2005) offer this perspective on effective mentorship:

> Mentors who see their work in educational terms have a clear idea of the kind of teaching they want to foster. They regard new teachers as learners and think about how to help them develop a principled teaching practice. Like good teachers, they have a kind of bifocal vision, keeping one eye on the immediate needs of the novice teacher and one eye on the ultimate goal of meaningful and effective learning for all students. ... Their mentoring practice blends showing and telling, asking and listening (Schon, 1987) in ways that promote new teacher learning. (p. 680)

This dual perspective is central to effective mentorship: mentors help novice teachers work through the immediate challenges of the day-to-day job, while also offering emotional support and cultural context needed for sustained professional growth (Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005). In this way, mentorship helps novice teachers cultivate "a strong sense of agency" are successful in helping them "retain a sense of control and remain resilient" in the face of adversity (Bieler, 2013, p. 24).

Collegial relationships: Fostering professional community through institutional fit.

For novice teachers, their informal induction into the profession is as formative as the professional development initiatives offered by their districts. Both formal and informal induction are socialization processes, by which novice teachers build collegial relationships,

come to understand their roles, and internalize "the core values and norms" of their schools (Pgodzinski, 2012, p. 984). Yet, since informal induction occurs outside of the confines of the professional development presented to novice teachers by their districts, novice teachers are able to "enact agency when self-selecting into particular relationships" with teachers within their school settings (Desimone, Hochberg, Porter, Polikoff, Schwartz, & Johnson, 2013; Pogodzinksi, 2012, p. 1011). In turn, these self-selected relationships are critical in helping novice teachers "find their way into the bureaucratic infrastructure of the school, as well as the informal, social and cultural norms, rules and expectations that make up the daily social organization of school life" (Marent et al., 2020).

The quality of these collegial relationships, interactions and experiences is particularly important in mitigating against early career attrition. Marent et al. (2020) observe:

> Relationships with students, colleagues, school leaders and parents have been found to be essential sources for social recognition, appreciation and support and as such of crucial importance for [early career teacher's] developing self-esteem, job motivation and task perception. … Yet, at the same time, research has demonstrated that the opposite is also true: the very same relationships can also operate very negatively, as sources of stress, self-doubt, loss in motivation and job dissatisfaction. (p. 2)

Thus, the relationship building at the heart of the informal induction has the potential to set the trajectory of a novice teacher's career. Miller and Youngs's (2021) research points to the importance of person-organization (P-O) fit in decreasing the likelihood of early career attrition, stating that P-O fit "had a stronger association with [first year teacher] retention than school characteristics, teacher characteristics, principal observation, or mentoring support" (p. 2). Furthermore, they found that first year teachers with "higher levels of perceived [P-O] fit with

teaching colleagues were more likely to remain at the schools where they started teaching" (Miller & Youngs, 2021, p. 8).

Indeed, multiple studies have shown that positive collegial relationships are central to novice teachers' sense of institutional belonging and are an important resource for helping them improve their pedagogical skills and their sense of efficacy (Ingersoll, 2003; März & Kelchtermans, 2020; Miller & Youngs, 2021; Keltchermans, 2006; Shah, 2012). Furthermore, Ingersoll (2003) notes that "the presence of a positive sense of community, belongingness, communication, and cohesion among members [is] one of the most important indicators and aspects of effective schools" (p.12). While great emphasis has been placed on formal induction within the literature and schools, emerging research calls for an increased focus on informal collegial relationship building and school climate as a critical component of understanding novice teachers' induction into the profession (Burke, Aubusson, Schuck, & Buchanan, 2015; März & Kelchertermans, 2020; McLean, Abry, Taylor, & Gaias, 2020; Miller & Youngs, 2021; Stenberg & Maaranen, 2021.

Reflective practice: Engaging in problem setting and problem solving.

Active engagement in reflective practice is an important mechanism for persevering through difficulties. Killeavy and Moloney (2010) note that "the ability to reflect, and so to learn from experience" is central to being an engaged "member of a professional community" (p. 1070). Indeed, "reflection is necessary [and] vital to good teaching," especially when the nature of that reflection "includes inward and outward examination of the social context, … [of] issues of equality and social justice" (Zeichner, 1990 as cited in Pultorak & Barnes, 2009, p. 34).

Schön (1983) seminal work, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action,* provides insights into how reflection aids the development of teacher identity and

resilience. He argues that the act of reflecting aids professionals in more than just problem-solving—it is central to the act of "problem setting" (p. 39):

>Problems of choice or decision are solved through the selection, from available means, of the one best suited to established ends. But with this emphasis on problem solving, we ignore problem setting, the process by which we define the decision to be made, the ends to be achieved, the means which may be chosen. In real-world practice, problems do not present themselves to the practitioner as givens. They must be constructed from the materials of problematic situations which are puzzling, troubling, and uncertain. (p. 39)

This observation contextualizes reflection within the nuances of professional life; it recognizes the elements and problems of a professional setting that are not always defined and therefore cannot always be anticipated.

For first-year teachers, the ability to engage in reflective practice is a critical step in their ability to take control of their professional identity and environments, which leads to an increased sense of self-efficacy and career optimism (Bandura, 1994; Taylor, McLean, Bryce, Abry & Granger, 2019). Formal mentorships, as well as informal collegial relationships, offer an important form of reflective practice in which experienced teachers engage novice teachers in introspective dialogue and action as they navigate their professional obstacles (Bieler, 2013; LoCasale-Crouch, Davis, & Weins, 2012; Pultorak & Barnes, 2009; Yost, 2006). Much like learning how to develop lesson plans or to differentiate instruction, novice teachers can learn to "use critical reflection as a problem-solving tool if educated to think that way (Yost, 2006, p.62).

Social Cognitive Theory and The Development of Teacher Self-Efficacy

  Theoretical Foundations: Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura's (2006) social cognitive theory offers a valuable framework for contextualizing the efficacy beliefs of novice teachers. As "an agentic perspective toward human development, adaptation, and change," social cognitive theory posits that individuals are able to effect change through their chosen behaviors in a given context (Bandura, 2002; Bandura, 2006, p. 164). Bandura (2006) observes:

> To be an agent is to influence intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances. In this view, personal influence is part of the causal structure. People are self-organizing, pro-active, self-regulating, and self-reflecting. They are not simply onlookers of their behavior. They are contributors to their life circumstances, not just products of them. (p. 164)

An individual as a "self-organizing, pro-active, self-regulating, and self-reflecting" (Bandura, 2006, p. 164) agent should not be confused with "a reverence for individualism" (Bandura, 2002, p. 273). Social cognitive theory rejects the extremes of determinism spectrum, positioning individuals as neither completely "autonomous agents" nor completely dependent on their environments (Bandura, 2006, p. 165).

According to Bandura (2002), "social cognitive theory distinguishes among three modes of agency: direct personal agency; proxy agency…; and collective agency…" (p. 270). Personal agency refers to an individual's ability to directly influence their situation and environment. Bandura (2002) acknowledges that "in many spheres of life, people do not have direct control over their social conditions and institutional practices" (p. 270). Often, an individual's sense of agency will take on other forms, as in proxy or collective agency. Within these modes an individual may affect change through others who may have more influence or resource (proxy) or through culturally defined "socially interdependent effort" (Bandura, 2002, p. 270).

Social cognitive theory conceptualizes a teacher's perceived self-efficacy as their "beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance [and] influence" (Bandura, 1994, para. 1). Bandura (1989) notes:

> Among the mechanisms of personal agency, none is more central or pervasive than people's beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs function as an important set of proximal determinants of human motivation, affect, and action. (p.1175)

In understanding the development of teacher efficacy, it is important to position social cognitive theory as "a model of emergent interactive agency," in which "persons are neither autonomous agents nor simply mechanical conveyers of animating environmental factors" (Bandura, 1989, p. 1175). Thus, a person's sense of efficacy and agency is contingent on the interplay of complex "personal and environmental factors" (Bandura, 1989, p. 1175).

Defining Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1997) defines perceived self-efficacy as the "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce certain attainments" (p. 3). At its core, self-efficacy beliefs "constitute the key factor of human agency. If people believe they have no power to produce results, they will not attempt to make things happen" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Maddux and Gosselin (2011) argue that to fully operationalize the concept of self-efficacy, it is necessary to identify what it is not—in doing so, we are able to distinguish how self-efficacy "differs from other concepts that deal with self, identity, and perceptions of competence and control" (p. 199). Maddux and Gosselin (2011, pp. 199-200) cite eight such distinctions:

1. "Self-efficacy beliefs are not *competencies.*"
2. "Self-efficacy beliefs are not simply *predictions* about behavior."
3. "Self-efficacy are not *intentions* to behave or intentions to attain particular goals."

4. "Self-efficacy are not *outcome expectancies* (Bandura, 1997), or *behavior-outcome expectancies* (Maddux, 1999a)."
5. "Self-efficacy is not *perceived control*."
6. "Self-efficacy beliefs are not *[causal] attributions."*
7. "Self-efficacy is not *self-concept* or *self-esteem*."
8. "Self-efficacy is not a trait."

These qualifications offer important contours to understanding self-efficacy, and how it functions in human agency. In the following subsections, I outline four key distinctions: self-esteem, intent, expected outcomes, and locus of control. These four distinctions offer the arch of the novice teacher experience: how they value their own worth as a teacher; how their teaching practice compares to their intent and training; how they come to define and assess the outcomes they expect to see in their practice and their students' learning; and how they determine the level of control they have over their professional practice.

Self-efficacy and self-esteem.

According to Bandura (1997), perceived self-efficacy is not synonymous with self-esteem:

Perceived self-efficacy is concerned with judgements of personal capability, whereas self-esteem is concerned with judgments of self-worth. There is no fixed relationship between beliefs about one's capabilities and whether one likes or dislikes oneself. (p.11)

Bandura goes on to acknowledge an important point: "people tend to cultivate their capabilities in activities that give them a sense of self-worth" (p. 11). Yet, he notes that empirical analysis of self-efficacy that is limited to those activities in which "people invest their sense of self-worth" inevitably "inflate correlations" between the two concepts, and the inverse may also be true: individuals have capabilities to execute tasks to which they don't ascribe self-worth (p. 11). In addition, a person's self-worth is not only influenced by what an individual can do, but also by other attributes such as "beliefs about physical attributes and personality traits," which do not

have any direct bearing on self-efficacy (Maddux & Gosselin, 2011, p. 200; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

Self-efficacy and intent.

Furthermore, self-efficacy is not defined by a person's "*intentions* to behave or [their] intentions to attain particular goals" (Maddox & Gosselin, 2011, p. 200). While intentions focus on what a person "say[s] they will do," self-efficacy is concerned with what "they say they *can* do" (p. 200). Thus, self-efficacy beliefs don't serve as predictions of how a person will perform a task. Rather, predictions of future actions and outcomes are contingent on their established efficacy beliefs. In addition, Maddox and Gosselin (2011) assert:

> Self-efficacy beliefs are not concerned with perceptions of skills and abilities divorced
> from situations; they are concerned, instead, with what people believe they can do with
> their skills and abilities under certain conditions. (p. 199)

Accordingly, a person's context (i.e., social, economic, geographic, etc.) is central to defining their self-efficacy beliefs within those environments. For early career teachers, their context is defined by their school environments. Bowles and Pearman (2017) identify three contextual factors that affect an early career teacher's sense of efficacy: 1) their teacher-preparation program; 2) principal support, and "characteristics of the teaching assignment" (p. 71). These conditions are significant in defining novice teachers' self-efficacy beliefs—in how they determine what they *can* do rather what they *intend* or *hope* to do within a specific context.

Self-efficacy and expected outcomes.

Distinguishing between self-efficacy beliefs and expected outcomes requires a deeper understanding of human motivation—what moves people to behave in the ways they do. Bandura (1997) explores how self-efficacy beliefs and expected outcomes differ:

Outcomes arise from actions. How one behaves largely determines the outcomes one

experiences. Performance is thus causally prior to outcomes. Similarly, the outcomes

people anticipate depend largely on their judgments of how well they will be able to

perform in given situations. To claim, as some writers have (Eastman & Märzillier,

1984), that people visualize outcomes and then infer their own capabilities from the

imagined outcomes is to invoke a peculiar system of background causation in which the

outcomes that flow from actions are made to precede the actions. People do not judge that

they will drown if they jump in deep water and then infer that they must be poor

swimmers. Rather, people who judge themselves to be poor swimmers, will visualize

themselves drowning if they jump in deep water. Perceived self-efficacy is a judgment of

one's ability to organize and execute given types of performances, whereas an outcome

expectation is a judgment of the likely consequences such performances will produce. (p.

21)

Bandura's example illustrates how expected outcomes proceed from personal efficacy beliefs:

people assess their own abilities (e.g., swimming) prior to taking a specific action (e.g., jumping

into the deep water). Thus, their actions stem from their assessment of their abilities in context to

the situation and environment in which they find themselves.

In addition, the development of self-efficacy beliefs is reliant upon self-referent

processes—the ability to engage in self-reflection, which may "boost or undermine their efforts

by beliefs about their performance capabilities" (Bandura, 1978a, p. 238). Tschannen-Moran and

Hoy (2001) note that "self-efficacy beliefs influence thought patterns and emotions that enable

actions in which people expend substantial effort in the pursuit of goals, persist in the face of

adversity, rebound from temporary setbacks, and exercise some control over events that affect their lives" (p. 787).

Self-efficacy and locus of control.

Self-efficacy and locus of control are closely intertwined, both being integral to the formation of human agency. Rotter (1966) conceptualizes locus of control as the degree to which an individual perceives that an outcome "is contingent upon his own behaviors or attributes" or an outcome is "controlled by forces outside of himself and may occur independently of his own actions" (p. 1). Internal control refers to an individual's perception that an outcome is derived from their own behavior, whereas external control refers to the perception that outcomes in a specific situation stem from outside forces, beyond the control of the individual (Rotter, 1966).

Indeed, locus of control is a foundational element of perceived teacher efficacy. Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, and Hoy (1998) cite early research on efficacy, specifically the RAND studies on teacher efficacy, which was based on Rotter's concept of locus of control and social learning theory (p. 204). According to Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001), these initial studies defined teacher efficacy "as the extent to which teachers believed that… control of reinforcement lay within them or in the environment" (p. 784). Based on this definition of teacher efficacy, the Rand's measure contained two items to gauge teacher perceived efficacy among their participants (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998):

> *Rand Item 1. "When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can't do much because most of a student's motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment.*
>
> *Rand Item 2. "If I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students."* (p. 204)

Rand Item 1 offers a general measure of a teacher's perception of external control on their ability to assume agency within their school environment. Strong agreement with Rand Item 1 suggests a belief that "environmental factors overwhelm any powers that teachers can exert in schools," (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998, p. 204). Rand Item 2 offers a general measure of a teacher's perception of internal control, or the degree to which they feel their actions affect the outcomes. Strong agreement with Rand Item 2 suggests "confidence in their abilities as teachers to overcome factors that could make learning difficult for students" (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998, p. 204).

Rotter's (1966) concept of locus of control was also foundational to Bandura's conceptualization of self-efficacy as "a cognitive process in which people construct beliefs about their capacity to perform at a given level of attainment" (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998, p. 204). Bandura's (1997) theoretical framing of self-efficacy beliefs differentiates between people's beliefs of their own abilities and their sense of agency or control within their settings: "Beliefs about whether one can produce certain actions (perceived self-efficacy) cannot by any stretch of the imagination, be considered the same as beliefs about whether actions affect outcomes (locus of control)" (p. 20). Bandura's assertion— that perceived self-efficacy is not the same as locus of control— is contingent on the premise that self-efficacy is the embodiment of a series of beliefs and experiences that inform a person of their abilities under certain conditions, and that these beliefs cannot be reduced to only the dimension of control.

Sources of Self-Efficacy

According to Bandura (1978b), individuals develop their sense of self-efficacy from four sources: "performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states" (p. 142). Performance accomplishments, also referred to as "enactive

attainment," is cited as being "the most influential source of efficacy information," as it is reliant on a person's own mastery experiences (Bandura, 1986, p. 399, Bandura, 1997; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Vicarious experiences are those in which individuals gain insights into their own abilities by watching the actions of others in comparable situations. Bandura (1986) notes that "seeing or visualizing other similar people perform successfully can raise self-percepts of efficacy in observers that they too possess the capabilities to master comparable activities" (p. 399). Verbal persuasion refers to a shift in self-efficacy based on the expressed opinions of others about their abilities; while widely used, the effect of verbal persuasion on self-efficacy formation is limited, particularly when those opinions aren't affirmed by the individual's experiences (Bandura, 1978b; Bandura, 1986). Lastly, individuals develop their self-efficacy beliefs by their physiological states (also referred to as emotional arousal). Bandura (1978b) notes that "stressful or taxing situations generally elicit emotional arousal that, depending on the circumstances, might have informative value concerning personal competency" (p. 146).

For early career teachers, these sources of efficacy beliefs play a significant role in their professional functioning, directly affecting their ability to engage in professional practices that lead to positive outcomes (Bandura, 1997). George, Richardson, and Watt (2018) observe that for novice teachers, the number of mastery experiences during those first few years of teaching are limited. As such, the role of vicarious experiences and social persuasion in the formation of self-efficacy beliefs is critical during those initial years. This may come through observing veteran and mentor teachers, which supports their vicarious experiences in teaching or through the reflective practice and encouragement that serves as a source of social persuasion.

Teachers with positive self-efficacy beliefs have the ability to purposefully engage and influence their practice. Bowles and Pearman (2017) note that "efficacious teachers believe they

are self-empowered to create learning environments that allow them to motivate and promote student learning" (p. 70). Thus, vital to the development of self-efficacy is both the ability to determine and execute individual behaviors/practices, as well as to influence and curate the professional environments in which novice teachers find themselves. Efficacy beliefs, in turn, are "causal factors to (a) resiliency, (b) teacher effectiveness, (c) student achievement, and (d) the use of innovative teaching strategies" (Bowles & Pearman, p. 71). Studies show that efficacious teachers are: more likely to implement student centered approaches; more effective in handling classroom management issues; and more likely to report higher job satisfaction than their less efficacious peers (George, Richardson, & Watt, 2018). In contrast, teachers with low efficacy "are inclined to invoke low student ability as an explanation for why their students cannot be taught" (Bandura, 1997, p. 242). These outcomes have important implications for the resilience of novice teachers, and the quality of education they deliver to their students.

Teaching through Crisis: Socio-Emotional and Pedagogical Considerations

Socio-Emotional Considerations

Sandra Lindsay, a New York nurse, holds the historical distinction of being the first American to be vaccinated outside of clinical trials (Guarino, Cha, Wood & Witte, 2020). Upon receiving her first shot, Lindsay shared the following reflection (BBC, 2020):

It didn't feel any different from taking any other vaccine… I hope this marks the beginning of the end of a very painful time in our history. I want to instill public confidence that the vaccine is safe. We're in a pandemic and so we all need to do our part. (para. 5)

Lindsay's words reflect a tangible optimism—a renewed sense of hope shared by many that life was starting to shift back to normal. I remember feeling an immense amount of relief after

receiving my first shot—a sense that I was one step closer to seeing my family and friends on a

regular basis, to returning to the office, and perhaps to traveling again.

Yet, this optimism is tempered by feelings of uncertainty and anxieties that persist about

what the future will look like in a post-pandemic world. The pandemic continues to pose an

evolving global crisis—one that has already claimed the lives of millions globally. Crisis can

broadly be defined as events such as "social unrest, pandemic outbreak, civil war, fire, natural

disasters," etc. that affect daily functioning at either a personal or societal level (Chow, Lam, &

King, 2020). Foster (2006) offers this perspective on the nuanced ways in which crises affect

communities:

> First, an important point of order and clarity: September 11th didn't change everything;
>
> nor did the landfall of Hurricane Katrina and subsequent breach of the levee that held
>
> Lake Pontchartrain back from the city of New Orleans; nor the Tsunamis that engulfed
>
> coastal communities along the Indian Ocean; nor does the ongoing genocide of black
>
> Africans in the Darfur region of Sudan, nor the ongoing demonstrations to extend basic
>
> civil and human rights to this nation's most recent influx of immigrants. What these
>
> events do— the extent that we bear witness to them—is render obvious to more people
>
> than in the past the depths of challenges facing this nation and the world. (p. or para. ?)

Foster's (2006) observation suggests that while communal crises don't change all aspects of

daily life, they do exacerbate and bear to witness systemic inequities that otherwise go hidden.

Certainly, the pandemic did not change everything; even through the pandemic students

continued to be educated, albeit for millions of students across the country, their education was

delivered through remote instruction (Gudmundsdottir & Hathaway, 2020; Pokhrel & Chhetri,

2021). However, COVID-19 has exposed and worsened socio-economic, racial and gender

inequities, including a lack of quality digital access to curriculum and instruction; as well as increased food insecurity and poverty among students and teachers globally (Allen & West, 2020; Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020; Reich et. al, 2020).

Teaching through the pandemic has also brought to the forefront the need to better understand the impact of teaching on teacher's mental health and well-being. Müller and Goldenberg (2020) note that there is a significant amount of research on the "related stress and trauma on children's academic and socio-emotional development" that comes from crisis, less is known about the impact of crisis on teachers' mental health and overall well-being (p. 26). In the immediate aftermath of the pandemic, teachers experienced elevated levels of stress due to closures, as they pivoted their instruction from traditional in-person facilitation to remote learning models (Müller & Goldenberg, 2020; Ozamiz-Etxebarria, Santxo, Mondragon, & Santamaría, 2021). As the closures lingered, additional stressors added to the overall fatigue and grief teachers experienced: caring for family members while simultaneously; experiencing physical symptoms due to prolonged sitting and digital work; increased feelings of isolation and lack of connection with students, etc. (Bonella, et. al., 2020; Gewertz, 2020; Müller & Goldenberg, 2020). In addition, in caring for their students during the pandemic, teachers were at an increased risk of secondary traumatic stress (STS), due to their work with students who had "traumatic experiences and helping or wanting to help them" through it (Müller & Goldenberg, 2020, p. 26). Returning to face-to-face instruction did not necessarily alleviate these stressors. Ozamiz-Etxebarria, Santxo, Mondragon, & Santamaría (2021) surveyed 1,633 teachers in Spain, and found that 50.6% of participants "indicated that they were suffering from stress," and 32.2% reported "suffering from depression" when their schools reopened (p. 4). The emerging literature suggests a need for further study on how to best protect teachers' mental health.

Pedagogical Considerations

Pedagogically, teaching through crises calls for intentional practices that acknowledge and prioritize teachers' and students' experiences and well-being. Foster (2006) outlines three key "principles for teaching and learning in times of heightened awareness" of crisis (see Table 2.2):

Table 2.2. Principles for Teaching in Times of Crisis

Principle	Explanation
Know our Students	Paying close attention and listening to our students and their families in order to learn, work with and respond to their stories, circumstances, needs and strengths;
Building Community	Working with individuals in the classroom, with community organizations, and in local communities to build robust networks of need responsive support for our students;
Maintain Reciprocal High Expectations	Expecting manifestations of greatness not only from our students but from ourselves; providing space and opportunities (in and outside of class) and demonstrating the knowledge, caring, and creativity for student to do great things—both in terms of curriculum, and as morally grounded, mutually supportive community builders and citizens.

Table 2.2 From *Bridging Troubled Waters: Principles for Teaching in Times of Crisis*

These principles underscore the importance of strength-based pedagogical approaches in which students, their families, and their communities are viewed as sources of fortification rather than challenges in moments of crisis (Foster, 2006). In his research with Austin Independent School District (AISD) following Hurricane Katrina, Foster (2006) observed that "maintaining high expectations [had] proven exceedingly difficult for teachers … who already held opinions shaped by district wide Ruby Payne trainings that emphasized poor children's 'culture of poverty' and various maladaptive behaviors that teachers should help them overcome." Deficit-based pedagogical models undermine teachers' efforts to reach and effectively support students, and it

39

devalues the classroom as a space for sustained community building, support, and transformation.

These principles compliment Chow, Lam, & King's (2020) Crisis Resilience Pedagogy (CRP) model for developing responsive teaching practices. As a framework that emerged in response to the pandemic, CRP identifies "five key attributes of resilience that can be applied" to "enable educators to sustain high teaching quality even when new delivery modes are implemented" (Chow, Lam, & King, 2020, paras. 14-15):

> 1) *adaptability* of both the curriculum and learning processes to "impart flexibility to the educational system in facing crises;"
>
> 2) *creativity* to enable teachers to not only change instructional modes, but to also leverage technologies and other innovations to enhance and enrich learning;
>
> 3) *connectivity* to both resources as well as to the classroom community through digital/virtual platforms when in-person learning is prohibitive;
>
> 4) *diversity* within this framework refers to the "wide variety of teaching and learning approaches… available… to address the challenges in crises;"
>
> 5) *endurance* requires the ability to create continual learning opportunities despite the challenges posed through crises, noting that "it is important for teachers and students to manage stress" as a means of persevering through crisis. (paras. 16-20)

Central to Chow, Lam, & King's (2020) framework calls for "joint efforts of different stakeholders" in creating and sustaining healthy and effective learning environments during times of crises (para. 17). Thus, teachers are not expected to carry the weight of resilience alone, but rather as part of an educational system whose policies and operations support teachers, students and the community.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

This research serves as an extension of a longitudinal case study conducted by researchers, including myself, from Kansas State University-College of Education (KSU-COE, in meeting the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation's (CAEP) Standard 4: Capturing Completer Impact on PK-12 Students. In 2019, we conducted a series of focus group interviews (five in total) with 1st and 2nd year teachers, whose teacher preparation pathways were representative of all KSU-COE's programs. These interviews were followed up with a survey to gather more specific measures of impact. In year one, participants were asked to identify and reflect upon the following:

- How did they identify student academic success?

- What challenges did they face in helping students achieve academic success?

- What measures did they take to address said challenges?

- What three documents/artifacts would they use to demonstrate their impact on student-learning growth? How?

The data gathering process coincided with the start of the pandemic, and we found ourselves, alongside our participants, processing the meaning and implications of abrupt school closures, as well as shelter-in-place and social distancing measures.

Indeed, COVID-19 dramatically and swiftly changed the educational landscape, forcing public schools in the United States, and elsewhere, to shift from face-to-face to remote learning models (Carrillo & Flores, 2020). It left educators to make decisions as to how to best facilitate this transition and meet students' educational and socio-emotional needs in the wake of increased isolation and uncertainty. What in March 2020 felt abstract and unfamiliar has unfolded into a

new reality— one in which school districts, and more directly their teachers, are experimenting with hybrid and all-remote educational models with varying degrees of success.

Research Questions

For novice teachers, the first year of teaching is already defined by a steep learning-curve, as they encounter the challenges of the profession. These challenges have been compounded by the effects of the pandemic: fears of falling ill from COVID-19; shifting COVID-19 protocols at the state and district level; disruptions in the school year; etc. (Goldstein & Shapiro, 2020; Rivas et al., 2020). Thus, the aim of this study is to capture the experiences of first-year teachers in the wake of COVID-19 and examine how the pandemic has affected their sense of professional efficacy, practice, and professional identities.

To achieve these aims, the following guiding question, and sub-questions, guide this study:

1. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected participants' induction into the teaching profession?

   a. In what ways did participants' induction experiences inform their teaching practices?

   b. How has the COVID-19 pandemic influenced participants' sense of professional efficacy and agency?

Research Procedures

The purpose of this study is to capture the experiences of first-year teachers in the wake of COVID-19 and examine how the pandemic has affected their sense of professional efficacy, their pedagogical choices, and their professional identities. I utilized case study methodology because of its ability to allow a phenomenon to unfold and grant us "access to knowledge we would not otherwise have access to" (Merriam, 1998, p. 33). Case study methodology is

"emergent and flexible, responsive to the changing conditions" of the placement (Meriam, 1998, p. 8), allowing for data collection processes that are responsive to the needs of the participants. Additionally, Florio-Ruane and Clark (1990) note that "the case study, unlike the lived experience, can be held still for the purpose of repeated examination from multiple perspectives" (p. 22).

In order to capture this impact, my case-study research comprised two phases: 1) Focus Groups and 2) Individual Interviews. This study began with an examination of the six focus group interviews from Cohort 2, utilizing Grounded Theory to analyze the data. The purpose of the focus groups was to gather a broad understanding of the experiences of first-year teachers as they tackled the various challenges that arose as a result of the pandemic. From this data emerged four axial codes and one selective code, whose central ideas guided my construction of questions for individual interviews. I selected three interviewees from Cohort 2, completing two interviews with each interviewee. These interviews allowed for deeper understanding of the participants' first year of teaching experiences. I analyzed the data from these interviews using Critical Spatial Theory to address sub-question 1 and Social Cognitive Theory to address sub-question 2, specifically. Collectively, analysis of Focus Group and In-Depth Interviews provided a nuanced understanding of how COVID-19 affected their induction into the profession. See Figure 3.1, which illustrates the two phases, as they align with theoretical analysis.

Figure 3.1. Alignment of Theoretical Frameworks and Research Processes
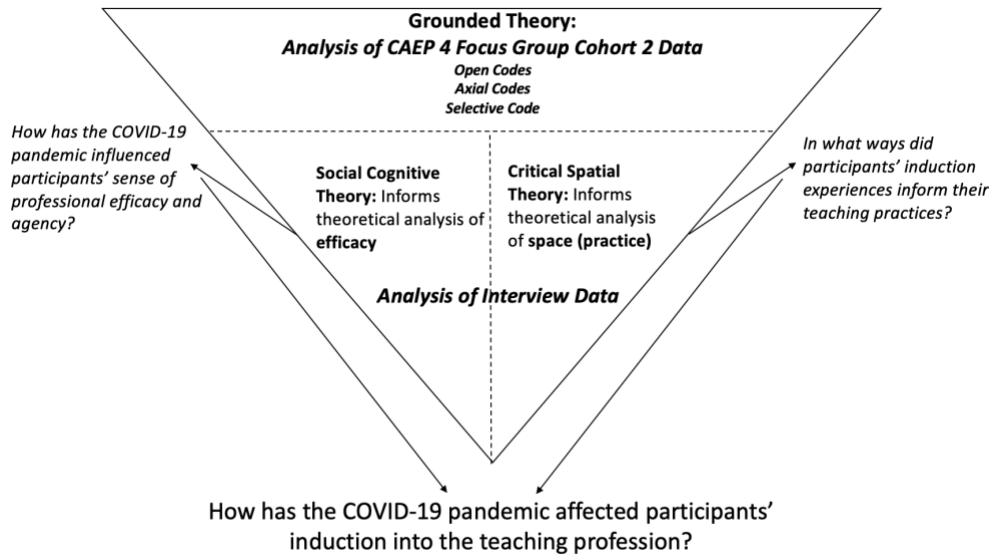
Selection of Participants

As an extension of a longitudinal case study conducted by researchers, my research built upon the work we are conducting in meeting CAEP's Standard 4: Capturing Completer Impact on PK-12 Students. The focus groups served a dual purpose as both the initial dataset for this doctoral research, as well as Cohort 2 data analysis for CAEP Standard 4. Thus, the focus group participants (N= 23) were representative of all KSU-COE's programs: traditional elementary education, Bachelor of Science Online (BSO) elementary, Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) elementary, and four traditional secondary programs (i.e., English Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, and Math).

From these focus groups, I selected three participants for Phase 2, the in-depth interviews. These interviewees met the following criteria:

- They were student teaching during March 2020, when schools across the country started to close their buildings due to the pandemic.

- They completed their first year of teaching during the 2020-2021 academic school year:

- Their first year of teaching was in a Kansas public school.

While the focus group participants taught in various states and content areas, this criteria ensured that my participants for Phase 2 shared a similar socio-political context. Specifically, having student taught in Spring 2020, they experienced the state-wide school shutdown, as the first state in the nation to do so (Dwyer, 2020). Subsequently, alongside their cooperating teachers, they followed the guidance offered to districts by KSDE through the state's Continuous Learning Plan (2020), and witnessed its evolution into their first year of teaching. In addition, they experienced delayed starts to their school year, after KS Governor Laura Kelly proposed an executive order to delay the start of the school year until after Labor Day, providing time for districts to "work with their counties to get the necessary mitigation supplies" prior to students arriving to buildings (Kansas Office of the Governor, 2020, para. 6). While the Kansas Board of Regents would eventually strike down her executive order, school districts were still able to opt for starting later, if they deemed it necessary.

Researcher's Role

As a coordinator of field experiences for Kansas State University, I often have the opportunity to observe preservice teachers and interact with their cooperating teachers. During the fall 2020 semester, all of my observations were conducted virtually out of necessity. Sometimes I was looking into a face-to-face setting, whereby the teachers and students engaged in learning, albeit in masks and socially distanced. Other times, I was part of a full-remote classroom, where my video-presence was one of many on a checkered zoom screen. On one visit to a full-remote classroom, the cooperating teacher pulled me into a breakout room to share the agenda for the day, but also to chat for a bit while the preservice teacher set up the day's activities. In our conversation, we shared our experiences teaching through the pandemic—she as

a kindergarten teacher, me as a college instructor and field coordinator. Undoubtedly, it's been hard for us both, but I found myself sharing something with her that I hadn't shared with many people until now: a part of me wished I was back in my high school ELA classroom, experiencing this moment in history with my students.

Admittedly, this is an odd wish, considering that the pandemic has worsened an already significant teacher shortage (Rogers & Spring, 2020). Yet, my wish is less an intent to reapply for my old position than it is an acknowledgement that my lived experiences have deviated from how I once solidly defined myself. Indeed, when I left the K-12 classroom, I had taken for granted how interwoven the identity of "teacher" had been to my own sense of self. If someone were to ask me "who are you?" my response would be: "I'm a high school English teacher," followed by "I'm a Puerto Rican woman," perhaps followed by "I'm from Emporia." My identity has always been attached to where I am from (both geographically and culturally) and my profession. Since my departure from the classroom, people inquire about what I do, and while I note my new title as a field experience coordinator, I instinctively qualify this with "… but prior to that, I taught high school ELA for 13 years." While my experiences as a K12 public school educator still inform who I am, particularly as a researcher, I must acknowledge the experiential divide that now exists between me and those still in the classroom.

In many respects, it is the experiential divide between me as researcher and my participants that will be the focus of this study. My role as researcher functions from the premise that my participants possess bodies of knowledge, experiences and expertise that I do not have, and that deserve deeper understanding (Manen, 2016; Morris, 2015; Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). In conducting this research, I will assume three key roles: moderator, interviewer, and participant observer. As a moderator and interviewer, my role will be to

"stimulate the participants to engage actively in the discussion of the topic" by allowing for digressions that lead to deeper meaning, while also providing direction to the conversations (Liamputtong, 2011, p.60). My role as observer will place me within my participants' professional spaces over the span of 2-3 months, with the interpretative goal to "'see the world through the eyes of the subjects studied'" (Corbetta, 2011, p.236).

I concurrently engaged in data analysis during all phases of research, albeit informally, as I "identify relevant concepts, validate them, and explore them more fully in terms of their properties and dimensions" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 69). Furthermore, by engaging in analysis throughout the process, I came to better understand my own positionality to the research topic, as well as how my subjectivities may affect my interpretation of the data. Ultimately, my various roles served to cultivate "intimate relationships with participants that permit trust and confidence" and lead to nuanced understanding of their lived experiences (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 92).

Data Collection

Manen (2015) notes that "human science aims at explicating the meaning of human phenomena… and at understanding the lived structures of meanings" (pp. 3-4). Qualitative research demands of the researcher more than observation and description—it is the pursuit for what drives meaning and purpose in the lives of participants. To this avail, my case study comprised of a combination of qualitative methods— specifically focus groups and in-depth interviews—to fully examine participants teaching experiences during the pandemic. A multi-methods approach allows for "'mutual enhancement' that compliments each method used," and thus leads to a more complex understanding of the participants' experiences amidst the larger socio-political and economic consequences of the pandemic (Liamputtong, 2011, p.93).

Focus Groups

According to Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub (1996), two driving assumptions of focus groups are "that people are valuable sources of information about themselves and that much can be learned from direct, extended conversations with individuals whose thoughts and opinions are critical for understanding a topic" (p. 17). Focus groups amplify participant voices, which is particularly important "when little is known about the phenomenon" being researched (Liamputtong, 2011, p. 88). Because "participants are not required to answer every question," focus groups allow for more "spontaneous and genuine" responses, which in turn, increases the comfort and engagement level of participants (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996, p. 15).

Given the collaborative and exploratory nature of focus groups, it is an ideal for "the generation of new ideas formed within a social context," which is important in defining key themes and phenomena that shape a more nuanced depiction of how the pandemic has affected first year teachers (Breen, 2006 p. 466). On the surface, discussions pertaining to education of K12 students seems rather dichotomous— should school buildings open or close; should students be allowed to play or should sports and activities be cancelled—as communities continue to work towards curtailing the spread of COVID-19. The consequences of these decisions have been felt deeply by teachers, who have been given varying degrees of latitude in meeting student needs. Moreover, as the frontline practitioners in education, the effect of decisions made policy makers at the state and national level is directly felt by teachers, who are left to implement and enforce policies with varying degrees of support. Focus groups provide a space for full exploration and dialogue of how first year teachers internalized these shifts.

Interviews

Three participants will be selected from the focus groups for follow-up, semi-structured in-depth interviews. Questions asked during the interview were descriptive and generally follow Spradley's (1979) "grand tour" approach (p. 86). A semi-structured approach lent itself to a more conversational tone— one that allows for digressions and reflective responses that capture the complexities of participants' experiences (Morris, 2015). The purpose of these interviews was to probe further into how the pandemic affected my interviewees' induction experiences, and ultimately, how it affected their practices and sense of efficacy. The interview questions encompassed various topics, derived from the themes coded in the focus group interviews. Furthermore, they were analyzed using Social Cognitive Theory and Critical Spatial Theory.

Data Analysis

Theoretical Frameworks for Analysis

Foundational theoretical framework: Grounded theory

Grounded theory serves as a foundational framework for analyzing how the pandemic has affected the educational practices of first-year teachers, as well as how it impacted their sense of efficacy. Glaser and Strauss (2017) broadly define grounded theory as "the discovery of theory from data" (p. 1)—a deductive process by which "hypotheses and concepts not only come from data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data" (p. 6). The theory that is developed from this process "denotes a set of well-developed categories (themes, concepts) that are systematically developed in terms of their properties and dimensions," and whose relationships to each other "form a theoretical framework that explains something about a phenomenon" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 61).

With roots in Pragmatism and Symbolic Interactionism, Corbin and Strauss (1990) cite two key principles of grounded theory:

1. "Since phenomena are not conceived of as static but as continually changing in response to prevailing conditions, an important component of the method is to build change, through process, into the method." (p. 419)

2. "Strict determinism is rejected, as is nondeterminism. Rather, actors are seen as having, though not always utilizing, the means of controlling their destinies by their responses to conditions. They are able to make choices according to perceived options." (p.419)

Data that is collected and analyzed through the lens of grounded theory represents the dynamic nature of the phenomena being studied. Furthermore, the data that emerged situated participants as potential agents within their environments. As Corbin and Strauss (1990) note, "grounded theory seeks not only to uncover relevant conditions but also to determine how the actors under investigation actively respond to those conditions, and to the consequences of their actions" (p. 419). In the context to this study, Grounded Theory was applied to focus group data to derive key themes pertaining to the participants' experiences teaching during the pandemic. Those themes guided the direction of the questions I posed to my three interviewees in the second phase of my research.

Interpretive theoretical frameworks: Social cognitive theory and critical spatial theory.

Social Cognitive Theory and Critical Spatial Theory also serve as frameworks for contextualizing the impact of the pandemic on first-year teachers. Social cognitive theory conceptualizes a teacher's "perceived self-efficacy" as their "beliefs about their capabilities to

produce designated levels of performance [and] influence" (Bandura, 1994, para. 1). Bandura (1989) notes:

> Among the mechanisms of personal agency, none is more central or pervasive than people's beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs function as an important set of proximal determinants of human motivation, affect, and action. (p. 1175)

In understanding the development of teacher efficacy, it is important to position Social Cognitive Theory as "a model of emergent interactive agency," in which "persons are neither autonomous agents nor simply mechanical conveyers of animating environmental factors" (Bandura, 1989, p. 1175). Thus, a person's sense of efficacy and agency is contingent on the interplay of complex "personal and environmental factors" (Bandura, 1989, p. 1175). Given the significant ways in which COVID-19 has changed the K12 educational landscape, Social Cognitive Theory provides a framework to better understand how first-year teachers have processed the effects of the pandemic, and how it has shaped their professional identities. Furthermore, Social Cognitive Theory allows for examination of how these reflections have led to intentional action in their curricular and pedagogical decisions.

Critical Spatial Theory also provides an important framework for exploring how first-year teachers have worked through the challenges posed by the pandemic, and how that work has shaped their lived experiences during these unprecedented times. While Social Cognitive Theory informs our understanding of efficacy, Critical Spatial Theory further conceptualizes this process within the larger socio-political spaces and constructs in which teachers find themselves. Lefebvre's seminal work, *The Production of Space* (1991), offers a "unitary theory" of space— one that combines traditional understandings of space, which have often been framed within

topographical contexts, with "the mental, including logical and formal abstractions; and … the social" (p. 11). In contrast to classical representations of space "as a container with people and objects being assigned fixed positions" (Schroer, 2018, p. 1998), Lefebvre's (1991) work was concerned with "the space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and Utopias" (p. 12).

In this iteration of space, "both [its] construction through human activity and the effects of spatial configurations on human action" are as significant as the physical space itself (Schroer, 2018, p. 1998). Ferrare and Apple (2010) note that "a critical theory of space is thus necessarily relational" (p. 211), and thus: "not only has the ability to rearticulate existing problematics, but it also has the potential to expose social relations that have often been taken for granted or ignored altogether by critical education analysists" (p. 211). Critical Spatial Theory allows us to examine how the pandemic affected the physical and virtual spaces that first-year teachers occupied, and how their positioning within these spaces impacted their sense of efficacy and informed their pedagogical decisions.

Coding Methods

Saldaña (2016) describes the coding process as "a heuristic (from the Greek, meaning "to discover")—an exploratory problem-solving technique without specific formulas or algorithms to follow" (p. 8). It enables the researcher to extract particular phenomena from the participants' experiences and contextualize them within larger, recurring themes (Saldaña, 2016, p. 14). This analysis is done "*simultaneously* with data collection" in a reflective and recursive manner, lending itself to more focused, purposeful and sound findings (Merriam, 1998, p. 162; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). A heuristic approach to data analysis is particularly useful in case study research,

where the phenomenon being studied is relatively new, and in need of thorough explication as the research unfolds.

As part of the initial stages of data collection and analysis, I engaged in microanalysis of the data, "a form of coding that is open, detailed, and exploratory" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 70). Microanalysis "is designed to focus on certain pieces of data and to explore their meaning in depth" (p. 70). Initial microanalysis will allow me to select pieces of relevant data as I identify thematic patterns. As relevant patterns materialize, subsequent data will be analyzed using open coding, which allows for recurring themes to emerge from the data, and subsequently from the teachers' experiences during the pandemic (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Corbin and Strauss (1990) describe the open coding process as follows:

> Open coding is the interpretative process by which data are broken down analytically. … In open coding, event/action/interaction, and so forth, are compared against others for similarities and differences; they are also conceptually labeled. In this way, conceptually similar ones are grouped together to form categories and their subcategories. … Open coding and its characteristics of making use of questioning and constant comparisons enable investigators to break through subjectivity and bias. Fracturing the data forces examination of preconceived notions and ideas by judging these against the data themselves. (p. 423)

Because "coding is a cyclical act," the data is not only documented, but also reexamined and recategorized as new data emerges, and differing interpretations come to the forefront (Saldaña, 2016, p. 9).

Research Timeline

Table 3.1 outlines the timeline for the proposed research:

Table 3.1. Research Timeline

June	• Propose research to committee
July/August	• Seek IRB approval • Analyze focus group data • Select interview participants
September	• Conduct first round of interviews with case study participants *Data will be analyzed and coded as it is collected.
October	• Follow up with participants for clarifications • Begin synthesizing and writing findings *Data will be analyzed and coded as it is collected.
November-March	• Conducted second round of interviews with case study participants • Follow up with participants for clarifications and final reflections • Continue to write and revise • Submit dissertation to committee
March	• Defend dissertation

Trustworthiness

Given the "holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing" nature of qualitative research, measures to ensure validity and reliability will require an equality multifaceted approach in seeking trustworthiness (Merriam, 1998, p. 202). Merriam (1998) notes key strategies for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research, notably: "triangulation;" "member checks;" "long-term observation;" "peer examination;" "participatory or collaborative models of research;" and "researcher's biases" and positionality (pp. 204-206). Table 3.2 outlines the strategies I utilized to ensure that my findings are trustworthy:

Table 3.2. Trustworthiness Measures

Strategy	Definition	Research Implementation
Triangulation	"…using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the	Central to the design of my research is seeking data from various sources, notably: focus

Strategy	Definition	Research Implementation
	emerging findings" (Merriam, 1998, p.204).	groups, individual semi-structured interviews, and field notes from observations. In addition, participants will be able to share any additional artifacts, insights, etc. during the process that may further inform the study.
Member Checks	"…taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible" (Merriam, 1998, p.204).	In keeping with Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 2015), data will be analyzed as it is collected, allowing me to engage in member checks, whereby participants can offer clarifications on my interpretations, as well as additional insights that may have been missed in the original interviews.
Peer Examination	"…asking colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerge" (Merriam, 1998, p. 204).	In addition to member checks, I will work closely with colleagues and academic mentors, having them read my work for critique and suggestions for revision.
Researcher's Biases/Positionality	"…clarifying the researcher's assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation at the outset of the study" (Merriam,1998, p. 205).	Given my former experiences as a teacher, I will need to engage in ongoing reflection whereby I balance my preconceived ideas of education with my participants' experiences and thoughts of teaching through the pandemic.

Ultimately, qualitative research demanded that I engage in continual reflexivity and introspection as the researcher—an awareness and acknowledgment of how my subjectivities intersect with all aspects of the research process (deMarrais & Lapan, 2004, p. 175; Merriam, 1998, p. 202).

Summary

My qualitative study captured the experiences of first-year teachers in the wake of COVID-19 and examine how the pandemic has affected their sense of professional efficacy, identities, and practice. I selected three interviewees from Cohort 2 participants in KSU-COE's CAEP Standard 4 case study (Kansas State University-College of Education, 2022). Data was collected through two phases: focus group interviews and in-depth interviews. Data included transcriptions of focus group and in-depth interviews, and follow-up correspondences between me and participants. Grounded theory served as the foundational framework for analysis and generated relevant theory from the focus group data, which in turn, guided the construction of the in-depth interview questions. Finally, my interviewee's experiences were framed within two theories: critical spatial theory and social cognitive theory. This study aims to further our knowledge-base of how COVID-19 has impacted first-year teachers.

Chapter 4 - Data Presentation

KSU-COE's CAEP 4 longitudinal case study began as a means to capture their completers' impact on PK-12 students. Yet, this case study captured something unexpected and fundamentally significant-- the beginning stages of a growing global crisis. The CAEP 4 researchers found ourselves, alongside our participants, trying to comprehend the abstract nature of a global pandemic that had not yet reached home; the meaning and implications of abrupt school closures, as well as shelter-in-place and social distancing measures taken as precautions for an invisible enemy. On March 17th, 2020, CAEP 4 researchers were conducting a focus group session, at the same time that Governor Kelly announced that Kansas schools would not reopen for the remainder of the school year. That day, while I was addressing the concerns of student teachers in a separate zoom, my fellow researchers were breaking the news to their participants, in real time, that they would not be returning to their classrooms. There was some discussion of what it meant to shutdown schools, and expressions of shock. The researchers continued on with the questions, not deviating from the script; however, while their words were replying to the questions, it was evident their minds were elsewhere.

Part of the significance of the CAEP 4 study is that, by circumstance, it witnessed and documented the education field in transition at the early stages of the pandemic. As such, this data offered insights into the immediate reactions of participants as events surrounding the pandemic unfolded. The data for this study is derived from two key sources: 1) focus group data from Cohort 2 and 2) in-depth interviews of three participants from Cohort 2. This chapter presents pertinent data that illuminates the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic affected their unique induction into the teaching profession.

Focus Groups

In 2019, we conducted a series of focus group interviews (five in total) with 1st and 2nd year teachers, whose teacher preparation pathways were representative of all KSU-COE's programs. These interviews were followed up with a survey to gather more specific measures of impact. In year one, participants were asked to identify and reflect upon the following:

- How do you identify student academic success?

- What challenges did you face in helping students achieve academic success?

- What measures did you take to address said challenges?

- Describe three documents/artifacts that would demonstrate you impact on student-learning growth.

Since then, the research committee has conducted an additional 11 focus groups: 5 follow-up focus groups with completers from Cohort One (now in their second and third years of teaching); and 6 focus groups with Cohort Two— new participants, currently in their first year of teaching. The following data is derived from the 6 focus groups from Cohort 2, conducted in March of 2021. All focus groups were conducted via Zoom, and lasted approximately 60-90 minutes in length. These focus group participants were first-year teachers who ended their teacher preparation in March 2020, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, these participants have the unique distinction of being part of the inaugural class of first-year teachers entering the teaching profession during the 2020-2021 school year, the first school year to be entirely affected by the pandemic. Upon completion of the focus group, Cohort 2 participants were given $25 in school supplies as a way of thanking them for their insights and time.

For participants teaching in Kansas (KS), I identified the relative size of their school districts as part of their demographic information. School districts in KS are classified by the size

of their high school enrollments, in accordance with the regulations set forth by the Kansas State High School Activities Association (KSHSAA) (*2021-2022 Classifications*). It is used as a relative measure of the district's size. Table 4.1 outlines this classification system (*2021-2022 Classifications*):

Table 4.1. Kansas High School Activities Association Classification and Enrollment Range

Classification	Enrollment Range (measured by Grades 9-12)
6A	2371-1328
5A	1308-729
4A	729-316
3A	314-174
2A	173-107
1A	106-12

Furthermore, to differentiate between various participants, each participant has been assigned a numerical identifier with two components: the number of their focus group and the order in which they shared their demographic information. For example, Participant 1.2 refers to (1) Focus Group 1 and (2) second participant to share their demographic information.

Focus Group 1

This focus group was conducted by me and a fellow researcher. We began by informing all participants of the purposes of the study and the focus group protocols. We also expressed that all information gathered from the focus group would be used for research purposes, and that any subsequent papers and publications would maintain their confidentiality. Focus Group 1 had three participants. Participant 1.1 was a first-year fourth grade teacher in a KS 4A public school district. Participant 1.2 was a first-year pre-school teacher in a KS 6A public school district. Participant 1.3 was a high school English Language Arts teachers, teaching in an out-of-state public school district.

Defining academic success.

The participants were asked to share how they define student academic success. Participant 1.1 defined academic success by a student's ability to apply the knowledge gained in authentic ways:

> I think that defining their success is based on their ability to not only like solve a task, but then apply a task in their context in their real-world scenario. And that's one of the most authentic ways to be able to measure their success. Not only can you pull evidence from an article you've read, but can you then write it in a paragraph about your own topic or use it to further your understanding? Or in a math context: not only can you like solve or simplify a fraction, but then are you making connections to—"oh, I noticed I did this when I was cooking last night, and I was making my…". So being able to transfer their information to real-world context and understand it, and draw connections is really how I've been trying to define my students success this year.

In Participant 1.1's explanation of academic success, she offered various examples (i.e., applying fraction simplification to the process of cooking) to illustrate a key marker of academic success for her: the transferability "of information to real-world context[s]." She also shared that she modeled how to relate the tasks they are doing in school to the real-world, stating that those "explicit opportunities to model and put things into context really help, especially at the elementary level."

Participant 1.2 agreed with Participant 1.1's conceptualization of academic success as a process by which a learner applies the lessons learned from an assigned task to authentic situations. Participant 1.2 elaborated further on Participant 1.1's definition of academic success within her school's socio-economic context, as well as her students' developmental stages:

I would have to agree. I'm pre-K, so I'm the first schooling that they even ever attend. I teach in a very low-income area…, and I also am the only regular ed. teacher in my building—all the rest are developmentally delayed classrooms, or a mixed abilities classroom. … So my academic success, I really define that kind of in the same way is when I can teach something, and then they can take what I've taught them and put it into their own way. We do a lot of play in my preschool classroom. … and I teach a certain thing, and then I direct my play. …And we get to learn it through a play experience. And it's really fun when you get to send kids to the developmentally delayed classroom next door, and you get to watch them … take what I've taught them and then try to go teach it to [other kids].

Participant 1.2 also defined academic success by how well students are able to apply their newfound knowledge. For her students, an authentic application of knowledge is teaching their peers what they've learned.

Participant 1.3's teaching situation differed from the others. She noted that while she student taught in fourth grade, she was teaching high school ELA, and that the shift in grade changed her perspective on what constitutes academic success:

For defining academic success, all of this has changed since I student taught fourth grade and now I'm high school. So it's just been wildly different. But, I think improving is definitely how they achieve no matter where they're at. If they pass an assessment, whether that's a summative or formative assessment, whether I'm observing it or whether it's actually happening, that they're achieving something, especially this year… that they're just meeting some sort of goal and demonstrating true understanding whatever that looks like.

Participant 1.3 defined academic success by the academic growth a student made, "no matter where they're at." She stated: "achieving one-on-one help and direction—that's been a struggle this year, because not all my kids have been in-person—but whenever I've been able to do that, that's helped immensely." Participant 1.3's definition of academic success included the first allusion to the effects of the pandemic on both students' abilities to learn, and specifically her ability to help students achieve academic success.

Challenges in helping students achieve academic success.

Participant 1.1 noted that COVID-19 has made helping students achieve academic success particularly difficult:

> Helping students achieve academic success in the face of COVID challenges. … I think this year has been particularly challenging. When I started, it was just kind of coupled with being a new teacher with its own set of challenges. And just learning the ropes in a very steep learning curve as your first year always is. Plus, also trying to recognize where these kids are at when they've been off of school for an extra-long time. And figuring out… what gaps do I need to address and how can I best do that and fit it into my teaching when I'm not even sure the scope and sequence of my teaching really.

For Participant 1.1, the challenges of being a first-year teacher were compounded under COVID. She was trying to "figure[e] out the pacing" of her curriculum, while also considering that students had not been in a physical classroom since March of 2020. She offered additional details to the challenges that COVID posed:

> At our school in terms of COVID, we have one fourth grade remote teacher that takes care of just remote students. So I haven't had … a remote student that I'm always constantly zooming in. But the way we've structured our plan is that should a student in

my class that's in-person be quarantined, or have family that is quarantined, I do have to

provide daily remote instruction for them. And so that has been one of the biggest

challenges. When I get an email that says, "Okay, tomorrow, this student needs to be

prepared and ready to zoom in and you need to be prepared to teach them."

Participant 1.1 further explained that she was "constantly adapting curriculum and making sure

that [she] had resources prepared … at a moment's notice for a kid for two weeks to learn

remotely, without the environment and the supplies that they always need[ed]."

Participant 1.2 echoed Participant 1.1's challenges in helping students achieve academic

success. She explained how remote learning presented challenges for families and students, and

her to effectively teach:

I mean, being a first-year teacher is quite a challenge itself. I teach two classes in a day,

so I have an a.m. class, and I have a p.m. class, and my a.m. class is a remote class. So I

teach remotely in the morning. And then I switched my role to an in-person teacher. I

have 16 kids in my in-person, and then 12 in my morning online. … But, we've had a lot

of problems where… there's no adult to even assist their four and five-year-old to do their

schoolwork. And so me, as a teacher, I'm trying as best as I can to be like, "Well, can you

go find your scissors and you're gonna hold your paper like this and then you're gonna

put your thumb in this hole and your other fingers in the other hole." But trying to teach a

four and five-year-old through a computer screen has definitely been a challenge

especially when I have no parent help at home to help their kid. I have a lot of kids crying

to me over the screen half the time because they can't do it.

Interestingly, parents/guardians were not always able to be home with their preschoolers during

instructional time. This reality made it more difficult for Participant 1.2 to facilitate

developmentally appropriate activities for preschoolers learning remotely. She also noted that "on top of having to be a first-year teacher and having to learn how to teach through a computer screen," her district adopted a new grading system, which they were still learning to use. These challenges affected her ability to help students achieve academic success.

Participant 1.3's challenges stemmed from student apathy. Below, she described her students' feelings towards what they were expected to learn:

…My biggest challenge this year has been apathy with the students. And I was used to being in schools with a lot of behavior issues, so this was a different problem. … They don't want to do anything. They think that the program that we're using, which is Edgenuity, … they find Edgenuity very boring, and so they don't want to do it. And a lot of them had just gotten in this rut of not doing things since March, and expecting to just pass the final at the end of the semester and have it be okay.

Participant 1.3 equated students' apathy to two key factors: 1) the nature of the curriculum, which students find to be "boring," and 2) the effect of the pandemic, as students had "gotten into this rut of not doing things since March." Her struggles aligned with those of Participant 1 and 2, as they had to contend with first-year struggles that were exacerbated by the pandemic.

Teacher measures to help students achieve academic success.

Despite the challenges that the participants' faced, each participant was able to share measure(s) they took in helping students achieve academic success. Participant 1.1 shared the measures she took to help her students succeed despite the disruptions caused by COVID:

…so really making sure I'm balancing providing them adequate support and feedback, and instruction, along with their parents. So their parents know what's going on. And making sure that I'm also still meeting the needs of my students in the classroom and not

spending half of my lesson just trying to figure out is zoom working, and can they hear

me, and so finding that balance has been a challenge as well. In terms of non-COVID

related things, my district does not have a core reading curriculum, and so that has been a

really big struggle this year. … And so we're in the process of adopting curriculum, and I

will be really excited to get that because I think I'll be able to focus a lot more on my

teaching strategies and my effectiveness as a teacher rather than just trying to constantly

pull resources and find things to hopefully help my kids make progress toward standards

… In terms of addressing that challenge, I think that my biggest thing has just been I do a

lot of research and schooling 24/7 basically trying to help figure out like, okay, which,

which is going to be most effective here? And how can I use this resource to convey what

are key focuses for these few weeks. I'm doing just a lot of reading through other

teachers, blogs, other teachers' research papers, and trying to apply lots of different

strategies

For Participant 1.1, the measures she had taken to ensure student academic success were aligned

with planning and preparation, whether that be planning ahead so that she was not wasting time

on technology, or researching best practices to enrich her current curriculum.

Participant 1.2 discussed the importance of having colleagues who could offer guidance.

While Participant 1.2 struggled to meet and connect with her district-assigned mentor, she felt

fortunate to have colleagues within her building who could assist her:

Luckily, I have co-workers in my building who teach an at-risk classroom, which is

pretty much ran like my classroom, just with a few modifications. One of them is actually

a K-State graduate from the early childhood program. So it's nice to get to talk to her

about things and incorporate what we learned in college to put it into our classroom.

Having a colleague with a shared educational background offered Participant 1.2 a mentor who could assist her with implementing aspects of her teacher preparation program into her classroom.

Participant 1.3 shared that, despite her students' apathy and the challenges posed by COVID-19, she still believed in having high expectations for her students:

> And also having high expectations for them. Because I think at this school, they just don't have that. And they've gotten away with doing very little in the past. And this is a really hard year to demand high expectations of them. But I am still trying my very best to hold them [accountable].

> Also, I go to every professional development that I can. I went to one last week that was all about engaging students remotely. And so I've used a lot of that this week, …, and I've seen a lot of improvements with that.

For Participant 1.3, a key measure to helping students achieve academic success is to hold them to higher standards, and for her to engage in professional development that, in turn, allowed her to better engage her students, despite being remote.

Demonstrating teacher impact on student-learning growth.

We asked the participants to reflect upon how they would demonstrate their impact on student-learning growth. We asked them to provide examples of 2-4 artifacts that they would show their principal to illustrate their impact. Table 4.2. outlines their responses:

Table 4.2. Focus Group 1 Artifacts

Participant 1.1	Participant 1.2	Participant 1.3
Exit Tickets: Participant 1.1 noted that she used exit tickets daily to figure out what students learned, and what she needs to reteach.	**Name Writing Sheets:** Participant 1.2 shared that her preschoolers write their name every day. She would use	**Journal Entries:** Participant 1.3's students "journal every day" as a way to "try to make them enjoy writing their

Participant 1.1	Participant 1.2	Participant 1.3
She "maps those out on a big spreadsheet" as a "running record of the year."	these to show students' fine motor/writing skills.	thoughts down, and build their emotional intelligence."
Student Writing Samples: She would use a writing sample from the beginning of the year and one from the end of the year to show student growth in their writing.	**Photos and Videos:** She took photos of her students' activities, as well as videos of them taking part in various activities. She would use these to show different skills, such as counting to 30.	**Data on Student Performance Based on Modality:** She would take data on performance based on whether they came to class or zoomed in vs. those who do not attend.
N/A	**Assessment Cards:** These cards have standards preschoolers are expected to meet. She used these cards to track various skills and aptitudes.	**Edgenuity Assignment Grades:** Participant 1.3 would use printouts from assignments completed in Edgenuity to show students' "improvement on skills."

COVID-19 and participants' teaching identities.

COVID-19's impact on the participants' professional induction and teaching identity was a focal point of Focus Group 1's conversation. Their unique experiences as "COVID's First-Year Teachers" informed each question posed in our focus group. I asked one additional question to capture their experiences more fully: How has COVID-19 shaped you as a teacher? How do you feel it has informed your identity as a teacher?

Participant 1.1 shared that preparing for remote teaching felt "like you were working about three times as many jobs as you were given the first time." She shares:

> With my remote kids, I spend every second of my plan time trying to give them feedback on the tasks that they're not doing with me in class, I spend every evening and every weekend trying to build out the things for them that they won't be able to accomplish via zoom. … And so it is it's just, it's definitely been very overwhelming. And then, in terms of being a teacher in-person. In some ways, I think we're at an advantage because we

don't really know a whole lot differently, in terms of what it used to be like—like we got

a little bit of student teaching. But I think it has been kind of to my advantage that I have

to go through all of these safety cleaning protocols every day. And that I have to block

this time into my schedule for my kids to wash their hands umpteen zillion times, and I

have to deal with these screen guards that are up and keep falling down. And you just

keep teaching. And that's that. And so I've never had it another way.

Interestingly, being a first-year in COVID meant tackling unprecedented challenges, but also

being better prepared to do so because their student teaching experiences were also during

COVID, and therefore they "never had it another way." Participant 1.1 went on to share:

Everyone always says your first year, you just got to survive. And then you'll really enjoy

it from there. And I definitely have had many moments where you kind of question like,

"Why did I ever decide to put myself through this?" And then you have to remind

yourself like, okay, it's not always like this. And they know there would be moments like

that, even in a normal school year. But I think it is exacerbated based on the things kids

bring to the classroom because they're having to be cooped up at home more and they

don't get to be with their friends in the next classroom… because we're segregated at

recess, and you can only spend time with your class. And so just a lot of those little things

that you are just learning to cope with emotionally has definitely been your own set of

challenges. I mean, you're taking on the lives of all of your students … and trying to care

for yourself.

For Participant 1.1, the effects of COVID-19 took on several dimensions—the changes to the

physical space of the classroom, including students being social distanced from peers not within

their classrooms; the increased workload teachers face adapting to different teaching modalities

and meeting various needs exacerbated by COVID-19, the emotional toll of all the changes and demands teachers are facing.

Participant 1.2 affirmed Participant 1.1's feeling about the effect COVID has had on teachers and schools. She shared:

I think a lot of people feel this way. Um, yeah, I'm overwhelmed. A lot of the times I feel like I have no life outside of just being a teacher. Because I literally spend my free time trying to figure out how I can teach what I teach in-person [and] also through a computer screen to my kids. … I have to plan months ahead to be able to know: "okay, I need to get this done for a whole unit to send home for my remote kids." And I see another struggle: I make these packets and then parents never come and pick them up. I think that definitely has prepared me to be a stronger teacher than I think if I would have walked into a normal year. This year has taught me how to take care of my mental health and to take a day if I need to take the day to prepare. Like even when I take a mental health day and stay home, it's not like I get to really take it, because I need a whole day to prepare for myself for the next unit. But I definitely think that in the years to come, life will be hopefully a lot easier than what I have to do this year.

Participant 1.2 agreed with Participant 1.1: being a first-year teacher during COVID has been overwhelming. For participant 1.2 it has also allowed her to take the time she needs to better support her own mental well-being. Yet, Participant 1.2 still found that a day away from school often still meant working to get caught up with school work.

Participant 1.3 noted that being a first-year teacher during COVID has made her more adaptable. She had to adapt to being "in and out of school," and being quarantined. She shared:

Changing constantly, like, today, I was just given a sub notification that my planning

period has gone, which is fine, but things like that are just happening constantly, or the

way that we take attendance changes every day. A kid will be there, a kid won't be there.

But you guys know how it is.

Participant 1.3's last statement "but you guys know how it is," suggested a shared experience

among teachers—an understanding of the constant changes and challenges posed by COVID-19.

Focus Group 2

This focus group was conducted by me and fellow researcher. We began by informing all

participants of the purposes of the study and the focus group protocols. We also expressed that

all information gathered from the focus group would be used for research purposes, and that any

subsequent papers and publications would maintain their confidentiality. Focus Group 2 had

three participants. Participant 2.1 was a first-year AP Chemistry teacher in a private school, out-

of-state. Participant 2.2 was a first-year Social Studies teacher in a public KS 3A school district.

Participant 2.3 was a first-year elementary teacher in a KS private school.

Defining academic success.

Participant 2.1 equated academic success with a students' ability to show their learning,

and in their ability to reflect upon what they've learned. She shared:

They need to be able to demonstrate or produce something that shows that they've

learned more than they would have, like based on a pretest to post test, and also that they

feel successful. Their personal reflection is that they have learned something.

For Participant 2.1, students' ability to apply their and show their scientific knowledge was a key

measure of their success. Participant 2.2 noted that while academic success may look different in

a science and social studies, that she also wanted her students to be able to show their learning. She described what academic success looked like in her class:

Academic success for me, in the field of history, I'm sure looks different from academic success for you in the field of science, although they're close. I try and teach my classes as a lab class. But more than facts and dates, like history used to be taught, I'm more concerned about the story. And if kids can make a personal connection to what they're learning—the people they're learning about, the lessons we can take away from how the people live their lives, the decisions that they made— and apply that to their own lives.

For Participant 2.2, her students' abilities to make connections between history and historical figures to their own lives is a sign of academic success.

Much like Participant 2.1 and 2.2, Participant 3 also defined student academic success by their ability to show their learning in meaningful ways. She stated:

I define student academic success by what students are able to do, not necessarily on their grades, but just do they understand the concept? So that they can solve at … half of the problems and explain it to me, whether it's showing it on paper, or being able to tell me what to do.

For all three candidates, despite the differences in grades and content areas, their students' abilities to apply their learning was an important marker of their academic success.

Challenges in helping students achieve academic success.

Participant 2.1's challenges as a first-year teacher revolved around her ability to properly pace her instruction to align with her students' learning readiness. She stated that she was able to fix her pacing by utilizing "more formative assessments and pausing to make sure that they were

really understanding." She also noted an additional challenge with her students simply wanting her to give them copies of notes, rather than taking their own. She shared:

> And so at first I gave them my slides and that didn't work. Then I moved to scaffolded notes, [but] then they were really focused, on "What word do I specifically put in the blank of the scaffolded notes," and so that really wasn't working for me either. So I moved to not sharing my notes at all but … modeling and demonstrating [notetaking]. This has seemed to help a lot.

Participant 2.1's did not want her students to rely on her giving them the information; rather, she wanted them to decipher what was important and to take notes accordingly. Participant 2.2 cited a different challenge, namely student motivation due to the uncertainties spurred by COVID-19. She described her students' motivations:

> It all kind of comes down to motivation for my kids. I think they're overwhelmed by a lot of change this year, change from last year kind of carrying over to this year, and especially last semester. It seemed like that constant threat, if you want to, I hesitate to call it a threat, that constant possibility of going online at any moment, was really stressful to a lot of my kids. We are in a rural area, and so a lot of my kids worry about isolation from their friends and just not being around them in general.

Participant 2.2 highlighted that this fear of going remote—of being isolated from friends—contributed to increased stressed. Moreover, she found that this stress manifested itself as follows:

> It has reflected itself in academics. I had a difficult time getting kids to just turn in assignments. That kind of came in two areas: it was either that they didn't do them, and so didn't turn anything in or what I found to be equally as common was that kids were

worried about their work being perfect before they turned it in. They would start it and they would work on it, but not turn it in.

Participant 2.2's reflection emphasized the cultural and spatial dynamics of COVID-19's impact on students. Their rural setting meant that COVID-19 mitigation restrictions may further isolate them from their peers. For Participant 2.3, her challenges were related to "one student who [was] not on grade level." She worked with their special education teacher to provide needed services.

Teacher measures to help students achieve academic success.

Participants shared measures they had taken to help their students achieve academic success. Participant 2.1 discussed the techniques she used to empower students to take ownership of their own learning:

> I've started putting more of the grading work on them and having them evaluate their own homework assignments. [I also] have them create … small projects and have them ask each other questions…, so that I get to see their performance. There's also always an element of them talking to their peers and reflecting on what they've produced.

Participant 2.1's techniques centered students as agents in their learning, as they were producing, discussing, and assessing their learning.

Participant 2.2 also incorporated student-centered approaches to help engage her students and help them achieve academic success:

> My class is very discussion-based. It's very personal experience-based. I look if kids can directly correlate, like decisions made by FDR to their own lives, or things that he overcame, such as his struggle with polio. How can they relate that to their lives? The ways that we worked on that through the year is that we do a lot of journaling, especially since

this 2020 to 2021 school year has been unprecedented. I think it's really important that

we're historians ourselves.

Participant 2.2 guided students through journaling as a way of having them document their

experiences in the pandemic. For Participant 2.2, her students' abilities to make meaningful

personal connections to history and their ability to reflect upon their own moment in history were

markers of their academic success.

Participant 2.3 noted that a key strategy that she implemented was working through

problems with her students, and differentiating reading instruction to ensure academic success.

She described:

I make sure I give them time to work on the whiteboard—we do our work together. If it's

math, we do it together. And then we do problem sets together. If it's reading, I separate

them into groups. So I can work with them individually instead of all together, because

sometimes, they don't want to work with their peers. But I set aside time to work to make

sure I have time to work with each one of them on different levels.

She noted that her instructional approaches to math and reading have helped her students achieve

academic success.

Demonstrating teacher impact on student-learning growth.

We asked the participants to reflect upon how they would demonstrate their impact on student-

learning growth by providing 2-4 artifacts that they would show their principal to illustrate their

impact. Table 4.3. outlines their responses:

Table 4.3. Focus Group 2 Artifacts

Participant 2.1	Participant 2.2	Participant 2.3
Video Projects: Her students created videos about an	**Journal Entry:** She would bring the first journal entry that they wrote, in which they	**Writing Journal:** Participant 3's students kept a writing journal. She noted that she

element, in which they had to make a model of the element.	were asked to free-write about their experiences from March 2020 to when they started school in the fall. They created a class timeline based on these journals.	can show their growth in their writing.
Test Samples: She would "bring a sample of their work from a test" to show their academic growth.	**Goal Setting Activity:** At the beginning of the year, students set "personal growth goals" for which they make plans to achieve.	**Math Quizzes:** She would use pre/post data from math quizzes to show students their growth.
Lab Report: She would share a lab report that has "a graph to show how they were collecting data and then able to compile that information into a graph."	**American Culture Project:** Students researched the 1920s to better understand the various aspects of American history and culture during this time period. They then developed a persona to portray, and show their learning.	**Religion Activities:** Since Participant 3 taught at a parochial school, she would use activities that she used to teach religion to show students' growth in their knowledge-base.

COVID-19 and participants' teaching identities.

For Focus Group 2 participants, the COVID-19 pandemic has posed opportunities for reflection

on practice and what ultimately is most important in terms of delivering content. Participant 2.1

observed that COVID has "been good and bad." She expanded upon this:

> We've had a lot of four-day weeks. And that's kind of ideal, [boarding been great]… but
>
> it's been hard to get through all of the content. I want my students to be really well
>
> prepared for the future. For some of them, this is the only chemistry class they're going to
>
> take, so I want to pack in as much knowledge as I can. But as my principal frequently
>
> reminds me, this might be the only chemistry class they take, and I don't—unlike a math
>
> class— I don't have to get them ready for the very next level. And like, if I don't get
>
> through everything with them, they're not really going to be behind either. So just finding
>
> that balance there. … I think I would have already been flexible, and like, open to trying

new things. But really, COVID has been freeing to make lots and lots of mistakes. And because we go from virtual to online, it's given me a lot of freedom with the students who say, Oh, that routine we started last week, we're throwing that out, and we're gonna try something totally different.

Paradoxically, the uncertainties that COVID ushered in for many teachers, has been freeing to Participant 2.1. From her perspective, it allowed her to make mistakes with opportunities to grow from them. Continuing with that theme, Participant 2.1 addressed something that Participant 2.2 had said earlier:

I wanted to respond to what you said that your students weren't turning in assignments, because they wanted them to be perfect. I was flooded with emails for a semester every night: How do I do my homework? And this semester, it's just for completion, and now they grade it in class. And they've said the pressure has been so much better now that they can just put down what they think their best answer is, and then learn about it when you come to class. So that's helped me a lot. And I always thought that completion credit wasn't a good thing. But now I see in a totally different way that it takes off the pressure of the perfectionism.

Both Participant 2.1 and 2.2 expressed the pressure some of their students feel to be "perfect," and thus unwilling to make mistakes, and constantly seeking reassurance. The COVID-19 pandemic allowed them to leverage flexibility to reset expectations and to focus on meaningful learning.

Participant 2.2 also shared how being a first-year teacher in COVID-19 informed her teaching identity:

I'm reminding myself to give grace to myself and to my students. And so the way COVID

has really shaped my teaching is not only to be flexible, but also I find myself— since I

view social studies in history as a vehicle with which to teach really important life skills

and life growth skills— I feel more like a counselor than a teacher this year, which is

great. That's my favorite part of my job. … I want my class to be a safe place where kids

can come and … feel less stressed. … But I will never know how I would have been if I

hadn't experienced COVID during my first year of teaching. And everybody keeps telling

me next year is got to be easier. And I believe them. But I'm really glad that it broke in

me that rigid perfectionism that I felt like I needed to be successful. Knowing that I can

wing it, I can roll with the punches.

Participant 2.2 noted that she never would have known "who [she] would have been if [she]

hadn't experienced COVID-19"—she will never know the teacher she would be in a COVID-

free world.

Participant 2.3 mused on how, ironically, being a first-year teacher during COVID-19

positioned new teachers in an advantageous position, given the challenges posed by COVID:

It's helped me actually be more organized, I wouldn't say I was not organized, but just

more on top of my lesson plans…. I think it's helping us because we don't know what it's

like without COVID. So while other teachers are like: "Yeah, this is new to all of us,"

we're like, "but this is normal for us." Whereas other teachers are like, "this is our new

normal," we're just like, "well, this is normal for us." Yeah. Even though we'd rather it

wasn't.

Participant 2.3 found that her unique induction into teaching has allowed her to develop skills for

navigating teaching through COVID that more veteran teachers may find harder to acquire.

Focus Group 3

This focus group was conducted by two fellow researchers. They began by informing all participants of the purposes of the study and the focus group protocols. They also expressed that all information gathered from the focus group would be used for accreditation and research purposes, and that any subsequent papers and publications would maintain their confidentiality. Focus Group 3 had five participants. Participant 3.1 was a first-year Journalism teacher in a public 5A KS public school district. Participant 3.2 was a first-year Math teacher in a 6A KS public school district. Participant 3.3 was a first-year Social Studies teacher in a 4A KS school district. Participant 3.4 was a first-year special education elementary teacher in a public, 6A KS school district. Participant 3.5 was an elementary music teacher in a public, 4A KS school district.

Defining academic success.

Participant 3.4 offered his initial definition of academic success, and framed it within his work as a special education teacher:

> Since I'm not like a classroom teacher— I support classroom teachers— I see student academic success as being like, as long as a student is progressing, they're still learning something. It may not be a mastery of a topic or a subject, but they found something in it that they can relate to, they can connect with. And so that's how I've had, that's how I look I've had with my students this year, just because how I know everything else has been crazy in their lives.

Participant 3.4 went on to share that for many of his students, "it's been rough at home," so one of his goals was ensuring that school was a "safe, fun place." He also noted that "hybrid was

terrible," and so he didn't want that to be a deterrent for them. That was his biggest concern during his first year of teaching.

Participant 3.1 built upon Participant 3.4's definition of academic success, noting that in her photo imaging class, student growth was a key marker of how she defined academic success:

> While they are by no means creating, award winning photography, they are really progressing in their photo composition, skills and understanding. And as long as they're being creative and showing me even just in the slightest that they're understanding the concept, then that's success. … As long as they are progressing, and just showing understanding and growth in each of their photos, then I count that as success.

Similar to Participant 3.4, Participant 3.1 valued their academic growth as an important factor in determining academic success.

Participant 3.3's perspectives on academic success mirrored those of Participants 3.1 and 3.4. He reflected on the idea of individual growth rather than depending on standardized content mastery as a key marker of student academic success:

> As far as academic success, it's different from kid to kid, absolutely different. Some of them, it's a win if they're there and getting stuff turned in right now, especially if they're at different levels. Some of them missed two semesters now, if they were online last semester, and then missed spring break, and never came back from spring break. And you're dealing with kids at very different levels, so progression on an individual scale, is really the only way that I can track academic success, because it's not fair to shove a square peg through a round hole.

Participant 3.5 echoed the group's perspectives of the value of individual academic growth, and framed it within the context of the music classroom:

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I agree with what everyone else said, before me, especially in music. And at the third, fourth, fifth grade level. I mean, fully understanding that some of the students absolutely love music, and it's their favorite and others that if they would give anything to not be there, like I totally understand that. So for me, it's just progress if they're participating, if they're involved in the musical experiences.

Participant 3.5 added the element of personal interest as a factor in how to define academic success; therefore, if a student participated in her class, even if it was not their passion, was a sign of success. Participant 3.2 related to Participant 3.5's definition, sharing that "half of my kids hate math." Therefore "building their confidence" and having them show individual growth was a key "part of academic success" for Participant 3.2.

Challenges in helping students achieve academic success.

When the researchers asked about the challenges the participants faced in helping their students achieve academic success, Participant 3.3 stated:

Can I start by kind of giving the simple answer of COVID and quarantines— it just kind of handcuffs you from the jump. But as far as getting academic success, I think this year is unique in the sense of, it's not the average school year. Kids missed some sports, they missed some stuff that would have otherwise, kind of extrinsically motivated them to get their stuff, and that we … don't have the luxury of this year. So I think my genuinely biggest challenge to having a kid be successful in my class is getting stuff turned in, or just doing it in the first place.

For Participant 3.3, COVID-19 affected all aspects of students' educational experiences, from academics to extracurriculars. Traditional extrinsic motivations, such as sports and activities, were gone in the face of COVID, making it more difficult for teachers to engage students.

Participant 3.1 also mentioned that motivation was a major challenge during her first semester of teaching:

> One challenge that I have faced is just student motivation. … We have in-person class in the morning, where they're in a homeroom with me from like, 8 to 11. And then they go home, and then they have zooms with all of their classes. And they've told me that they will just turn their zoom on like a podcast, and listen to it in the background. … But I think that because they're online, they just don't feel like school is real right now, and so I had so many students failing first semester.

The shift from in-person to virtual learning has been a challenge for Participant 3.1's students. The students' admission that they listen to their classes "like a podcast… in the background" is suggestive of how they adapted their previous technological literacy practices to their new educational setting, albeit with varying degrees of success and engagement.

Participant 3.5's biggest challenge was building relationships with students. Her school adopted a school schedule where she sees each group of students once every five weeks. This was done to reduce interactions, and therefore reduce exposure points to COVID. She noted:

> Having students not come in-person, I mean, trying to learn the remote students' names, and the personalities. It's been nearly impossible for me, and I feel terrible, because some students will come on, or another teacher will mention a name to me, and I'll have no idea who they're talking about, which is so unlike me. I'm a very personal person.

The lack of consistent face-to-face interactions with students made it difficult for Participant 3.5 to connect with students and to learn more about them.

While Participant 3.2 was not able to answer this question due to technical issues, Participant 3.4 offered this perspective:

One of the big things that I struggled with was probably in the first semester, we were

still hybrid. And we had four teachers that started the year and then one quit in the

beginning of October. So I took over half of that teachers' caseload. And then trying to

build the relationships with those students halfway through, while already having a

schedule with my students that I already had, was just mind blowing, and I was so

stressed out about it.

Participant 3.4's reflection addressed the fact that the pandemic worsened teacher shortages. Yet, once the district was able to hire a new special education teacher, Participant 3.4 expressed that he was less stressed about the workload. That said, Participant 3.4 still had to adapt to new routines and expectations as his school transitioned from a hybrid model to fully in-person.

Teacher measures to help students achieve academic success.

Despite the various challenges posed by COVID, the participants shared the measures they took to help students achieve academic success. Participant 3.1 indicated that she helped them "achieve academic success" by giving "them a lot of freedom and creativity." She found that by "giving them the flexibility to create," she "has helped them be really successful" in her content.

Participant 3.4 shared how he created a safe space in which he could build relationships with students, making school a place where they would want to be. Participant 3.3 elaborated on this idea, stating:

I think in a way, we've been blessed by COVID, the kids that are in-person now, half of

them are more excited than ever to be in the classroom, they get to be out of the house. And

this has kind of become an odd blessing in a way to have those kids that are just incredibly

excited to be there. And the other half of its me trying to get kids excited to be there. And I

think my consistency is the biggest thing that I can add to their academic success.

Participant 3.3 discerned that the challenges that COVID-19 has posed, namely that students have not been able to be in-person consistently since March 2020, was also a key reason for many students to be "excited" to be in school. What once had been a given assumption of schools—that their doors would always be open—was no longer a fact that could be taken for granted.

For Participant 3.2, she changed her instructional practices to better align with the learning modality of her students (e.g. in-person or remote). For her in-person students, that included active participation in playing and experimenting with instruments. She shared how she adapted this for her full-remote students:

> Now with the remote students that's a little bit more difficult. So trying to help them achieve the success would be just my method of how I'm presenting the info or the experience. So I chose to not have my [remote] students… zoom in with me while I have their in-person peers. So what I do is I just pre-record the lessons and then they're able to see me and kind of be with me.

For Participant 3.2, pre-recording lessons for her remote students allowed them to work through the content at their own pace, without her being distracted in trying to deliver instruction in two modalities simultaneously.

Participant 3.5 addressed the measures she took to handle challenges in helping students achieve academically. Specifically, as she found relationship building to be a struggle, she did the following:

> I try to be a lot more personal in the videos that I'm recording for them— a lot more like incorporate more of my personality. And then whenever I am on zooms with them, or I do

get to see them in-person, just being really conscious and making a strong effort to make

them feel seen and noticed.

Participant 3.5 actively works to get to know her students as a means of helping them achieve

academically.

Demonstrating teacher impact on student-learning growth.

We asked the participants to reflect upon how they would demonstrate their impact on student-

learning growth by providing 2-4 artifacts that they would show their principal to illustrate their

impact. Table 4.4. outlines their responses:

Table 4.4. Focus Group 3 Artifacts

Participant 3.1	Participant 3.2	Participant 3.3	Participant 3.4	Participant 3.5
Newspaper Layouts: She would use various student-created newspaper layouts to show how students improved in their skills.	**Group Work:** She would use the work from students' collaborative efforts to show student-learning growth.	**Simulations:** He would have students engage in historical simulations and capture their learning from their involvement.	**Student Reflections:** He would document students' perceptions of their academics as a means of having them take ownership of their learning.	**Student Practices:** She would use examples of her students' ability to play an instrument by documenting their practices.
Photographs: She would use student photographs to show their growth in concepts such as the "rule of thirds."	N/A	**Student Writing:** He would use student writings about history. to show their learning growth	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	**Journals:** He noted that having students write about current		N/A

Participant 3.1	Participant 3.2	Participant 3.3	Participant 3.4	Participant 3.5
		events, and their connections.		

COVID-19 and participants' teaching identity.

For Focus Group 3 participants, all participants indicated that teaching through COVID posed a significant hardship; however, it has also allowed for opportunities for growth. Participant 3.5 stated:

> I think for me, honestly, it's been like, I've hated COVID. But it's kind of nice with teaching, because it's given, it's kind of given me the permission to throw out what my expectation is of what I should be doing. And I'm just, I feel free to totally try out something new.

While COVID-19 provided hardships for new teachers, Participant X, this has also presented the opportunity to try new things. The researchers noted that all the participants were nodding their heads to this sentiment. Participant 3.1 added to the discussion:

> I kind of went into the school year with a curriculum that I had kind of planned out. But then because we were hybrid with my photo imaging class, we weren't able to teach actual camera function, like how the camera itself works. So I had to switch so many things up. And I was like, why don't we just have fun with it. And so now I'm focusing more on smartphone photography, and how they can have fun with their phones, and still take really good quality images.

Participant 3.1 adapted her curriculum to use the technologies readily available to her remote students. While she was not able to continue with the standard curriculum, she felt "the freedom and opportunity to explore." Participant 3.3 went on to describe how the pandemic has shaped him as a teacher:

I think it's made me a better teacher. It has forced creativity that I never aspired to have previously. And if you told me a year ago today [that] … it would have been pre-spring break before the world went insane, that I was going to teach on Zoom full of 20 sophomores about World War I, I would have laughed in your face. But I think, honestly, it's forced me to be more creative in a way that I never would have without this pandemic.

Participant 3.4 noted that not only are teachers having to adapt, but the system as a whole had to adapt. He observed that while "it's been more stressful on teachers, they're able to do what they need to do" to meet students' needs. Participant 3.2 captured the group's conversation, noting that "it has given me more freedom to try stuff and fail." For this group, their experiences through COVID informed their teaching identities by giving them the freedom to try, to fail, and to experiment to reach their students where they are at.

Focus Group 4

This focus group was conducted by me and a fellow researcher. We began by informing all participants of the purposes of the study and the focus group protocols. We also expressed that all information gathered from the focus group would be used for research purposes, and that any subsequent papers and publications would maintain their confidentiality. Focus group 4 had three participants. Participant 4.1 had taught previously; however, this was his first year as a traditionally licensed elementary teacher. He taught in a public 2A KS school district. Participant 4.2 had also taught previously; however, this was his first year as a traditionally licensed elementary teacher in a public 2A KS school district. Participant 2.3 was a first-year elementary teacher in a public 2A school district. In addition, all participants of Focus Group 4 were graduates of the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program.

Defining academic success.

For participant 4.1, academic success is defined by the individual students' strengths and areas for growth:

> I've got a classroom of 14 right now. … I've got a wide array of students, academically, if you will. So I don't look at really the whole class as a whole. I'm looking at more individuals, and where they're striving to go, and what they're doing for their own personal academic success. You know, I tell my students all the time: the only one that you're competing against is really yourself. And let's strive for your best and you're the only one that can define that as well.

For Participant 4.1, it was important to measure student growth based on their academic journey, not by comparing them to their peers. Participant 4.2 expanded upon this individualized approach to defining student academic success, explaining that understanding the entire child is important in defining those measures. He shared how he does do in order to guide his students towards stronger social outcomes:

> One of the biggest things and the reasons why I came into teaching, especially within my hometown, is because of the different socio-economic demographics associated with the classroom, not only this classroom, but the entire school district. I think in order for you to be able to achieve academic success, you have to, at first, understand who the child is as an individual, each one of the social, emotional, maybe intellectual levels in order for you to understand how to teach them. So for me, definitely defining the student academic success would be for them to come out of the current/previous situation they are in in and put them in into a better environment.

Much like Participant 4.1, Participant 4.2 also sees the need to more fully know the individual student, and in doing so, helping them develop skills that lead to more equitable outcomes for students. For Participant 4.3, academic success was aligned to helping students understand the key concepts and to master the academic standards that will lead to their success.

Challenges in helping students achieve academic success.

Participant 4.1 indicated that his biggest challenge was in meeting the differentiated needs of his students. He stated:

> The biggest challenge I've had this year is just having that wide array of student achievement from the past. I actually have a couple of my students are actually getting ready to be tested for the gifted program. And then I have, you know, all the way down to I have a couple students that actually are at a first-grade reading level, and they're in third grade. So that's been difficult, but it's been a fun challenge for myself, to try to discover how to have all these students with that wide array of, of academic background.

Participant 4.2 had a similar challenge, as his students also have a wide range of abilities, needs and talents. Yet, his biggest challenges were behavioral. He shared:

> But overall, the way I look at one of the biggest challenges that we have a lot of around here, I will say is behavioral issues, not so much academically. And that can be an impediment on the academic environment, and how well they're going to progress or how bad they're going to regress. And so as a result of that, I realized that it's better to take that personal approach with students. Like I said previous, it is understanding who they are. If you hit the core, then you can easily make your target and have that success with them eventually.

Participant 4.2 recognized that building relationships with students, and taking a personal approach, was the best way to address behavioral issues.

Participant 4.3's challenges in helping student achieve academic success stemmed from a lack of instructional support:

I would say I have very little support. I have worked with our special ed. department …, but it's been challenging. But I think that it's made me a stronger teacher because, there's lots of things going on in these kids' lives. We are a lower socio-economic district. And that in itself [means] the kids face a lot of difficulties. We have a lot of families in distress.

Participant 4.3 highlighted the importance of institutional support systems to assist teachers in addressing challenges. She dealt with challenges beyond her own teaching practices, specifically poverty, and having students and families facing hardships and distress, and she needed support from her district in order to address her students' needs.

Teacher measures to help students achieve academic success.

Focus Group 4 participants shared the various ways in which they helped students achieve academic success. Participant 4.1 shared that one key measure he implemented were pod groups. He explained the advantages for his students:

[I'm] so thankful that our principal, here this last nine weeks, has allowed us to go back to pod groups. So it allows me to place the students in groups where they're not only helping one another, but they're really helping themselves to help explain the concepts even further than even I can, you know. I tell them all the time: you're probably a better teacher than I am just in the fact that you're able to help one another in their learning.

While many districts restricted the use of collaborative groups in classroom as a mitigation measure for COVID, being able to implement pod groups meant that Participant 4.1 could rely on student-centered approaches to better engage students.

Participant 4.2 also shared how he creates an environment that helps students achieve academic success:

One thing that I really work on is building relationships. … You're more effective if you're able to build a relationship with the student on a personal level, before an academic level. I've noticed that I've had students that come in with a third-grade spelling and reading level and end up leaving, you know, going at least to fourth grade. That's not ideally, you know, what we want, but at least we have a long-lasting impression on their lives, so that goes hand-in-hand with students achieving academic success.

For participant 4.2, building relationships with students opened the door for him to help them reach academic success. As a fifth-grade teacher, he indicated that having his students read at a fourth-grade level by the end of the year is not ideal; however, that growth, coupled with the long-lasting impression of a positive teacher-student relationship leads to academic success.

Participant 4.3 started teaching mid-year. She shared what she did to facilitate academic success:

I just started at the beginning of the book and retaught everything. And I had to because they had not mastered it; they didn't understand the concepts. So that was a challenge. … We check for understanding all the time. We do a lot of group work. I also have them do a lot of they do the work on the board publicly, we take turns.

Participant 4.3 recognized that she needed to reteach content her students achieve academic success by reteaching concepts, allowing them to work collaboratively, and providing opportunities for them to share their work.

Demonstrating teacher impact on student-learning growth.

We asked the participants to reflect upon how they would demonstrate their impact on student-learning growth by providing 2-4 artifacts that they would show their principal to illustrate their impact. Table 4.5. outlines their responses:

Table 4.5. Focus Group 4 Artifacts

Participant 4.1	Participant 4.2	Participant 4.3
Student-led Conferences: He used samples from student-led samples with parents to show student-learning growth.	**Formative Testing:** He used district-level formative assessments to chart student learning growth and adapt instruction.	**Standardized Testing Data:** She used testing such as STAR reading to help gauge student ability.
Benchmark Tests: He used benchmark testing to help establish how students did at the beginning of the year and at the end.	**Social Emotional Data:** Students reflect upon how they are doing emotionally upon entering 5th grade, and they chart their emotional well-being throughout the year.	**Writing Samples:** She showed their growth through the use of their writings throughout the year.
N/A	**Student Work Samples:** Student work samples, and student reflections on their work, helped him demonstrate areas of strength and growth.	**Anecdotal Record:** She kept a daily log of what they do in class, and how students are doing.

COVID-19 and participants' teaching identity.

In thinking about how COVID-19 affected his teaching identity, Participant 4.1 expressed how the pandemic has made him reevaluate what is important:

Today, my mentor teacher and I [were discussing how] a year ago, none of us didn't even know what was going to be going on. And looking forward to the last nine weeks, and, [getting] to enjoy the kids and boom, that was all changed. So I don't know, it's just really, it's made me more sensitive to individual needs, and just really not to take things for granted. In the classroom, it's okay to take those moments to, like [Participant 4.2] and [Participant 4.3] said, build those relationships. Because I didn't— we didn't get— we didn't get those relationships that we could continue to develop. A year ago, you know, it was taken from us, and we didn't know. So that's what's probably changed me the most is just to take those moments and really build those relationships.

Participant 1's reflection highlights the unknowns that came with COVID, and how quickly the school-year, and every traditional aspect of school "was taken" from them. In light of this, he saw a renewed value in building relationships that can help them sustain the changes brought by the pandemic.

Participant 4.2 shared how COVID-19 brought tragedy to him and how he has persevered:

It has changed [me] on a personal level, but also, I mean, professionally. Unfortunately, you know, I did, I lost my mother to COVID in July of last year. And it's, it's been something that I had to kind of prepare myself for the school year with everything reopening. … I'm the oldest of five, and we don't have any parents anymore. So I've taken that … to look at my students and tell them: I'm still standing, you know, and I'm thankful that my sister is actually in the school district, and she's a para. And so them seeing that real life, you know, to be able to withstand the storm and putting that connection with it.

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As I listened to Participant 4.2's story, I was reminded of the immense toll that COVID-19 has taken, not just on schools, but on the people within them—the students, administrators and teachers who have lost loved ones, who have struggled with their own health, who have navigated two and a half academic school years again a multitude of obstacles.

Participant 4.3's reflection also emphasized the emotional toll of COVID, specifically on her students:

>…dealing with the students' fears of when they had to quarantine. None of our students in our school actually were sick, but you know, they were close contacts. So when they had to go home, dealing with that fear of what was going to happen, how long they were going to be out— that was that was a challenge at first. We had several students out for a month because of close contact so that in itself was hard for the students that were still in school to miss the classmate… It just made us all more aware of the fragility of what we're doing, going school, because there was fear for a long time that we could be closed down any minute.

An appreciation for building relationships, and helping their students through fear and loss were defining elements of how COVID-19 shaped their teaching identities.

Focus Group 5

This focus group was conducted by me and a fellow researcher. We began by informing all participants of the purposes of the study and the focus group protocols. We also expressed that all information gathered from the focus group would be used for research purposes, and that any subsequent papers and publications would maintain their confidentiality. Focus group 5 had three participants. Participant 5.1 was a first-year fifth grade teacher at a public 2A KS school district. Participant 5.2 was a first-year kindergarten teacher in a public 6A Kansas school

district. Participant 5.3 was a high school agriculture teacher in a public 3A Kansas school district.

Defining academic success.

Participant 5.1 framed academic success as students showing growth in their learning, a process that is facilitated by his ability to build relationships with his students:

> I think the big thing for me and focus of mine is, first of all, …. making that personal connection with them. So they feel comfortable, where they're at. And then just academically, just making sure that they're building off of each day. So similar to how I said, I'm trying to build myself each day, you know, work on something this day, if they get it this day, then we can go to the next step. You know, if they don't quite get it, reinforce it that next day, and just, you know, continuing to show growth.

Participant 5.2 defined academic success by what students are able to grasp, noting that if "they're doing well, then they're becoming successful." She also indicated that if students show effort, then "we're on the road to success."

Like Participants 5.1 and 5.2, Participant 5.3 also conceptualized academic success as student growth. He observed:

> Whenever I look at a student's academic success in my classes, I tried to look at it from the standpoint of where they were, where they are at the end of a unit or at the end of the lesson. It was to see if they're better than where they were.

Participant 5.3 also pointed out that "students learn differently," so he differentiated to "meet students at their level."

Challenges in helping students achieve academic success.

Participant 5.1 shared that the biggest challenge this year has been the effect of COVID on his classroom:

Well, I would say I guess, this year, the biggest challenge, I would say, is obviously, maybe COVID. Going towards academic success, … I've been fairly lucky, I haven't had kids out of the classroom too much. I pretty much had my full class in the room the whole time. But I have had two online students the entire year. And I think it's just, it's when they're not in the classroom,… , you can't necessarily see exactly what steps they're taking. …I think that's a big challenge, just trying to reach them and see where they're at each and every day.

For Participant 5.1, a major challenge has been providing support to students online since he is unable to see how they are working through a problem.

Participant 5.2 agreed with Participant 5.1, stating that her biggest challenge this year was COVID-19, and its effect on her students, many of whom were also struggling at home:

Okay, so for sure, COVID. But my kids come from lower socioeconomic situations. And so I had some kids who never showed up to zoom. I had some kids who they would come, but they would not do their work-- they have SeeSaw assignments right now, they just haven't done them. And then even trauma, trauma is a really big thing for some of my kids in. … And so my kids who struggle are definitely struggling, but it's more than, like grades, it's home life, it's different things like that.

The everyday struggles that Participant 5.2's students faced were compounded with COVID, making it harder for her students to engage academically in a virtual environment.

Participant 5.3's challenges also mirrored those of Participants 5.1 and 5.2, although he added behavioral issues:

Like the others have said COVID obviously is a big challenge this year, with students

being gone all the time, quarantined online students, not being able to build relationships

like normal, and lack of motivation from students. But besides COVID I guess one of the

biggest issues I faced this year, some behavior issues with a lot of my younger students

have sometimes been hard to deal with that make it hard to engage them. So I've tried

working on building relationships with those students, working with mentor teachers just

to get ideas of things I could do to help… . And then there's some classes were also has

some issues like Participant 2 mentioned, where I have some diverse students where I

have like some English language learners, that don't necessarily have someone in the

class with them at all times… . And then students have various forms of trauma that I had

to work with.

Participant 5.3 described the challenges he faced when dealing with behavior issues, particularly

among his younger students, as well as the struggles he faced not having proper support for his

English Language Learners (ELLs). Like Participant 5.2, he also worked with students who had

experienced trauma, which posed challenges for his ability to help students meet academic

success.

Teacher measures to help students achieve academic success.

Despite the challenges that COVID posed for the participants, they all shared ways in

which they helped students achieve academic success. Participant 5.1 noted that, despite COVID

making it harder to have students work in groups, he was able to implement small groups, which

"helped them build each other up and be successful." He also shared that his school's new

English Language Arts curriculum has "a lot of tools and strategies" that helped his students

understand the curriculum. Participant 5.2 also indicated that her school placed restrictions on

group sizes; however, she implemented guided reading with her Kindergarteners, and differentiated their work based on their skill levels. Participant 5.3 concurred with the other participants, noting that the main way he helped students achieve academic success was through "differentiation and meeting students at their level."

The participants also shared other measures they took to help their students, specifically as it pertained to their students' social and emotional well-being. Participant 5.1 indicated how he changed his diction when referring to assessments in order to help his students:

[I do] not always call it an assessment because I have several kids in my class that have test anxiety, very high test anxiety. So, you know, making them maybe feel it's more just a regular assignment. But then I can still use that to see what they're getting throughout their lessons and what improvements they're making.

By being sensitive to his students' anxieties, Participant 5.1 was able to gather more meaningful data about his students' abilities, and see how they were growing.

Participant 5.2 also shared how she met her students' emotional needs by reaching out to other professionals, including the school counselor and social workers, to ensure her students have access to resources they needed. Participant 5.3 stated that building relationships with his students was instrumental in his ability to help them achieve academic success. He also noted "connecting kids to resources" as an important component of ensuring their well-being and academic success. Participant 5.3 cited his own ability to seek resources, specifically the assistance of mentor teachers, in helping him navigate his first-year challenges.

Demonstrating teacher impact on student-learning growth.

We asked the participants to reflect upon how they would demonstrate their impact on student-learning growth by providing 2-4 artifacts that they would show their principal to illustrate their impact. Table 4.6. outlines their responses:

Table 4.6. Focus Group 5 Artifacts

Participant 5.1	Participant 5.2	Participant 5.3
ELA Curriculum Reports: His ELA curriculum included online resources that include various formative assessments.	**Quarter Assessments:** She compared formative scores from quarter to quarter to show growth.	**Animal Science Research Project:** This project allowed Participant 5.3 to see how his students have grown in "thinking about research and agriculture."
Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS): His district use DIBELS as a way to assess student literacy skills.	**Report Card:** She kept track of developmental/academic milestones appropriate for kindergarten on report cards.	**Welding Skills Sheet:** He kept track of approximately 30 different welding skills and how students have progressed in becoming proficient at those skills.
Math Exit Tickets: He used exit tickets to assess how students are doing.	**Letters and Sounds Recognition Form:** She kept track of her students' ability to recognize letters and corresponding sounds.	**Course Competency Profiles:** He shared with students the course competencies and charts their growth based on these profiles.

COVID-19 and participants' teaching identity.

For Participant 5.1, the COVID-19 pandemic required that he consider aspects of teaching that he never had to think about before. He noted:

The biggest thing is you just had to think of things that you never thought you'd have to think of… . And I think, you know, there's more frustrated those days that are, it's frustrating things that aren't even because of your students or anything like that. It's just, you know, I wish I could do this. I wish I could do that. And you can't right now, unfortunately. But I think at the same time, that as a first-year teacher, not only have we

had the learning curve of being a first-year teacher, but we've had to do that while battling COVID as well. So I think we've learned more than normal first-year teachers. … from September to now in March, I feel like I've grown so much as a teacher. I've learned so many different things, had to do things, so many different ways, that it's just opened my eyes up to a lot of things that I had never thought of. And opportunities to use different things, different methods that I just probably wouldn't have thought of before. And so I think those are big things and just continuing to learn every single day, like I said earlier, and I know I'll take a lot from this year, not only just from teaching, but having to deal with COVID. I've taken a lot from it already. And I'm sure I'll take a lot more things in next two months as well.

The concept of "growth" was also central to Participant 5.2's sense of teaching identity as a result of her experiences in COVID:

I say it's made me tougher, like tougher skinned… You just have to do it. And that's kind of where our school building is. You just need to get it done. It has to be done. ... So I think it just made me tougher. I'm not gonna say I'm more organized, because I don't feel like that's true at all. But, I will say that I noticed time more. So, I'm trying to be on it, trying to make sure that we're getting all our minutes in. I guess COVID has stretched me a little further than I thought my first year would actually go. So I'm sure I'll keep that, because being stretched is good.

Participant 5.2 described the growth she made as a teacher as "being stretched" and thus she feels that it has made her tougher—more able to handle what has to get done.

Participant 5.3 offered a different perspective on the effect of COVID on his students' opportunities for learning outside the classroom, and the lessons he's learned in how to adapt:

As a Career in Tech Ed. teacher, we have a huge CTSO, Current Technical Student

Organization, component to our curriculum. For Ag., it's FFA. And this year's really

made me realize how important those opportunities are for students to get them outside of

school, to practice leadership and career development events. And you know, kids have

not had those opportunities this year. So I kind of see the lack of motivation that they're

experiencing, and it's hard as a teacher, when you can't give them that consistency. I can't

work with them outside of school because normally as an Ag. teacher, I'd work hours

upon hours outside of school, the school day with students, so I can't build those

relationships, and give them those opportunities. But kind of on the flip side of that, I

think it's made me think more about what I teach in my classroom with not having some

of those opportunities. It makes you rethink a lot of what we teach because … this the

way it's always been done, but we didn't really have that option this year.

Participant 5.3's reflection on how COVID-19 shaped his teaching identity centered on what his

students lost due to COVID (i.e., the ability to engage in activities outside of school, motivation,

etc.), and in turn his role in cultivating those experiences within his own classroom.

Focus Group 6

This focus group was conducted by me and a fellow researcher. We began by informing

all participants of the purposes of the study and the focus group protocols. We also expressed

that all information gathered from the focus group would be used for research purposes, and that

any subsequent papers and publications would maintain their confidentiality. Focus Group 1 had

three participants. Participant 6.1 was a first-year music teacher in a 4A public school KS

district. Participant 6.2 was a first-year elementary teacher in a public school district, out-of-

state. Participant 6.3 was a first-year Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) teacher in a public 5A school district in KS.

Defining academic success.

For Participant 6.1, academic success was contingent on a student's ability to understand the content (i.e., music). She shared:

> I would define academic success as students understanding how to play their instruments and get a good sound on their instrument, even if they are working to do that physically understanding the process. Another huge component of it would be music literacy, understanding how to read music, and understanding what the symbols are, and notation and so forth. And so if they're able to understand and perform those aspects, I would consider that as being successful for them in my class.

While Participant 6.1 framed academic success by a students' mastery of the content, she also emphasized the importance of working through the process acquiring that competency with the content.

Participant 6.2's definition of academic success expanded upon the idea of learning as growth:

> First and foremost, defining student academic success, I think really, [it] starts with growing growth… You know, I'm learning these students, and I don't have a history with them. And so I started off basically just looking for areas where there are struggles, and then how I target that is, you know, seeing where they're trending.

Participant 6.2 saw growth in student outcomes as a sign of academic success. Being able to document growth required that he identify areas for growth as a means of adapting instruction to better meet student needs.

Participant 6.3 noted that in FCS, she had students who were performing at "different academic levels," ranging from students who were "reading at a second third-grade level" to students who were gifted. Based on the wide range of academic levels, she defined academic success as follows:

> I would define academic student academic success by how well they are participating in class, whether they're answering questions, raising their hand and asking questions. Just participating in group work, I do a lot of group work. Whether they're turning in their work on time, and obviously, how well they're doing on their work. And then also how well they can perform tasks in my class, which is very hands-on: how well they can make something can they so a project, so the ability to actually perform a certain task.

Participant 6.3 identified student participation in class as a key indicator of student academic success, as well as their performance on the tasks they completed in class.

Challenges in helping students achieve academic success.

Our participants identified various challenges they've experienced in helping students achieve academic success. Participant 6.1 found that her biggest challenge was adapting to various learning models throughout the year. She explained:

> So I would say for me this year, and for our school district, we've been through several learning model phases... So just kind of a background, our elementary kids have been in person five days a week. And so we've been able to see the fifth graders the most consistently, which has been really helpful.... So being able to do that, it would have been much more challenging if they were in hybrid to be able to start an instrument, and we probably would have dealt with a lot more frustration in that regard. Our middle schoolers have largely been hybrid. So I've been seeing half the alphabet, two days a

week, the other half the other two, and then everyone was remote on Wednesdays, and

our high school was in the same boat. Our middle schoolers went back five days in

person, kind of midway through October. And then we had a huge spike in cases and they

had to go back to hybrid. And so that was a big challenge to face to, they had just gotten

in a routine of being back five days in person, it was only two weeks that we had them.

And so there were the academic challenges of going back to hybrid, but also the

motivational and emotional challenges of getting able to see all your friends, especially at

that middle school age group, and then having to be taken away again.

While never naming the COVID-19 pandemic specifically, her observation of the "spikes in

cases" that affected her district connect the changes in the learning models to the pandemic.

Additionally, she contrasted the learning model of her elementary students (e.g. fully in-person)

and that of her middle school students (e.g. hybrid model), indicating how hard it was for her

middle schoolers to transition back to only attending two days a week, after having the

opportunity to be in school five days a week. She cited the motivation and emotional challenges"

they experienced as a result of being away from their peers.

In response to Participant 6.1's challenges, Participant 6.2 offered an aspect of teaching

during COVID-19 that he has found particularly beneficial, despite the challenges: the routine

and order that COVID-19 protocols have engendered:

I'm ex-military. So when I tell you that I enjoy that a little bit of this COVID protocol in

regards to there's a certain type of order that's given throughout the day. Kids come in

knowing and it's really been a beautiful thing to see… I have fifth graders, you know,

borderline middle schooler so they know that when they come into the school learning

environment, they already know there's a certain expectation of them every day.

That said he noted that his biggest challenge has been engaging his students in learning:

> But on the flip side, I think what I've struggled with the most this year has really been the engagement piece. I'm confident in 100% is Social Studies, because I love it. I'm a Social Studies buff! … And I think there's something that I'm doing that sparks an interest in them, and they're excited because they see me excited. But then … there's been things that I felt like I tried to get them involved. But then sometimes, 75% of my class, or 85% are struggling parts with the strategies. So I feel like I slow my tempo down. [Then], I'm having students say: "Hey, you go so slow, … because, you maybe they're getting it. So it's finding the balance.

Participant 6.2 noted a lack of engagement in his students, and as a result, he struggled with pacing his instruction to differentiate for his students.

Similar to Participants 6.1 and 6.2, Participant 6.3 also cited challenges posed by transitioning from various teaching modalities (i.e., hybrid, full-remote, in-person, etc.), as well as engaging her students:

> So we have also been hybrid, to remote to only having our on-site— we have an on-site cohort that comes every single day. We're currently at 50%. So I see kids every other day. But I would say engagement is definitely one of the biggest challenges. I have tried pretty close to every single technology under the sun to get my kids engaged in class, getting them engaged with projects. Just like day-to-day, I use technology every day to get them to respond to me asking questions, getting them to engage. I have sent stuff home, like it being a hands-on class… We do a sewing project it is I teach a sewing class, that is literally what they took, take the class to learn. And so I make kits and they get sent home. So there's no reason that they don't have the materials to do the project.

Despite the various accommodations and adaptations Participant 6.3 made, including delivering

materials to her students' homes, she expressed how difficult it was to engage students to do the

work. She also cited differentiation as a major challenge:

…That has been a huge hoop for me to jump through. Because I went from my student

teaching placement, I didn't have students that were that low. In my classes, we had, they

had a separate class that they would take. And so that has been a big adjustment for me.

And it's just realizing that, okay, I'm going to have to create a whole entire different

assignment for them, or it's going to look similar, but it's going to be very different, and

knowing when I need to differentiate and working with other staff members, with my

instructional coach, working with the special ed. department, to figure out what I need to

do to best help my students, and working with admin as well.

During her first year of teaching, Participant 6.3 had to learn to differentiate her instruction in

order to help her students achieve academic success. Furthermore, she learned to work with other

educators to ensure she had the right resources to properly differentiate for her students.

Teacher measures to help students achieve academic success.

Participant 6.1 shared two important ways in which she helped students achieve academic

success. She cited her planning and preparation key components in helping students achieve

success:

The ways that I help them achieve is by choosing music that's going to help them learn

concepts in a sequence to prepare them as they go through our program. That's kind of the

blessing about teaching [grades] 5-12: we get to see them from beginning to end. And so

making sure that we're structuring each grade to help them progress.

When planning, she chose music that allows students to build upon skills in order to grow in their musical ability. Additionally, because she taught all music courses from fifth grade through 12th grade, she was able to structure coursework, overtime, to ensure growth from year to year. In addition to her planning and preparation, Participant 6.1 noted that she provided "opportunities for them to go above and beyond" by offering extra support. She did this before or after school, and by connecting her students to music groups in their community.

Participant 6.2 shared that differentiation is the primary method he implemented to ensure student academic success. He explained that differentiation is about "tapping in and getting to know your students, what suits them, and what type of learning styles might suit them or instruction to help them be successful." Participant 6.3 also cited knowing her students as an important part of her ability to help students achieve academic success. She shared:

> How I help students achieve academic success: what I would say is just meeting them where they are at, [and] figuring out what I have to do to help my students be successful in the way that they are going to be successful. And obviously, having a student at a third-grade reading level and a student at an eighth or ninth grade reading level looks a lot different for how they're going to be successful in my class. So meeting them where they're at, but also holding them to a high standard so that they're not constantly held at the same standard as everybody else.

Much like Participant 6.2, Participant 6.3 also believed that helping students achieve academic success required an understanding of how achievement looked differently for each student, based on their strengths and areas for growth.

Demonstrating teacher impact on student-learning growth.

We asked the participants to reflect upon how they would demonstrate their impact on student-learning growth by providing 2-4 artifacts that they would show their principal to illustrate their impact. Table 4.7. outlines their responses:

Table 4.7. Focus Group 6 Artifacts

Participant 6.1	Participant 6.2	Participant 6.3
Recording of a Performance: Despite limited rehearsals and opportunities to perform, Participant 1 would submit a recording of one of their performances to show they're still making music and still making progress on their skills.	**Practice Math Word Problems:** He indicated that at his last summative meeting, a majority of his students were struggling with math. He gave students a word problem to solve, looking at how they extract information for the problem in order to solve.	**Specific Unit Outcomes:** Since Participant 6.3 covered a variety of content, she would select various units to illustrate growth using the assessment outcomes.
Check-in Surveys: Every 4 to 6 weeks, Participant 6.1 sent her students a survey to gauge what students believe are their areas for growth, and to check in to see how they are doing or where they may be struggling.	**In-Class Hands-On Assignments:** He would use the work of his students on these projects to show how students are progressing.	**Student Writing:** As a "Literacy First" school, her building focused on literacy practices embedded throughout all content areas. She would use student writing samples to illustrate improvement in writing and knowledge acquisition.
Student Rewards: At the fifth-grade level, Participant 6.1 gives students ribbons to mark students' musical accomplishments, as they practice at home, as well.	N/A	N/A

COVID-19 and participants' teaching identity.

The participants were asked to reflect and share how the COVID-19 pandemic affected their sense of teaching identity and their teaching practices. Participant 6.1 offered the following reflection:

I think that it's helped me reaffirm how crucial the relationship aspect of it can be, especially in an elective class, that they're, they're choosing to take my class. And so I really want to take the time to get to know them, and understand their stories and where they're coming from. And I also took over for someone who had been there for a long time. And so, I knew that I was walking into those shoes as well. But just showing them that, you know, we're going to work hard, we're going to adapt. And even when we're faced with challenges, we're going to be resilient. And so I think all of us as teachers, first year teachers and experienced teachers have really tapped into our resiliency and gotten to the core of we do this, because we love our students, and we want our content to be something that improves their life and to provide them especially in these challenging times, something that brings them some light, and often dark situations that we have. So I think beyond the music and the notes and everything like that, that's really reaffirmed that that's the core of why I'm doing what I'm doing.

For Participant 6.1, the COVID-19 pandemic affirmed for her the importance of building meaningful relationships. She also realized the need to lead students through difficult times by fostering resilience when faced with challenges. She noted that for both first-year and veteran teachers, their students are their priorities, and that education has not seized to be important in the face of a global pandemic.

Participant 6.2 echoed Participant 6.1's sentiment of how COVID-19 has required teachers to be resilient. He reflected:

Prior to being a teacher, I was in the criminal justice sector for about 20 plus years. And when I tell you, I've done it all— from juvenile corrections, to prosecutor's office involving crimes, to a special agent, criminal investigations, white collar crimes, to

teaching at the collegiate level criminal justice— so with my coming into this, I've always known the ability to adapt at a situation. … So in COVID, I'm really so much more impressed with my colleagues, in particular my principal. Just for me, being a new teacher in this environment, a COVID environment, and just how awesome they've been and patient because I am a new teacher. … And I just think that's very impressive and commendable for them. … I'm learning in this moment. So I just feel like I can only… I don't know, it makes me smile. I just feel like I can only rise from this, I mean, get better. It's going to get better, because I'm trying so hard now to make it be. When this is behind me, I get to say I went in as a teacher under COVID and found ways to communicate and adapt.

Participant 6.2's prior lived experiences required adaptability and resilience, and he respected and admired his school's leadership. He recognized that one day, this pandemic will be over, and he would be able to claim that he started his profession under these circumstances, and he was able to grow from it.

Participant 6.3 shared a more somber, yet equally significant, observation of the effect of COVID-19 on her teaching identity:

I think that if you can get through this in your first year, you'll probably get through anything. But for me, especially, it's been difficult because I do have such a hands-on content. I had to figure out: okay, how am I going to teach kids how to show [their learning] when we started out with kids coming once every eight days. And so like, how do I teach a kid how to sew? How do I teach a kid how to cook when they may not even have flour in their house? So I think I've never been a person that is I guess I would say okay with being okay. … And so I am figuring out how to add a project to this class. And

now I'm going to have kids doing a different project at school than they are at home. And the remote students are doing a harder project than the kids that are coming every other day. And within this whole class, I actually have two independent studies students that are taking me for cooking. And so figuring out how to balance three products in one class, and then having two students that aren't even a member of the class. … And so figuring out how to make it as meaningful for them as possible. So whether that means I stay here till 5:30, figuring out a plan for my whole trimester because I decided our trimester started literally on Monday, and I decided to throw on my whole plan for it today. So yeah, not being okay with being I guess— I don't want to say mediocre— but being okay.

Given the hands-on nature of her FCS curriculum, Participant 6.3 found that it was difficult for her to be able to teach her content well when students were learning remotely. She had to learn to be okay with "being okay."

Grounded Theory: Exploration of Focus Group Data

Prior to moving into the second phase of research gathering via in-depth interviews of select participants, I analyzed the initial focus group data using grounded theory to determine patterns in responses. Specifically, I engaged in three processes: 1) opening coding, 2) axial coding and 3) selective coding. This allowed for me to see initial thematic patterns that guided the types of questions I posed in the subsequent in-depth interviews.

Open Coding

According to Given (2008), open coding is the process by which a researcher "break[s] down the data into segments in order to interpret them." This requires conducting "line-by-line analysis" to identify concepts, important details, etc. that come to inform the phenomenon being

researched, in this case first year teachers' experiences teaching through the COVID-19

pandemic (Given, 2008). In my initial analysis, I identified 47 open codes (see Table 4.8):

Table 4.8. Focus Group Open Codes

Focus Group Open Codes						
Knowledge Application	Knowledge Transferability	Learning through Play	Academic Growth	COVID-19	Learning Gaps	Pacing of Instruction
Remote Teaching/ Learning	In-Person Teaching/ Learning	Adapting the Curriculum	Parental Involvement	Student Apathy	Time Management	Zoom
Colleagues	Professional Development	Cleaning Protocols	Screen Guards	Social Distancing	Student Emotional Well-being	Hybrid Teaching/ Learning
Demonstrating Learning	Differentiation	Scaffolding Instruction	Student Motivation	Student Engagement	Fears	Turning in Work
Student Self-Assessment	Modeling Instruction	Freedom to Fail/ Experiment	Flexibility	Lost Instructional Time	Lost moments	Lost opportunities
Building Relationships	Creating Safe Spaces	Creativity	Student Behavior	Quarantines	Resilience	Lost Loved Ones
Trauma	Student Performance	Student Participation	Technology	Accepting Limitations		

These codes encompassed not only the participants' perceptions of their impact of student

learning, which was the primary purpose of the initial focus groups, but also the emerging crisis

of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on their first year of teaching.

Axial Coding

I employed axial coding in order to organize the open codes into categories, creating

connections among codes and allowing for recurring themes to develop. When defining the

elements of the participants' first-year teaching experiences, the following categories emerged:

1) Teaching Practices, 2) Teaching Values/Dispositions, 3) Teaching Challenges, and 4) Changes

to Teaching Environment. Table 4.9 illustrates how I've aligned each open code with a unifying

category:

Table 4.9. Focus Group Open Codes

Open Codes	Axial Codes
Instructional Practice	Teaching Practices
• Differentiation	
• Scaffolding Instruction	
• Reteaching	
• Pacing of Instruction	
• Adapting the Curriculum	
• Modeling Instruction	
• Technology	
• Creating Safe Spaces	
• Building Relationships with Students	
Assessment Measures	
• Application of Knowledge	
• Transferability of Knowledge	
• Academic Growth	
• Demonstrating Learning	
• Student Self-Assessment	
• Student Performance	
• Student Participation	
• Learning through Play	
• Turning in Work	
Teaching/Learning Modality	Teaching Environment
• Hybrid Teaching/Learning	
• In-Person Teaching/Learning	
• Remote Teaching/Learning	
• Cleaning Protocols	
• Masks	
• Screen Guards	
• Social Distance	
• Quarantines	
Loss	Teaching Challenges
• Lost instructional time	
• Lost moments	
• Lost opportunities	
• Lost loved ones	

Open Codes	Axial Codes
• Student Behavior	
• Student Motivation	
• Student Engagement	
• Student Apathy	
• Student Emotional Well-Being	
• Parental Involvement	
• Learning Gaps	
• Time Management	
• Pandemic Fears	
• Trauma	
• Meeting Needs of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students	
• Relationships with Colleagues	Teaching Values
• Professional Development	
• Freedom to Fail/Experiment	
• Flexibility "Wing it"	
• Increased Creativity	
• Problem-Solving Skills	
• Resilience	

These categories, while not exhaustive, comprise the complex array of experiences and values that came to define how participants perceived their first year of teaching and how they came to define what was most important to them as educators. The dashed lines are suggestive of the fluidity of these categories—each category is influenced by the others. Therefore, an examination of instructional practices cannot occur in isolation of changes in the teaching environment, the teaching challenges, or the values that teachers come to bear. That said the codes comprising each category share common characteristics that align to what participants *do* (i.e., Teaching Practices), the obstacles they face (i.e., Teaching Challenges), the environments they inhabit (i.e., Teaching Environment), and ultimately the values they embrace as educators (i.e., Teaching Values).

Summary of category: Teaching practices.

I delineated their teaching practices into two sub-categories: 1) Instructional Practices, defined as actions taken by the participants to teach and improve student outcomes; and 2) Assessments, defined by how the participants administered and/or interpreted various formal and informal assessments in order to assess student performance and to guide future instruction. When reflecting upon the instructional practices that impacted student academic success, participants in each focus group discussed the need to differentiate instruction and adapt their materials and/or pacing, particularly as a response to changes within their teaching environments due to COVI-19. Participants were expected to adapt their instructional practices to match the structural demands of teaching in both virtual and in-person environments.

Assessment practices encompassed both the activities, assignments and exams that participants would administer (refer to Tables 4.2-4.7), as well as the measures that they deemed most important in determining student academic success. Notably, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, participants often cited "growth" (sometimes noted as "progress" by participants) as a key measure, rather than focusing solely on mastery of the content. Participant 3.4's observation that "as long as a student is progressing, they're still learning something" aligned with participants across the focus groups, especially with the challenges posed by COVID-19, where students had "been off of school for an extra-long time" (Participant 1.1). Thus, while students' ability to understand and apply content was important, participants noted that attributes such as effort and participation were also important indicators for assessing students' academic gains.

Summary of category: Teaching environment.

Participants' instructional and assessment practices significantly affected by structural changes to their teaching environments due to the COVID-19 pandemic. First, all participants had their student teaching semester altered as they transitioned from in-person instruction to

remote instruction when school buildings were shutdown. Second, the changes in modalities

expanded as they entered their first year of teaching. Participants taught in one of three

modalities, sometimes transitioning from one to the other throughout the school year: In-Person

Teaching/Learning, Remote Teaching/Learning and Hybrid Teaching/Learning. In-Person

Teaching/Learning is considered the most traditional modality, and for this study is defined as a

teacher and students sharing the same physical space (i.e., the classroom) within a larger

educational setting (i.e., school building). Participants discussed how, despite being in-person,

significant changes altered their learning environments. These changes included the

implementation of more rigorous cleaning protocols and mask requirements, as well as situating

screen guards around desks. In addition, participants commented on social distancing protocols

that kept students apart throughout the school day.

A few participants engaged in remote and hybrid teaching/learning modalities. For the

purposes of this study, Remote Teaching/Learning is defined as a teacher and students sharing

the same virtual space via a video conferencing platform (i.e., Zoom). Hybrid Teaching/Learning

is a combination of in-person and remote modalities, in which the teacher, often situated in the

school setting, teaching students both virtually and in-person, and students alternate between

virtual and in-person learning based on their schedules. Participants found themselves adapting

their instruction and assessments not just to meet student needs, but also to account for the

dynamics of these various modalities, as they were expected to pivot between them as necessary.

In classrooms where the content is interactive in nature, these shifts posed serious challenges, as

shared by Participant 1.2 who tried to teach her preschooler how to use scissors over Zoom, or

Participant 6.3 whose FCS curriculum requires that students engage in a variety of hands-on

activities such as cooking and sewing.

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Summary of category: Teaching challenges.

In addition the challenges posed by restructuring lessons to pivot between different teaching/learning modalities, participants shared other challenges that they faced as first-year teachers: addressing student behaviors, motivation and engagement; attending to students' social-emotional needs; working through varying degrees of parental involvement; finding ways to target learning gaps and to differentiate for the increasingly varied academic needs of students with diverse backgrounds and experiences. These challenges align with the traditional challenges that first-year teachers faced prior to the pandemic (Ingersoll, 2003; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003).

Yet, a common thread among the focus groups was the immense sense of loss that they and their students felt as result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Loss was a pervasive sentiment, as participants shared what they had lost as a result of the pandemic. Participant 4.1 reflected on how the pandemic took away the relationships he and his cooperating teacher had built with their students, when student teaching abruptly shifted to remote. Having his classroom and students suddenly taken from them solidified in him the need to not take relationships with his students for granted—a value he carried into his first year of teaching. Participant 4.2 shared how he lost his mother just months after the COVID-19 pandemic was declared an epidemic. This loss solidified within him a deeper purpose in teaching—to impart on his students that they too can "withstand the storm" in their own lives, however hard it may be. Participant 3.3 reflected on how his students were experiencing the loss of sports and other activities and milestones that would have served as extrinsic motivators. These examples of loss were echoed in the stories of other participants, who despite being able to navigate their first year of teaching through

COVID-19, felt the magnitude of how the pandemic has changed their lives and the lives of their students.

Summary of category: Teaching values.

For the purposes of this study, I framed the concept of "values" as those beliefs that participants identified as being important to their work and/or to how they perceive themselves as teachers. Participants shared how starting their careers during the COVID-19 pandemic shaped how they perceived themselves as educators. They valued their colleagues and students and saw building those relationships as an important part of their practice. Several participants also noted that being first-year teachers during COVID-19 meant that they had to develop their problem-solving capabilities, as well as their creativity in response to the multitude of obstacles they faced.

Ironically, most of the participants noted that the COVID-19 pandemic was one of the worst things to happen to them as new educators; however, the pandemic was a mixed blessing, because it gave them the "freedom to fail"—the freedom to experiment and try new approaches to meet the educational challenges before them. For some of our participants, the pandemic had an equalizing effect, since veteran teachers were also learning and adapting alongside them. Participant 2.3 noted that this wasn't their "new normal—it is just [their normal]." As such, participants noted their resilience in knowing that while they may not do everything perfectly, they have the skillsets to adapt in moments of crisis.

Selective Coding

While the participants' teaching experiences varied, their experiences were all significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the common variable in the range of experiences they shared, COVID-19 did not simply affect key participants' teaching traditional

practices, environments, and values. COVID-19 significantly altered the spatial dynamics of

teaching and learning, which consequently changed the ways in which participants engaged in

their professional responsibilities, including, but not limited to: how they engaged students in

learning, assessed their academic progress, and built relationships with students and families, etc.

This central concept is illustrated in the figure below. COVID-19 became the common

denominator in the experiences that participants shared:

Figure 4.1. Representation of CAEP 4 Participants' First-Year Teaching Experiences
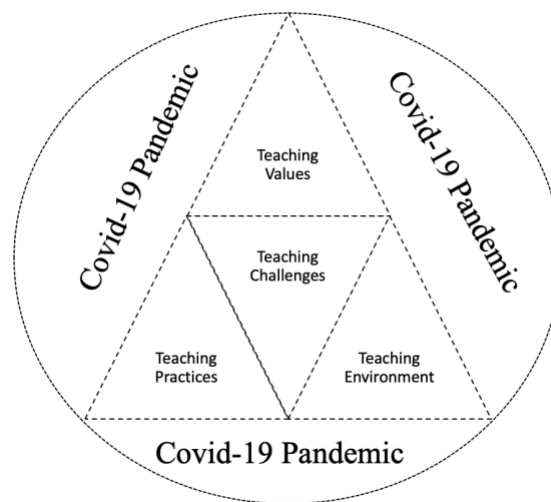
The category of "Teaching Challenges" permeates all other categories. While some of the

challenges presented existed independently of COVID-19, the COVID-19 exacerbated these

challenges, while also posing new obstacles. Furthermore, it is also important to revisit the

recurring value, as it pertains to this: the "freedom to fail"—the freedom to experiment and try

new approaches to meet the educational challenges before them. The pandemic not only

challenged our first-year teachers—it challenged entire education systems to consider how

education may need to look and function differently in response to the looming crises brought on

by the pandemic. As such, COVID's first-year teachers were at the forefront of this

reconfiguration of American education.

Interviews

From September to November 2021, I conducted two interviews with three participants from the CAEP 4 Cohort 2 focus groups. For these interviews, I chose three participants that met the following criteria:

- They were student teaching during March 2020, when schools across the country started to close their buildings due to the pandemic.

- They completed their first year of teaching during the 2020-2021 academic school year:

- Their first year of teaching was in a Kansas public school.

- They graduated from our undergraduate elementary education program.

Based on these criteria, I selected the following focus group participants: Participant 3.4, who taught in a 6A public school district, and Participant 5.2, who taught in a different 6A public school district; and Participant 1.1, who taught in a 4A public school district. I asked each participant to share with me a pseudonym that they would like for me to use in this study. Participant 1.1 indicated that he was okay with me choosing, so I chose Quincy as his name in this study. Participant 3.4 chose D.Mead as her name, and Participant 1.1 chose to go by Hattie. They were informed about the purpose of my research as an extension of the CAEP 4 study, as well as the fact that any identifying information such as the name of schools, districts, etc. would be redacted to ensure anonymity.

Due to the pandemic, I made the decision early on to conduct all interviews via Zoom. I recorded each interview, and transcribed them for analysis. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes to 80 minutes in length. As a thank you for their time and for sharing their stories with me, I gave each participant a $100 gift card at the end of our time together. This section is dedicated to framing their induction experiences during the 2020-2021 school year; however, I

include their reflections on how the pandemic continued to affect them as they entered their second year of teaching.

Interview #1: The Experiences of Three First-Year Teachers Navigating Teaching and COVID-19

The Focus Group data was instrumental in conceptualizing the various effects of the pandemic on novice teachers. While all of their experiences varied, the data pointed to an important central concept: COVID-19 significantly altered the spatial dynamics of teaching and learning, which consequently changed the ways in which participants engaged in their professional responsibilities. This concept was the premise from which I based my questions for these interviews (see Appendices A and B). Specifically, my questions were framed to gather more in-depth information about their teaching practices, environments, values, and challenges, and the impact of the pandemic on their first year of teaching.

Quincy

Quincy's Journey to Teaching: From Inspiration to Preservice Teaching

To start our conversation, I asked Quincy to share a little bit about himself—how to he came to teaching, as well as about his classroom and school. From there, he shared with me the story of how he came to be a teacher:

> Well, I guess I kind of knew I wanted to be a teacher in high school. At first, I thought I wanted to be a physics teacher, because I liked physics in high school. And then I took a class called interpersonal skills, which intermixes gen. ed. and special education students together. And that's where I kind of knew I wanted to be a special education teacher. And from then on, I was like: this is what I'm doing. And I haven't wavered at all.

Quincy shared a passion for special education, one that he carried with him through his teacher preparation program, through his first year of teaching. When the pandemic was declared in March 2020, Quincy was in the middle of student teaching, preparing to transition from his special education placement to his general education placement. Quincy student taught in the same building where he taught during his first and second year of teaching. About that experience, he recalled:

> I was student teaching here at [my current building]. ... And I remember it was right, like, right when we were getting ready to switch over because I was doing the special education part…, and I didn't want to go to the gen. ed. [placement]. I fell in love with the resource setting, working in small groups, one-on-one, and I didn't want to go over there. And so when schools shut down, everyone made the joke that I started COVID, because I didn't want to go over to the General Education room. So in some ways, I was almost kind of glad that it started so I didn't have to go over. But it was a struggle. Because during the like we had to do the portfolio and everything I was like, Well, I never taught in the gen. ed. setting.

Initially, the ramifications of the pandemic were short-term for Quincy, as his frame for understanding the pandemic's impact on education was narrowed to his experiences as a student teacher, and his immediate needs as a student (i.e., transitioning classrooms, finishing the portfolio, etc.)

However, over time, his concerns extended to his preservice classroom, and the challenges he faced trying to engage students in a virtual environment:

> I was very nervous to start off with, and then trying to do everything, on Zoom. And trying to work with kids, not in person, just on the computer and iPad. It is frustrating. I'd

say it's just trying to keep their attention and not have them do other things. Or not being

able to point on their paper that they have in front of them what they're supposed to be

doing, what they're supposed to be looking at. And trying to figure out new ways to teach

and give that same information was a struggle. It was just frustrating, especially being

that I was a student teacher. So trying to figure out all that stuff was just very, very

frustrating and time consuming, trying to figure out what was going to be best to do with

each student.

For Quincy, transitioning to a fully-remote educational environment—a setting that he had not

experienced as a preservice teacher prior to this point, posed a series of challenges he had not

anticipated, beyond the immediate needs of his placement: how to keep students' attention, how

to direct and show students how to approach the work when they were not physically present,

how to differentiate in a virtual environment. Being in a fully-remote environment intensified

teaching challenges.

This led me to ask Quincy a follow-up question, as I pondered how his students perceived

this transition from being in-person to fully-remote during his student teaching experience. He

shared:

The hardest thing for them least was being at home, but still having to do that school

piece and pay attention to the teacher while they were sitting in bed or on the couch.

That— the different environment and the different setting— I think was the biggest

adjustment and hardest thing for most of my students.

I connected with this observation, as I recalled my own experiences with my daughter who also

had to transition to full-remote in March of 2020. I recall her first zoom call as a kindergartener,

her blank stares to the small squares, each encapsulating her friends and teacher. I also recalled

the times I would observe student teachers, teaching through zoom, continuing with lessons as one child was jumping on a couch, or another was eating cereal on his couch. Yet, despite these challenges, there was one issue that Quincy did not have to contend with: attendance. In those early months of the pandemic, his students had strong attendance, a fact he attributed to parents also working from home, therefore being able to assist their kids in logging in, etc. He would see this change during the start of his induction year of teaching.

Quincy's Teaching Environments

Schedule.

Quincy started his first-year of teaching on a hybrid schedule. While districts varied in the portion of online and in-person work, hybrid schedules meant that students would spend part of their time working virtually and part of their time engaging in in-person learning. In turn, teachers would teach both virtually and in-person. Below is the schedule Quincy followed for the first semester of his first year of teaching:

Table 4.10. Quincy's Teaching Schedule

	Monday-Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday-Friday
Teacher Schedule	Quincy taught Group 1 (8 students)	All students worked online/at-home	Quincy taught Group 2 (4 students)
Students' Schedule	Group 1 attended in-person; Group 2 worked from home/online	All students worked online/at-home	Group 2 attended in-person; Group 1 worked from home/online

He explains what his typical week looked like under this schedule:

> For a lot of my online work, it was just one-on-one with students, I would say up to two-hour blocks, in my day were for the students who were online. So it was kind of weird. I had 12 students on my caseload last year, and eight of them were in person on Monday and Tuesday, and only four of them were in person, Thursday, Friday. So my Thursdays

and Fridays, were a lot of time with me on my computer with those setup times for students.

This schedule required that he teach within two distinct environments simultaneously—a virtual classroom and a physical classroom. His district utilized the video-conferencing platform, Zoom, to host their virtual teaching. Initially, the hybrid schedule was implemented by the district to reduce the number of students in school buildings at any given time, thus making it easier to social distance. After the winter break, Quincy's school transitioned back to in-person instruction, five days a week.

Virtual classroom.

For Quincy, teaching virtually did not pose any huge disruptions to his ability to manage his class, since his interactions were mostly one-on-one with students. He described his experiences with the virtual components of teaching:

> I tried to do the best I could with setting up times with them, that they were okay with—they didn't have zooms for their classroom teachers. And if their parents were home, and they knew about it as well, so that they could help remind students to get on. So the one-on-one piece was classroom management wasn't anything different than normal, because it was just me and the student. And we just talked about, like, [they would] show me their house … . And then we'd go on and work. And then they'd be like, Oh, I forgot to show you something. I was like, Okay, we got to get this done. And you can go show me the other room. So the one-on-one wasn't the classroom management was nothing that was a struggle. And then when they came to school, I noticed a lot of my students were more relaxed when they came to school, because they weren't here five days. And they were like, Okay, I'm only here for two.

His description of his virtual classroom illustrates the spatial dynamics of teaching virtually. The first observation is that parents played a significant role in students' engagement. When parents were present, they were able to assist their student in logging in, and they would communicate with Quincy via Zoom, as noted earlier. The second observation is that while his students were not distracted by occurrences within the traditional school setting, both the teacher and the students were inhabiting three spaces simultaneously—1) their immediate physical surroundings, 2) the virtual space of a classroom, and 3) the abstract, academic space of learning. The example he offered of his students wanting to show him their house, illustrates how the worlds of learning and of home converged. Thus, while traditional school distractions were not present, new distractions emerged (i.e., tours of students' homes). Yet, for Quincy, he did not view these as disruptive in nature. In fact, he noticed that overall students seemed more relaxed when they returned to school due to the fact that students were only in the buildings two days a week.

Physical classroom.

As a special education teacher, Quincy inhabits two spaces within his school building: offices designated for special education teachers to complete paperwork and for students who needed one-on-one support, and a traditional set of classrooms for whole group instruction. He explained the changes in the physical spaces, once students returned to in-person schooling, five days a week:

> I think in-person, the environment change was just on the fact that everyone was now not in collaborative groups in the classrooms. And that was something that a lot of our classrooms had, where they were in groups of three or four, and the students were right there and could ask for help. And now they had to be spread out so many feet away from each other. And there was less room in the classroom for students to get up and go split

up into groups or go to their Google classroom library, or they had a carpet space—like

there just wasn't room for it anymore. And that took away from those class building

activities where they could all go sit and do something together, which I think didn't

make for cohesive classrooms, as much as normal. There's a lot more of butting heads

between people or between students, because there just wasn't that cohesiveness of the

classrooms that there had been.

Quincy also shared insights into other changes to the physical educational environment,

specifically the sanitation protocols they were expected to follow to mitigate the spread of

COVID-19:

They said, every time the students would leave a classroom or move to a different

classroom for specials, or go to the bathroom, like, when they came out, they had to put

hand sanitizer on, and then when they came in, they had to take another thing a hand

sanitizer. I think they wiped down [everything]. We had to basically share a computer lab

between … seven grade levels and teachers. So for every group you had in there, you

were wiping down the tables, the chairs, the books, the pencils, everything. Just because

we were in such close quarters as well, that they wanted us to really be on top of that.

Factors such as social distancing and new sanitation routines, while necessary, altered how

teachers and students inhabited these educational spaces, specifically in their ability to interact

with one another.

Quincy's Teaching Practices

Instructional practice.

I asked Quincy to share how the pandemic affected his teaching practices, specifically as they applied to planning, content delivery, assessment, relationship building and classroom management. When it came to planning and delivery of instruction, he noted:

> For my planning and delivering instruction, I definitely changed from a, "let's do it in pieces, break down the lesson more and have more hands-on work" to "when they're here in-person, I'm going to give them as much content as possible." And when they're at home is when they have their independent work. Kind of didn't work out the greatest that way. But that's kind of how I shifted then. And then when we came back five days a week, I shifted back to more of doing the lesson with the students instead of just giving them all the information at one time, because I only had it for two days, and I didn't know if they're going to show up for the other three. So I just wanted to get them as much content as possible. And that's kind of how I planned for it to be that whole semester.

The changes that Quincy made to his planning and content delivery were connected to how his district restructured the school schedule to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Since his district moved to a hybrid schedule, where students attended two days a week, and worked remotely for three, he shifted his instructional practices so that on the days that they were in school, he would give them "as much content as possible," and he assigned independent work for the days students were home. Yet, he noted that "they just didn't do anything because they didn't know what to do." Since he wasn't there to answer questions or to model how to do the work, he found that they "kept falling farther and farther behind." Quincy's struggles were not unique in his building. He shared that "a lot of classroom teachers felt that way" and that the amount of missing work by the end of his first semester was astronomical.

Instructional assessment.

As a result, Quincy had to adapt his assessment approach. He could not rely on students completing all the work, so he had to be strategic about how he assessed the work they did produce:

> So what I did [was that] I worked with their classroom teachers [and] we went over, like, what did they do? And what are we still, like, what, what are the main ideas out of each group of assignments that were sent home, and what is the one or two assignments from each chapter, each lesson that is going to give you the best picture of what they can and can't do. … And like our catch up times at school, they would come and work in a small group, but we just tried to get those main assignments done. That gave them the main idea of the lesson or topic that they were working on.

Quincy also shared that the change to a hybrid schedule did not allow for a great deal of time to conduct formal assessments. He noted that:

> In the hybrid settings, we didn't have the time when students were here to do the formal sit down, take this test. We did do some of it. But it wasn't, was our top priority to do that formal assessment. At least for, for me, a lot of it was just informal stuff that we were doing during when I was giving them the content.

In addition, he shared that he used district level data and online software to help his students learn via Zoom, by sharing his screen and modeling. For Quincy, being able to see what the "students do on their own without any prompting, or without me having to write up on the board and showing them how to do it again, was how [he] got that grasp of what they really know."

Building relationships with students and parents.

For Quincy, the change to a hybrid schedule meant that he had more communication with parents/guardians, but not in the ways he had originally anticipated. He explained how he interacted with parents/guardians:

I think going into it, I thought it was gonna be a lot of sending emails to parents about stuff. And then that was gonna be my main form of communication. And then with being in hybrid, and the students being on Zoom, and the parents who were able to stay home like, that was our way of communicating. Me and the student would work for 30 minutes on something, and then Mom or Dad would get on for five, and we just talked about what do we need to… work on. … So with Zoom and working in hybrid, and the hybrid model, a lot of communication was done on Zoom between parents, so the emails were kind of taken out of it. Being able to see the parents face-to-face, because like they weren't allowed to come into the school at all, to be able to see them face-to-face and have those conversations, I felt like it built that built the relationships with parents a lot more than it ever had been.

A unique benefit of teaching via Zoom was that he had more contact with parents than he had anticipated. Parents/guardians were now a part of the classroom environment, which helped, especially in the first months of remote.

Yet, Quincy noted that as time went on, parents were less involved and students were attending less frequently. He expressed:

I think the biggest struggle and challenge was getting kids to show up. And I was only able to see them in person two days a week, because we were hybrid. And so getting kids to show up on Zoom was the hardest part for me, because a lot of the kids that needed it

the most didn't have the support at home to make them get on and do the homework, or even just listen to what was going on in the classroom.

When reflecting on the drop in attendance from his student teaching semester to his first semester of teaching, he observed that parents were less involved due to the fact that more parents were returning to work, and therefore were no longer able to be present to assist when students were online.

Yet, despite the challenges, Quincy indicated that his biggest triumph were the relationships that he built with students, especially when they returned to school five days a week. For Quincy, building relationships so that students could go to him if they "felt like they needed a safe space" was a priority for him:

My biggest thing with the students is like when they were here, I was happy that they were here. Like, when they didn't show up. I was like, hey, that's fine. Now that you're here, this is awesome, let's work together, let's do something, let's do this. I had a couple high behavior students last year, who, over the past couple years here at the school, it kind of gotten a bad rap from a lot of the teachers. And I think kind of just coming in, like, I'd heard all those stories about him and just kind of coming in with like, an open mind and being like, Hey, we're gonna have fun, … we're gonna work on this together, you're not doing this alone.

Quincy understood that for some students, relationship building was a central component of his instructional practice and how he structured and managed his class.

There were times during his first year of teaching, that he had to prioritize students' emotional needs over their academic needs. This was particularly true as more parents had to

return to work, and his students, who were often the older sibling, were then trying to help younger siblings with their school work:

I think the biggest thing, especially when we were in hybrid was that like, a lot of our students are low economic status, free and reduced lunch. So a lot of our students when they were at home, didn't have a parent there. And it was, they were in charge a little brother or sister—[they were the] older brother and older sister making sure they're getting everything done. And so I think, for I know, at least two or three of my students, it was their emotional needs came first because they were the oldest at home, and they were having to take care of little brother and little sister. And so just giving them that reassurance that "Hey, it's okay. I understand what's going on at home. If you can't make a zoom, if you can't get this assignment done when you're at home, that's fine. We'll make time for you when you're here to get that done.

Relationship building was a means by which he could support his students' well-being and ultimately their academic needs, as well. Quincy understood his students' familial situations, and made space within the frame of his classroom to offer the supports needed for them to feel safe and learn, despite the challenges that his students faced.

Quincy's Teaching Values

I ended my interview with Quincy by asking him how his first year of teaching shaped him and his values as a teacher. He shared:

My first year of teaching— how it shaped me as a teacher—care. Showing the students that you care more about them than you do about their schoolwork. And I think that's been the biggest thing for me is being able to build the relationship with the student outside of the academic side of them, whether it's, they're really invested into football, or

they're really like this certain band or something, and being able to have that connection

with them there. Or it's not just oh, he's my teacher, he's nice. It's like, oh, he knows

everything about this or he came to my flag football game or something. And so really

just shaping the fact that these kids need more than just a teacher; they need someone

who's going to care about them no matter what they do academically. And so that's kind

of shaped my viewpoint of that relationship piece and how it's the most important thing

as a teacher.

His experiences as a first-year teacher reinforced for him how meaningful relationships were

central to his teaching practice. In the difficulties posed by COVID-19—namely the changes that

arose from adopting a hybrid schedule—his belief in the importance of meaningful relationships

gave shape to his teaching practice and identity.

D.Mead

D.Mead's Journey to Teaching: From Inspiration to Preservice Teaching

To start our conversation, D.Mead shared a little bit about herself—how she came to

teaching, as well as about her classroom and school. D.Mead's journey to teaching did not start

with a desire to be a teacher. She shares how she came to realize that teaching was a career she

wanted to pursue:

I didn't want to be a teacher. I'm not gonna lie to you, I definitely do not want to teach.

When I was younger, I wanted to be a dentist. Then I found out I didn't like teeth or math,

so it just, it didn't fit! But I love kids and all my jobs, pretty much outside of two, I've

worked with kids. I worked with a K-six program as a coordinator for Boys and Girls

Club, and I liked it. And I liked pretty much every job that involved me with kids at my

church. I love my job. I literally just said that! I love my job.

D.Mead's prior experiences working with kids in other settings, including the Boys and Girls

Club and her church, allowed her to explore her passion for working with kids and education.

D.Mead went on to describe her current teaching environment, including descriptions of her

school and classroom:

> So [my district] is a pretty big district. I don't know how many elementary schools [we
>
> have]— I almost want to say like, I want to say like eight or 10…. [In] my classroom, I
>
> have 20 kids. Our demographics as a school, we deal with a lot of the socio-economic
>
> [issues]. We do have a lot of kids that don't have a lot, who struggle a little bit. So, I
>
> mean, you're trying to teach through what they're going through at home. So, it's kind of
>
> hard. I'd say our Hispanic population, our ELL, is pretty high—we have quite a few ELL
>
> learners, and a lot of friends on IEP s.

In describing her educational setting, one line struck me when she said it: "You're trying to teach

through what they're going through." Her comment was in reference to the hardships that

poverty posed for her students and their home lives; however, it also resonated with me as a

particularly succinct and accurate way to capture the experiences of teachers working through

the COVID-19 pandemic. We briefly discussed this point—that this line captures the nature of

what teachers find themselves navigating—teaching *through* what students and teachers going

through as a result of this crisis.

> D.Mead also described her transition from in-person to full-remote student teaching in

March of 2020. At the time, she was student teaching in the same district in which she taught

during her first and second year. She described that transition as follows:

> I was teaching fourth grade, and we were just going to spring break. So we went to spring
>
> break, and I was like, cool, because when I came back, I was gonna pretty much take

over the classroom. I had prepared everything; I was ready to go. And they were like:

well, we're gonna be out of school another week. And I [thought], that's weird. For what?

So I was like: Cool, another week off, another week to perfect my plans. And then they

the next week, they [announced] we're gonna just not come back. And we're gonna pass

out iPads, and we're just gonna do a Zoom over our iPads and our Chromebooks. And I

was like, what is happening? Is it that serious? I didn't think it was that deep. But, it was.

I could relate to D.Mead's recollection of those first weeks of the pandemic. In March 2020, the

pandemic felt abstract—far away. Much like she described, the effects of the pandemic on daily

life was incremental. It started with a week off, followed by another, until school districts across

the country started to shut their doors (citation).

After schools transitioned to full remote instruction, D.Mead did not have the opportunity

to take over the classroom. Her cooperating teacher resumed control of the classroom, given the

significant shift in teaching/learning modality. Like Quincy's district, D.Mead's district adopted

the video-conferencing platform, Zoom, in order to conduct class. Each day, they taught two 30-

minute session via Zoom, and students worked independently the rest of the time. D.Mead

describes the sadness that enveloped the last weeks of the Spring semester of 2020:

It was kind of stressful, once I really honed in on what was going on— like, we're really

not going back to school. And these kids are really not coming back to school. And I'll

probably not see them again. I didn't get to say bye or anything like that. So that was just

kind of sad. But, I took it as time to just get work done for my own schooling, but it was

still sad. And we ended up, I think I was on zoom with them for maybe two weeks, and

then it was my time to be done. And then that was pretty much it. So it was just kind of

sad, now that I'm thinking about it.

This singular emotion—sadness—captured the sense of loss that focus group participants shared. For D.Mead, the shutting down of schools meant she lost an opportunity to teach her lessons, to say goodbye to her students in-person. They collectively lost opportunities to be with each other in a face-to-face setting.

D.Mead's Teaching Environments

Schedule.

D.Mead started her first year of teaching a month later than what the district had originally planned. Her experience aligns with many districts in the state who took advantage of Governor Kelly's declaration that schools could opt to start after Labor Day to use the additional time to plan for any needed remote instruction (Kansas Office of the Governor). D.Mead described her first few weeks of school:

> We started school late, I think like a whole month, started September, which threw us for a loop. We started on Zoom, so I was at school, but my kids were at home. So I'm meeting them for the first time on Zoom. And then I think it took two weeks, and they came into full person, or, you know, they came into the classroom— we were face-to-face. And [we were] face-to-face for like three, four weeks, maybe. And then we were back to Zoom. And then we came back for another week.

D.Mead's school district opted to use a model of pivoting between full-remote instruction and full in-person instruction, depending on the number of COVID cases in their area. D.Mead indicated that her district reverted back to full-remote instruction twice during her first year of teaching: once in September 2020, and then at the end of November 2020, and they were full-remote through February 2021. I asked D.Mead why her school returned to full-remote teaching and she shared that their "the county's numbers were too high for us to stay in school," and that

too many teachers and students were becoming sick. Below are D.Mead's teaching schedules, as

delineated by modality:

Table 4.11. D.Mead's Teaching Schedule

D.Mead's Full-Remote Teaching Schedule	9:30-10:00 a.m. Reading 1:30-2:00 p.m. Math 2:00-3:30 p.m. Professional Learning Communities (Students would work independently when not on Zoom during these times; Teachers would plan, grade, etc.)
D.Mead's In-Person Schedule	8:40-9:00 a.m. Morning Meeting 9:00-10:00 a.m. Guided Reading 10:00-10:30 a.m. Phonics 10:30-10:55 a.m. English Language Arts Recess 11:10-11:30 Calendar 11:30-12:45 Lunch and Planning Time 1:00-1:30 Reading Time 1:30-2:15 Math 2:20-2:45 Centers 2:45-3:05 Recess/End of the Day

D.Mead's district limited class sizes to 15 students per teacher, as a mitigation measure to allow

for social distancing.

Virtual classroom.

D.Mead faced challenges as she began the school year virtually. She noted the numerous

distractions her Kindergarteners faced, as they too adapted to learning in a virtual environment:

> TV, video games, playing video games, while I'm trying to teach you something. Their
>
> parents are talking to them—not bad or anything. But like, if your parent is sitting right
>
> here, I can't see them. … The second zoom [of the day] was usually about lunchtime. So
>
> everybody was eating, everybody had a bowl with something!

Similar to Quincy, D.Mead and her students were inhabiting three distinct spaces—1) their

immediate physical surroundings, 2) the virtual space of a classroom, and 3) the abstract,

academic space of learning. For D.Mead's kindergarteners, differentiating between these spaces proved to be a struggle. While in their homes, they acclimated to the comforts of their immediate surroundings (i.e., video game, food, etc.), making it difficult for them to focus on the lessons D.Mead taught via Zoom. D.Mead observed: "…distractions were everywhere. I mean, and then if you come to school in your PJs, every day, you're not gonna focus, you're comfortable. I don't have much power or say so in that. So, it was hard." The interplay between the physical space of home and the academic, abstract space of learning often lead to a blurring of boundaries that made it more difficult for her students to be fully engaged in a virtual environment.

Initially, D.Mead did not have many strategies to help her manage her class or to keep them engaged. She indicated that her "classroom management online was the mute button." She shared:

> They're five, so they kept unmuting themselves and talking over me. so I would just mute everybody and then be like "freeze lights!" So I mean— we had to go over that. But when we came back in-person, we used callbacks. And so I would use callbacks when we got on Zoom again.

D.Mead clarified that "callbacks" were chants, where she would offer a verse and students would stop and repeat the second part of the verse. For example, if she said "1.2.3 Eyes on me!" then students would respond with "1.2.3. Eyes on you!" This gave them a sense of routine and expectation that provided more structure to their learning. Interestingly, D.Mead noted that she was able to develop this routine when the students were with her in-person, and so bringing it back to the virtual setting was more successful. Ultimately, despite the various the challenges virtual instruction posed, D.Mead remarked that her students had strong attendance, in which she

estimated that about "80% of my kids showed up" every day. She credited strong parental support for her students' attendance.

Physical classroom.

D.Mead had to contend with challenges posed by the changes in the physical space. D.Mead observed, "Keeping them socially distance was a really big challenge, because they are five. And that's nearly impossible." She also noted that other aspects of the environment were limited, such as flexible seating, due to the mitigation protocols they needed to follow. Yet, despite these challenges, D.Mead found teaching in-person to be easier in many respects to teaching virtually. She observed:

> In my physical classroom, I could see everybody; that helped that they were all with me. I knew what was going on, so that made life a little easier, just because I knew we'd be on the same page. But like, I don't know, the kids in their homes— it was different. I didn't know what was going on. Some of them weren't even at their house, they were in a daycare, and not with their parents. So it was tough.

Similar to Quincy, D.Mead found that being in the room gave her the ability to see what her students were doing, and therefore she was better able to guide them through learning issues that may arise. When the students were in their homes, learning virtually, she did not have that vantage point, and therefore could not as easily help her students. Moreover, there were times when some of her students were in settings other than her home. This meant that she wasn't always aware of who would be available to help her students on the other end.

Being physically back in the classroom also meant that D.Mead could better address the emotional needs of her students:

As far as emotional [needs]… I tried the counselor on a couple of friends, because a

couple of friends have been through some pretty significant trauma. The counselor would

help pull them and talk to them or do activities with them.

Yet, at times, D.Mead admitted that she wasn't always sure how to assist, because she "felt like

[they] were just all trying to make it." D.Mead's statement spoke to the reality that she and her

students were just trying to make it through—survive—through the challenges posed by the

pandemic.

D.Mead's Teaching Practices

Instructional practice.

For D.Mead, there was a significant difference in her ability to plan and deliver content in

a virtual setting and in-person. In reflecting on the difference, she observed:

So in-person, I think it was way better because I used a planner, it was written out. I

knew how our day is gonna go. I took time to get everything together. I realized that they

couldn't be in groups, so I had to work it out so that they could still maybe possibly move

around the room, but still be socially distanced.

But on Zoom, since we only taught 30 minutes a day, or you know, 30 minutes, two

times a day, I didn't really plan hard. It was pretty much the same thing. We'd go over a

new letter, we learned the letter, we would maybe draw a picture with that letter. And

then by the time you get them all drawn, it was time to go. I would keep some kids

afterwards, just to see how we were doing just to see if we were okay. And then math—

we were teaching weight and volume. There's no way to do that over zoom. Which one is

heavier? Like, I don't know.

For D.Mead, her ability to plan for in-person teaching and learning was stronger than her ability to plan for full-remote teaching and learning. She noted that this was due in part that her teacher preparation program prepared her to plan, teach and assess for in-person interactions. As a mitigation measure, D.Mead's district implemented "micro-classrooms," in which each teacher had 15 students. D.Mead explained how this helped her meet the academic needs of her students: "I only had 15 [students], which was great, because I could do more one-on-one time to make sure that we were getting it." Being in-person, in small classes, meant that D.Mead could focus more intentionally on the academic needs of her students, and provide them more support than she could in a virtual setting.

   Instructional assessment.

   When assessing her students' academic growth, D.Mead indicated that while she was able to engage students in some informal assessment by having them identify their letters, for example, she relied more heavily on assessing students formally when they were back in-person. She shared:

   > It was hard. So when we were on Zoom, I would try … to do something where I say, "look at these letters. What letter is this?" But again, the distractions, your environment. So when we were here at school for like, two weeks in-person, I'm rushing and trying to get through all of my assessments, because I want to see if there has been any growth or if we are still the same, but I mean, like, that was the main focus every time we were here, like, use your time to get your kids' data. But student progress, though. I feel like if they knew it, they were fine. And if they didn't know it, that was just what it was. He just didn't know it. He didn't grasp the concept.

D.Mead's reflection highlighted the struggles she faced trying to assess her students' growth and in addressing her students' academic needs. When she shared that "if they knew it, they were fine. And if they didn't know it, that was just what it was," I asked her a follow up question "if they didn't get it, how much agency or how much control do you did you feel that you had in moving that needle?" To that she replied:

> I felt like it had to be on me. I couldn't necessarily ask for help; though, I know that's not the case. Like I can ask. But, you just work with them as best as you can. When we were here, in-person, I knew the kids that struggled, that need the most help. But on Zoom, that wasn't the case. And sometimes those would be the kids of course, that wouldn't show up. So it didn't make my case any better.

I asked D.Mead why she felt she couldn't ask for help. She shared that she didn't want to add to her administrators' already full plates. She knew the stress and pressures they were under, and so she preferred not to add to more stressors.

Building relationships with students and parents.

D.Mead expressed that her greatest triumphs during her first year of teaching were the relationships she built with her students. She explained:

> So triumphs— I definitely would say the relationship between me and my kids. I felt like I didn't have a choice but to make sure that we had a good, solid relationship. So whether we were in-person or on Zoom, I was always making porch visits. I was always dropping stuff off. It was if it was their birthday, I'm hyping it up over zoom and then dropping them off a gift at home… I just wanted to make sure that they knew that school is still fun and that I want you here. I definitely say that was my biggest triumph, for sure. It was just the relationship we had all together.

For D.Mead, building relationships with her students was an important way for her to bridge the gap between school and home. Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, D.Mead still found ways to celebrate her students' birthdays and to make personal connections that gave her students a sense of hope.

D.Mead also built relationships with parents through consistent and open channels of communication. She commented on how her principal mentioned that teaching students through Zoom also meant teaching their parents/guardians. For many elementary aged students, parents would assist them in logging into their lessons, especially during the early months of the pandemic, when many parents were also home. This fact did not make D.Mead nervous or apprehensive, indicating that she "knew [she] wasn't saying anything that [she] wouldn't say to their parents." When reflecting upon her ability to build relationships with parents, D.Mead stated:

> I felt like I didn't have a choice. And it's not that anybody made me feel that way. I just felt that way myself. Nobody had taught me how to teach in a pandemic. These are their first usually, I didn't have any kids that were the oldest. So these are their first kids in kindergarten, this is their first year at school. I don't have a choice but to make sure that you feel like you are welcomed. … The families were awesome. I was in constant communication with them through emails and SeeSaw messages. So, our relationships were really good. I'm still cool with parents to this day.

When D.Mead mentioned that she "didn't have a choice," she was not referring to a lack of agency in the ways in which she built relationships with students or parents, nor in her ability to do so. Rather, in her reflections on the importance of building relationships, her lack of choice was tied to her own success as a teacher, teaching through COVID-19—if she wanted to do the

best work for her students, then building strong relationships with parents was important.

D.Mead's Teaching Values

D.Mead's induction into teaching at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic taught her that

teachers are sometimes called upon to make sacrifices to do what needs to be done. She stated:

> The way I see it: it just needs to be done. Like we just got to get it done. And you can't let
>
> it affect how you think or what you know, or anything like that. You just have to do what
>
> you know is right.

In our conversation, we reflected on what that means in practice. As teachers, for example, if we

are called upon to wear a mask and social distance, then that is what we do so that we can keep

students in schools; we can continue teaching and students continue to have opportunities to

learn. D.Mead replied: "Right!"—that is what we do to ensure that we can continue to teach as

safely as possible.

In her second year of teaching, D.Mead was optimistic about the new changes the year

has brought:

> I will I have 20 kids this year. We have to be three feet apart, which is still impossible,
>
> because they're five! I did move rooms, so that's entirely different, for sure. However, we
>
> have the ability to use flexible seating. We didn't get to do that last year, so this has been
>
> fun. I feel like the relationship between me and the kids happened quicker because we've
>
> been in school together more. And we started out in-person, so that's been pretty cool.
>
> I feel like [this year is] going probably better, because I can meet the need of the kid right
>
> here, right now.

D.Mead does acknowledge that there are still challenges she faced, namely not having enough

time to cover all the material that needs to be covered, and feeling as if she and her students are

falling behind. Nonetheless, D.Mead conveyed a sense of resilience having faced unprecedented challenges during her first year of teaching.

Hattie

Hattie's Journey to Teaching: From Inspiration to Pre-Service Teaching

Hattie shared with me how she came to pursue teaching as a career. Much like D.Mead, her journey also included exploration of other careers paths before deciding that teaching was what she wanted to do. Hattie shared:

How I came to education was like a lot of teachers. I had grown up in an education family, so both of my parents were teachers. My mom was a K-12 library, and my dad was a 5th-12th band director, so I was raised in education. I had grandparents who were teachers, as well. [It is] kind of in my blood. Believe it or not, the last desire that I ever had was to become a teacher.

Having grown up around teachers, Hattie revealed that she had seen what her "parents went through as a result of the "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) legislation. Hattie reflected on the impact of NCLB on her and her parents:

I was a child during that time, and I really, really despised state assessments, standardized testing, going through it as a kid. I just was not a fan of what it was making teachers do and what the impact that it was having then on schools as well, in terms of funding, because my parents' jobs were always the ones on the chopping block. There was just a lot of tension around it that I saw being the child of a teacher.

These early educational experiences were formative for Hattie. She experienced the effects of NCLB as both a student, and as the child of educators. As a student, NCLB meant an increased emphasis on testing, forcing teachers to reprioritize their teaching to increase test scores. As a

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child of educators, NLCB meant uncertainty about her family's livelihood, as districts reallocated funds to address the high-stakes testing. This meant cutting funding for electives.

Yet, Hattie still had a love for education—a love that was cultivated through programs such as 4-H, which gave her "real world learning and teaching experiences." In college, she pursued communications studies with a leadership minor; however, as time passed, she realized that her real love was teaching:

> After my first semester of college, I did some soul searching, … and I just kept coming back to I want to be around young people— I want to focus on youth development. I think education is where I want to be as much as I've told myself, "No, I'm not going to become a teacher, like my parents." And so that got me to the education field. And once I got into the College of Ed, it was just transformative. And I was surrounded immediately by really supportive staff, really supportive colleagues, and very passionate peers who were also just all in for young people, for working with students and for really being a teacher. I found that community very quickly and it just felt right.

Hattie found purpose and community within her teacher preparation program, and that fit made her transition to teaching as a profession easier.

Like Quincy and D.Mead, Hattie's student teaching experience was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. She described how those first days unfolded for her:

> So, I remember I had gone home for spring break, … it was like the second week of March right before, COVID hit, like it really started. And I started really paying attention to it over spring break while I was home and had a little more time. … It all just seemed very far off to me at that start, even over spring break. …I was in a small town in Kansas, and that was just so distant. And then that weekend, or I guess, that Friday, really was

when we started getting these messages like okay, this is like hitting, suddenly there's all of these outbreaks happening. And we started getting lots of information all at once. … It was still in that place where I was like, but this isn't real, right? And so then suddenly, we got this message that there's not going to be any school next week, we're extending spring break. I was like, okay, a week, they're gonna figure out, how do we get this under control, fine, whatever, I get another week of spring break. I'll be home. I can get caught up on more lesson planning. I can get my portfolio really hammered out. As we just kept going through that week, you kept seeing and hearing information about this isn't going away, this isn't going away. And I just remember thinking, it's not gonna be that bad. …But we were having EDCATS meeting, and that was when we found out that schools were shut down. And I remember someone hearing that, and then us getting off of that meeting. And I was sitting in my kitchen, and my parents had been in our basement and they walked upstairs to start getting supper ready. And I was like, okay, they just shut down schools. And then being educators. They were like, what? And it was just kind of like hard to wrap your mind around. Like, we're not going back to school. What does that mean? Where am I at? What is my role going to be?

I noticed key similarities in Hattie's and D.Mead's recollections of how the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded for them. Both participants questioned how the pandemic could be so serious. For both D.Mead and Hattie, the pandemic seemed abstract, until it effectively shut down their school buildings. For Hattie, this experience extended to her questioning all the unknowns—what would it mean to "shut down schools," what role would she play in any educational endeavors in her student teaching experience moving forward.

Hattie described her transition back to her student teaching placement after that extended spring break. Her district allowed for teachers to return for one day to grab any materials they needed so that they could teach through the video conferencing platform, Zoom. Hattie shared:

> I student taught in … a huge district, very supportive. It was a great experience, and gave me really great COVID experiences there, in terms of teaching online. … I taught half of a semester in-person, and my cooperating teacher was excellent about saying, "Hey, you're still our teacher, so you're going to do Zoom." And so she gave me a lot of leeway and I got to continue taking the lead through the end of my student teaching, which better prepared me to be in my classroom.

When her district transitioned, her cooperating teacher was instrumental in ensuring that Hattie continued to take on the responsibilities of any teacher transitioning to teaching in a full-remote environment. This included adapting their in-person curriculum to deliver instruction via Zoom. By positioning Hattie as "their teacher," her cooperating teacher empowered Hattie to take control of the teaching situation.

Hattie's Teaching Environments

Schedule.

Much like D.Mead, Hattie started her first year of teaching almost a month later than what the district had originally planned. Her experience aligned with many districts in the state who took advantage of Governor Kelly's declaration that schools could opt to start after Labor Day to use the additional time to prepare for mitigation protocols (Kansas Office of the Governor, 2020). Unlike Quincy and D.Mead, Hattie started her school year fully in-person. This meant that her students were in-person five days a week. Yet, this did not mean that she never

taught online. When her students were quarantined, they would participate in her class via Zoom.

Table 4.10 outlines her general schedule:

Table 4.12. Hattie's Teaching Schedule

Hattie's In-Person Schedule	7:40-8:15 a.m. Breakfast/Daily Orientation 8:15-9:45 a.m. Writing/Reading/Literacy Block 9:45-10:15 a.m. Reading Interventions 10:15-10:50 a.m. Music Lunch/Recess 11:35-11:40 Transition 11:40-12:15 Technology 12:00-12:55 Science/Social Studies (alternating weeks) 12:55-1:20 Math Interventions 1:20-2:20 Math 2:20-2:40 Snack Break and Read Aloud 2:45-3:00 Recess/End of the Day * *Friday times shortened to accommodate for early release.*

Virtual classroom.

Despite teaching in-person from the beginning of her first-year of teaching, Hattie did also provide online instruction to students who were quarantined due to the pandemic. She shared:

> As an extension of our COVID efforts, if you had a specific child in your class that had to quarantine due to a close contact, we were still required to provide them with live Zoom instruction. So they would be at home, but I would have them on Zoom on screen, like engaging with our class as I talked, or providing them alternate lesson plans to work on for that time.

Hattie indicated that while it "worked to an extent,… it became very cumbersome." She was one of the first teachers to need to provide virtual instruction, around mid-October. Hattie shared that from that point through March, she had students in a constant rotation into quarantine, which

meant that she was effectively teaching both in-person and virtually simultaneously, despite her main form of instruction being in-person.

Hattie had not anticipated worrying as much as she did about her students' well-being as a result of being quarantined. She observed:

I didn't realize I would worry about it as much as I did. But you're just very worried about their social emotional well-being as well. And so while these kids were quarantined, you just you want, as a teacher, to keep giving them opportunities to be with peers when they're stuck at home with no one. And for two weeks—that's a long time. And so you wanted them to get engaged. So little things like I'd always pull up my kids that were quarantined for lunch. I'm not going to be in here, but our lunch aid will and all our kids were in there and they could chat with someone for lunch. Any little time when you could get them to continue doing some of the fun [stuff] was really important to me.

Even when quarantined, Hattie expanded the use of Zoom to allow for her students to interact with each other in social settings. Building moments of community virtually were important aspects of the virtual classroom she inevitably had to cultivate despite teaching in-person for the entirety of her first year.

Physical classroom.

Hattie's predominant teaching space was her physical classroom. Hattie started her school year in what most would consider to be "normal;" her teaching environment was defined as fully in-person. Yet, even in this more traditional, face-to-face setting, Hattie found that she had to significantly reshape her classroom environment to accommodate for COVID-19 mitigation efforts. Much like Quincy and D.Mead's in-person classes, Hattie had to ensure that students were social distancing, wearing masks, and following general hygiene guidelines, such

as sanitizing surfaces and washing hands. At times, Hattie questioned the efficacy of some of these measures, given the number of students in her classroom:

> I had 23 kids in my class, and my classroom is far from big enough to physically distance that in that way. And so I guess I did a lot of questioning… While our district was trying to come up with all of these protocols, …realistically, is that going to make a difference? …It's to what extent do we just need to not over plan was kind of one of my questions I kept reflecting on. Are we stressing ourselves out over nothing, when the result of the end is going to be the same?

While Hattie wanted to ensure that her students were safe, she questioned if some of the measures they were expected to follow would be effective due to the number of students in her classroom.

One of those mitigation measures was to have students seated in rows. Similar to Quincy and D.Mead, seating students in rows meant that cooperative learning was harder to do. Hattie described how she figured out ways to work within the COVID protocols so that her students could have more interactive lessons:

> We started out in rows. And pretty quickly after that, I think after about the first quarter, [even though] we stayed in those rows, I still was able to keep cooperative groups. So these four desks are together. When we're doing activities, as long as we're together for less than 10 minutes, you guys can be away from your desk. And so I tried to get them out of their desks as much as possible. …We're gonna take a walk and take a break, and then we can go back, so we don't have like those 10 consecutive minutes together.

These workarounds were important in Hattie's ability to still create moments of interaction and cooperative learning for her students. Hattie noted that as the year progressed, they received

more guidance. Yet, as the district tried to find different ways to overcome physical obstacles imposed by COVID-19, new challenges would emerge. Hattie shared one such example:

> We got screen guards. We were supposed to have screen guards at the start of the year, but didn't have them. When we finally got those, it made it look even worse in the room. Poor kids at the back of the room could not see a darn thing on the board! But we were [able] start putting kids in groups and we had some specific group arrangements that we were able to do. I tried that out and got kids into groups. And we made like "x" shapes that had a big, empty space in the middle so that they were still sort of apart from each other with their screen guards up and everything. And so that was a whole other management piece. …But [nonetheless] that was really helpful and definitely influenced how I set up my room because kids were a lot happier when they got to go back to groups.

Hattie adapted her instructional and classroom management strategies to fit the changes in her classroom space.

Interestingly, for Hattie, the change in the classroom space did not only affect how her students interacted with each other—it affected how she positioned herself within that space. She observed:

> [The change in her classroom] was interesting and definitely made me as a teacher have to think a lot more about how I move around my classroom, because it takes up so much space. When we were in groups that had to be distance from each other, it just reduced the pathways for walking. So I really had to be strategic about… okay, I've got this one kid that shuts down on a whim, so I've got to have him on the outside of a group near a wall, so that if he shuts down, I can get to him quickly. I can make sure that I've got other

spaces where he can just get away without being right in the middle of our entire class

and our whole class gets distracted. And so just with those arrangements, taking up so

much space, that was something I had to consider.

In this example, Hattie referred to her taking up space twice, specifically in the context of how

much she needed to move around the room to meet different student needs. Hattie had to

strategically think of how to position herself and her students to 1) mitigate for COVID-19, and

2) meet each students' academic and social-emotional needs. These considerations affected not

only the classroom space, but also how she and her students existed within it.

Teaching Practices

Instructional practice.

For Hattie, planning for instruction posed a major challenge, specifically due to the

multitude of unknowns that COVID-19 posed. Hattie reflected on this challenge as she

transitioned into her first year:

I was still kind of in that March mindset where I'm kind of living from day to day, and I

don't know what next week is going to bring. Is there going to be a huge uptick? Is there

going to be a huge decrease? So it was really hard for a planner like me, and I wanted to

prepare so badly for things, and I couldn't for most of it. And so I did a lot over the

summer of like, okay, what are the things that I know—[something] I can set up and

regardless of whatever they throw at us, I will be able to do? So I was thinking through a

lot of management systems: Do I want a classroom reward system? What are going to be

my rules, expectations? How am I going to enforce those? And so I did a lot of

philosophical thinking and trying to get those things clarified once I knew where I was

going to be.

I connected immediately with Hattie's word choice—"that March mindset"—an allusion to the early days of the pandemic when its impact was still abstract for many Americans. Not being able to depend on a predictable pattern of events made it difficult for Hattie to plan effectively for the future. Her way to work through this was to plan for those elements that she could control in the face of uncertainty—her expectations, her procedures, etc. Hattie noted that she spent time thinking of "what if" scenarios. She reflected:

> I spent some time working on, I guess, clarifying, expectations, and then creating some, "what if" scenarios: Okay, if we ended up being on Zoom, this is how I'm going to have to manage or if we end up being in-person, this is how I'm going to have to manage…. So those were some of the main things that I did to prepare. And like I said, I just had to learn very quickly that I had to be okay with not knowing a lot, and so that was interesting.

Hattie and I had discussed a significant shift from preservice to in-service teaching. Hattie noted that in her teacher preparation program, she had so much control, partly due to the curated nature of field experiences—experiences that are highly structured in terms of number of lessons taught, length, etc. Transitioning to in-service teaching meant that these parameters were not as strictly defined, and she had to learn to be flexible and "okay with not knowing" every little detail. That capacity to adapt was particularly significant as she navigated the uncertainty of COVID-19.

Hattie's district delayed the start of their school year. Hattie recalled that they started at the beginning of September, giving her a couple more weeks to plan and prepare her lessons. Hattie described how she viewed this added time:

> Our school district decided in August to delay our school start. When that all came about, there was the whole debacle about whether schools were deciding, or the government was

deciding, and our school decided to delay until like, the week before Labor Day. We had

a couple of weeks where I was able to really just be with my team, which ended up being

very useful. It didn't feel reallu useful at the time; it felt like we were doing a lot of:

"Okay, what if this; what if that; here's some training on this new assessment platform

that we're giving… And so there was, again, a lot of "what ifs," but it was very helpful

for me as a first year teacher, because I had two weeks of days where I was spending

seven to eight hours just with my team. And so I felt like I got to know them a lot better

than I would have, had I just started normally with four days of professional

development, and then dive into school.

This time gave her the ability to build meaningful relationships with her colleagues. Ironically,

despite the multitude of challenges that COVID-19 posed, Hattie observed that when she started,

"everyone was kind of a first-year teacher in many ways," which she described as "a silver

lining" because she was able to come to the table as an equal—a fellow colleague also working

towards figuring out how to work through COVID-19. By collaborating with her colleagues, she

was able to refine her ideas of how to implement collaborative learning strategies, such as Kagan

techniques, into her lessons so that students were still engaged despite the challenges.

Instructional assessment.

As Hattie adapted her teaching practices during her first year, she also came to identify

the ways in which she views student agency in their learning, which in turn, is central to how she

assesses students' work. In context to her students' learning, she postulated:

You are the one that owns your success, I am here to help you get there. But ultimately,

you are the one responsible for making yourself successful by the choices that you make.

I can do as much as I can to coach you to support you. But ultimately, you are going to be

responsible for owning your learning.

Hattie went on to concede that, at times, she has had a hard time of letting go—of letting her

students take ownership of their learning. Yet, her belief that students are in control of their

learning also guides how she assesses their work. Hattie valued looking at their academic

growth, rather than relying on one metric for assessing their work. Furthermore, she valued how

students apply their newfound knowledge to real life situations, how they made connections

between their learning and their lives, as important measures of their growth. Yet, she finds

herself trying to balance the pace of instruction, when most students are ready to move on to new

content, but a few may not be ready to do so. She indicated that it is a "big struggle that [she] had

[her] first year and [she's] still working on balancing this year."

For Hattie, helping students succeed academically meant that she must be prepared to

"explain and answer questions more effectively than just saying, because it works." This means

that Hattie had to "relearn" the material she is teacher so she can conceptualize it in several

ways, and in turn be able to help students reach a deeper level of understanding. She recognizes

that while students own their learning, her job is to differentiate her approaches so that students

are engaged and appropriately challenged.

Hattie has also found herself facing, alongside her students, the pressures of state

assessments—a pressure she recalled hating as a student, and now had to administer as a teacher.

She stated:

I also knew state assessments were coming up, [and] my kids had never taken state

assessments, because obviously, they didn't get them in third grade. So this was going to

be their first year taking them, and I don't want to be obviously teaching to the test. But

you also want them to do well, because they're still measuring that as your progress. …

How do I make sure that they are getting what they need, and that it's quality…?

Hattie's experience speaks to a dichotomous chasm faced in education: on the one hand an acknowledgement in educational research of the limitations of standardized testing to accurately and equitably measure student academic success, and on the other hand, the reality that standardized tests are a key state/federal accountability measure (Morgan, 2016). The issues associated standardized testing, which predated COVID-19, has widened as COVID-19 has exacerbated equity issues in education (Allen & West, 2020; Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020; Reich, et. al, 2020).

Building relationships with students and parents.

An integral part of Hattie's ability to build meaningful relationships and a healthy learning environment for her students was to build a solid foundation with parents—one in which she could celebrate her students' accomplishments while also giving them access to their learning, at a time when parents were not allowed to enter buildings. Hattie shares:

> We didn't know are we going to be going remote, so I knew I had to give parents some semblance of understanding of what was going on in our room. And developing those relationships with them early was really key. And so the other thing was we had no in-person parent nights, we had no live zooms like to welcome them. They'd never stepped into my classroom, they never stepped into our school. … And so I knew it was going to be really crucial to connect with them in some way to make them feel welcomed. And I wasn't exactly sure the best way to do that, because I've never done it before.

Hattie made families feel welcomed by sending out a weekly update email that gave them a summary of what they were studying and exploring in her classroom. She would also send

pictures to give parents insights into the classroom environment. About the pictures, Hattie noted: "I think they did a lot more than I realized for parents, just to help them feel like they could at least see something that was going on and that we're not just sitting behind our desks." In addition, she made it a point "to make positive phone calls home" as part of her management style.

By incorporating families as an integral part of her classroom, Hattie was able to build relationships with students that positively impacted their learning, despite the challenges they faced as a result of the pandemic. When reflecting on the impact of her phone calls, Hattie mused:

> I think my parents were very appreciative of that because they could hear my voice. I could like tell them something personal I had learned about their child and get their input and their feedback about things. They knew that I wanted to partner with them, and that we are still a team even if you are not here in-person. And so that I think was huge in terms of just building relationships and showing them I'm on your side.

Hattie utilized the Seesaw platform to send messages, and to collect student work. Hattie indicated that in addition to training kids on how to use this new technology, it "became a really great place to show parents what kids were doing, as well." Her collaborative approach to relationship building ensured that both families and students felt valued and seen.

Teaching Values

Despite the challenges, Hattie's first-year of teaching offered her an opportunity to learn more about herself, and what she values as a teacher. She offered this reflection:

> I think looking back on my first year, just from start to end, … one of the biggest ways that I grew personally, as an educator, was just in my ability to be flexible and be okay

with the unknown. In college, I had to deal with that some in my field experiences, but for the most part, I was always in a very controlled environment. And I was able to be in control of my success. And so going into the education field, like I knew I was not going to have control of a lot. But I don't think I had quite mentally pictured to what extent, and I think COVID enhanced that a lot—that I would not be in control of things. And so I really struggled.

Hattie's first year of teaching required that she face her fears, and concede that she may not be able to plan for every worst-case scenario. In fact, she shared that early on, a focus on trying to plan and mitigate for every worst-case scenario meant she "wasn't really taking care of herself." Fears of her students falling behind, of doing her students a disservice, contributed to a lack of balance. Yet, she found that it got better. She shared:

Slowly throughout the year, I think finally, it got better. Probably starting second semester was when it really started to shift for me that first semester was just a lot of "Okay, from day to day, how am I going to survive tomorrow? How am I going to get there?" But especially once I hit the fourth quarter, I could really see this big shift [where] I'm no longer planning my instruction for tomorrow, and adjusting— I'm planning for next week and adjusting. I can take this and know, okay, I'm going to use these materials, this is how I'm going to use the resource. And I've got to be okay with going in and doing some of it without every single word planned out, because that's what I liked to do in college … And so just letting go of some of that and being okay with saying, "I can make a mistake, and we will find time somewhere somehow, to make it up."

Hattie's first year of teaching taught her the importance to extend grace—"to be willing to forgive yourself, and forgive your kids, if something doesn't go right and just move on." This was a big revelation for Hattie, and it allowed her to "rebuild [her] entire sense of self confidence," while embracing her mistakes. Ultimately, Hattie recognized that allowing her students to see her in this more humane light, meant that her students could also make mistakes and "that gives them a little bit of agency too," in their learning.

Interview #2: Formal and Informal Induction Preparation

The first set of interviews with Quincy, D.Mead, and Hattie focused on their perceptions of their abilities to engage in various aspects of teacher practice (i.e., planning, instruction, assessment, classroom management, etc.), and how the COVID-19 pandemic affected their ability to effectively engage in those tasks. My second interview focused on their formal and informal induction into the profession: the various levels of influence and support that informed their development as a teacher. Specifically, in addressing formal induction, I focused on the two key forms that districts use frequently: professional development and formal mentorship. In discussing their informal induction, I framed those experiences as professional learning opportunities that they sought on their own that were not specifically curated by the district. The development of collegial relationships was an important part of all three participants' informal induction.

Quincy

Formal Induction

Professional development.

To start our interview, I asked Quincy to share more details about the transition between his student teaching semester and his first semester of in-service teaching. Quincy recalled

applying for his current position as a special education teacher, which was in the same building

where he student taught. He noted that he interviewed through Zoom. Quincy shared that he

loved the school and that he loved the people, so he was excited when he received an offer.

Quincy explained how that transition from summer to the start of the school year evolved:

> It was kind of quiet until mid-July, when "Hey, this is what we're going to be doing since
>
> we're going to be in hybrid teaching." We had new teacher orientation in-person. That was
>
> not on Zoom. Oh, yeah, we did that in-person for three days, … and we were all in the big
>
> cafeteria—everyone was spread out. We did our new teacher orientation stuff, got all of
>
> our materials that the district gives us. And then that's when we started into the beginning
>
> of the school year trying to figure out how are we going to teach kids that aren't in school.
>
> And that was it. No one knew what was going on. So it just made it even harder as a new
>
> teacher not having the background of teaching full time, kids in-person to having to figure
>
> out how to do that online when I don't know what the normal school day setting really
>
> looked like, because I had only been in there for two, three months for my student
>
> teaching.

Quincy's recollection of his formal induction mirrors those of most new teachers, as professional

development is a relatively standard way by which school districts launch the start of a new

academic year (Wong, 2004). In his explanation of the transition between preservice and in-

service teaching, he qualified those experiences by delineating the modality in which he took

part. He noted that his interviews were via Zoom; however, the first three days of professional

development were in-person. While this detail was subtle, it suggested that the modality of his

experiences was a factor in how he defined his professional spaces.

Additionally, there was a notable turn within his explanation from the expected experiences of formal induction and the unknowns he and fellow teachers were facing as a result of the pandemic. He summarized these expected aspects of formal induction (i.e., "new teacher orientation stuff," getting their materials, etc.) before transitioning into the real work, as signaled by his observation "and then that's when we started into the beginning of the school year." The real work was figuring out how they were going to "going to teach kids that weren't in school." Quincy's reflection of his formal induction also reflected his doubts, as he acknowledged that no one knew what was going on, and that his fractured student teaching experience meant that he had less in-person experience by which to work from in order to adapt remote instruction.

I asked Quincy to elaborate on his formal induction—the ways in which the district provided a "systemic, organized plan for support[ing]" and preparing new teachers for the start of their professions (Bartell, 2004, p. 381). He commented:

> …I don't remember how many new teachers were there my year, but there was quite a few, probably close to 20, if not more teachers. And it was definitely a "here's teaching, here's a curriculum that we use." We had a few mini sessions where we would go and someone would demonstrate how to go through the system of whatever curriculum they were talking about. So for me, it wasn't as retainable, being a special education teacher. Because a majority of the time I'm not using the curriculum that's provided in class for those core elements. I'm using an adaptive curriculum, or just a different curriculum altogether. But they went over how to check on, or use, our Infinite Campus, which is like our student portal that tracks attendance and everything how to use that and all the information on there; the website that we use for all of our payroll, how to access that. There was about 30-minutes to an hour for each of these different websites that they

walked us through: how to get on there, what our logins were, how to figure out our login,

change our login if we wanted to, and use the site correctly. … Gosh, it seems like forever

ago, but it was really like a year ago…

Quincy's recollections of his formal induction focused heavily on how the district prepared them

to use various technologies and platforms throughout the school year. Yet, he also shared how

the district provided training over the COVID-19 protocols that teachers and students were

expected to follow. Quincy described this portion of his professional development, as well:

And then a lot of that time was COVID procedures, like, we're going to wear masks,

we're going to six feet apart. This is the best way to separate students, make sure you

keep them in a seating chart. No groups, like it was all that at the time, and everyone

didn't really know how it was going to look, and so it was very confusing. And everyone

kind of had a different idea about what it was going to be at that time. Because no one

had ever done this before in schools. It was just a very confusing and tricky time.

A common thread in Quincy's description of his formal induction could be described as

uncertainty—despite the district's efforts to provide structure and routine to the start of the 2020-

2021 school year, Quincy's observations of his formal induction indicate that the professional

development that Quincy received could not fully account for the unknowns posed by COVID-

19.

Yet, it was still helpful in giving Quincy a starting point for how to approach teaching

and learning during his first year. I asked Quincy how his formal induction informed his teaching

practices. He shared the following perspective on how it affected his teaching:

I think the biggest thing is when I was going through that, it was all about hybrid

teaching, how are we going to use technology to assess kids who are at home. And it

changed my entire— what I thought I was going to be doing. I found out real quick that technology is great, but technology can't be the only thing we're using to teach kids especially when kids aren't even in the building. I would have kids just not show up. So I couldn't do anything. And they would say "Oh, my iPad was done. I didn't bring my charger home. And that's why I didn't get on" or "my Wi Fi wasn't working." And that made me realize that I wouldn't want to work for a virtual academy at all, either! Because I couldn't deal with all the technology issues and everything. What I did find helpful was having the Canvas training that we used. It was very much centralized, like this is our program we're going to use to communicate with students who aren't at home. Having everything in one place really helped me, even now. It's like, okay, this student, all their things are in one place. … Because at the time I was like, Well, how am I going to keep everybody's stuff straight?

Through Quincy's formal induction, he was able to develop skills with his district's learning management system, Canvas, which, in turn, enabled him to organize and keep track of his students' work and learning. Despite the initial unknowns, over time, Quincy was able to apply the training he received to develop his teaching practices. Yet, Quincy learned more than just how to use technology in hybrid settings; he learned something about himself and his teaching preferences. His experiences with balancing remote and in-person instruction made him realize that virtual teaching is not something he would want to pursue. Furthermore, given his students' issues with technology, he quickly realized that relying solely on virtual assignments and participation was not going to be an effective strategy for capturing what his students were learning.

Formal mentorship.

As part of Quincy's formal induction, his district assigned him a mentor as part of their mentoring program. Quincy's mentor was his cooperating teacher from student teaching, which allowed for a continuation of the mentorship he received from her in his teacher preparation program. He described the mentorship program as follows:

> The way they did the mentorship [program] was the mentors went to a Zoom meeting once a month, and then the mentees went to a Zoom meeting once a month. But we never had a meeting together. So it was just the mentors talking to other mentors about what they were doing, and mentees going over a book about teaching with two instructional coaches. We never talked to other mentors, or knew what they were telling their mentees or anything like that. We just talked about this book and had to do assignments on it. And the mentors, I think, just talked about what they were doing with their mentees and what struggles they were having. So I get it was a mentor program, but we never interacted a whole lot besides at school with the normal questions that we have every day.

Quincy's experience with the formal mentorship program was focused on the book study he completed with other mentees. As a whole, the group did not interact with each other. That said his relationship with his mentor was unique. It started when he was student teaching, and she mentored him as his cooperating teacher. In addition, she is his colleague—they teach special education together, and share an office space. Thus, his mentor was an integral part of the informal induction that Quincy experienced.

Informal Induction

Collegial relationships.

For Quincy, his relationship with his mentor teacher was formative in his understanding of the intricacies of teaching—the components of teaching that were not explicitly addressed in his teacher preparation program. He described the ways in which his mentor teacher has educated him on the workings of education:

> She's very involved in the teaching community. She was part of KNEA … for a long time. So she's very knowledgeable about education, which is really helpful for me. Because even like, going through school, I [knew] how to take curriculum and teach it to kids and the different modalities and how to teach kids, but I didn't know like the legal stuff, how schools work. Like how school board works, how KNEA works with a school board and how the contract comes up—all that stuff was very interesting to me. … She's knowledgeable about all the different, special education specific curriculum that we use. So I've been able to bounce ideas off of her like, "oh, I have a student who struggles doing this, what do we have? Not district wide, but in our special ed. department that might be more beneficial than trying to adapt what they're doing in the classroom." And she's like, "Oh, we have this, this and this" and, "I've also made this in the past for kids."

For Quincy, his mentor teacher has been instrumental in helping him see the multiple institutional structures within education, and how teachers may be able to advocate within that system. In addition, his mentor teachers' institutional knowledge—her understanding of the school and its resources—has enabled him to seek resources outside of his formal induction to better meet the needs of his students.

Quincy described how their relationship has opened his eyes to the inner workings of school. Specifically, Quincy noted that he learned that "there is more to teaching than just working with kids":

Now, as a teacher, like, there's things other teachers do, that nobody knows about, or that the administration is doing that no one knows about. So having that realization [that] there's so much more to teaching than just working with kids. Yes, that's kind of opened my eyes to like, there's more I could be doing in this community or in this school than just working with this kid.

His relationship with his mentor teacher helped Quincy understand his positionality as a teacher. His role extended beyond the classroom to how he is able to contribute to the community and the school at large.

In addition, his mentor was instrumental in teaching Quincy about the importance of communicating with colleagues. He shared:

I think there's a lot more to the school workings than what you see in student teaching, … because you're not always on the emails about students from the principal or from the parents or from other teachers. So, you don't get to see that side of things. And I think definitely the biggest thing for me was how much teachers actually do talk to each other about different students, because when I was student teaching, I didn't see that a lot, because a lot of it was done through email. … So that was the most eye-opening thing when I first started teaching was how much teachers talked and then with COVID, and on Zoom. It was even more important to have that communication about what if students were showing up to your Zoom and not someone else's… to have that communication about what was going on.

For Quincy, his mentor teacher was instrumental in helping him develop collegial relationships, and in helping him understand the complex cultural dynamics of schools, from the role of school boards and teacher organizations to the daily demands of teaching.

I asked Quincy how the pandemic affected his ability to build relationships with his colleagues—if it made it harder to connect with other teachers. Interestingly, the pandemic has a positive effect on relationship building with other teachers. Quincy commented:

> I don't think it really did. Because the teachers were still here, we were still together. And our administration made it a point to [build time] when we were hybrid Wednesday's …It was like a work day, almost on Wednesdays, because everyone was at home. And it was supposed to be for buildings to be cleaned before the next group of kids came on Thursday and Friday. And so, they made that day where they would have games in the gym, they'd bring snacks, and it was specifically for team building and to get to know everybody and just have a fun day during a stressful time. And so COVID… might actually [have] helped us build relationships rather than negatively affect us.

Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, Quincy's administration found ways to help teachers build community and relationships with one another. For Quincy, this relationship building was important to his own development as a teacher.

Quincy's Support Systems

Encompassing both formal and informal induction, I asked each of my participants to share who guided them through aspects of the teaching profession, and how these support systems guided them. I based these aspects on Bartell's (2004) "New Teacher Needs Addressed in Induction Programs," as replicated in Table 2.1. Quincy shared who guided him through the following new teacher needs: 1) procedures and expectations, 2) managerial expectations, 3) teacher's psychological development and well-being, 4) instructional components, 5) professionalism, 6) school and community culture, and 7) politics (Bartell, 2004, p. 635); refer to Table 4.11.

Table 4.13. Quincy's Support Systems

New Teacher Need	Guide	How?
Procedures and expectations	Curriculum Director and Mentor Teacher	Quincy cited two people as instrumental to helping him learn the school and district's expectations: his district Curriculum Director and his mentor teacher. He shares: "It was a new teacher orientation day where he talked about curriculum and the expectations and the guidelines on how they expect that to be done. And then I think also was my mentor as well. …When I had questions about what do we actually need to do with this, she was there [to say]: this is what they want. This is how we've done it before, that was really helpful."
Managerial expectations (i.e., classroom management, coursework management, systems management, etc.)	Mentor Teacher and School Psychologist	Quincy cited his mentor teacher and school psychologist as instrumental to understanding the managerial expectations of the school. He states: "my mentor talked about…the expectation for when we need paperwork done, …when we need to get parents notice that the meetings happening. And our school psychologist at the time, she was very on top of dates and paperwork, …and was open to questions if we had any about what are the procedures for timeliness on the paperwork that we needed to do."
Teacher's psychological development and well-being	School Principal	Quincy shared that his school principal has helped him to focus on his psychological development and well-being. He stated: "I would probably go with [my] principal. He does very well when he comes in and does informal or formal observations, just be like: Hey, this is what I noticed. You're really strong, and these are different things that you can do in that area that are going to are going to fit to your strengths. These are your weaknesses, and these are things that you know, can help those weaknesses as well. But he was really good about just focusing on our strengths and what we are good at as teachers… And I think that helped me kind of identify who I was as a teacher."
Instructional components: Teaching practices, assessment, etc.	Mentor Teacher	Quincy cited his mentor as the person who has helped him the most with understanding instructional components. "A lot of the students that I have now, she had when I was student teaching or had before I was student teaching. So just having a person [I can ask]: 'what does this kid like? What are things that you've seen in the past that have worked with this student?'

New Teacher Need	Guide	How?
		and then being able to adapt from there and figure out how I was going to teach this kid."
Professionalism	Father, Mentor Teacher and Principal	Quincy noted that his father was a big example of what it meant to be a professional. He also credited his mentor teacher, because of her involvement in KNEA. He shared: "She knew if you have a complaint about this, this is the person you go to. If that person can't help them, this is the next person." He also cited his principal who "set the professionalism guidelines," including healthy work/life balance boundaries, such as guiding his staff to respond to parents during the school day, not from home, as well as giving themselves time limits when they must work additional hours.
School and community culture	Self	He cited himself because he is from the community in which he teaches, so he understands the values of the community.
School politics (Defined as an understanding of the stakeholders within schools, their agendas, and the workings of the school system.	Mentor	His mentor was instrumental in helping him see and understand the various stakeholders within schools, and how to navigate that. He stated: "She would always come back after meetings and board meetings and talk about what was going on. I didn't know this is how this worked in schools. And so just having her be in the middle of it was very eye-opening. [It] helped me learn a lot about how the school gets things done, how they get money for things, how people get elected, and what the process of that is to be on the school board… And yeah, it was crazy. Learning about all that."

Quincy named his mentor teacher as an important person who guided him through five of

the seven categories listed. He shared that he continues to talk to his mentor teacher every day,

and that they communicate frequently throughout the day. He also cited other school staff who

helped him navigate these various needs, including his curriculum director, principal, and school

psychologist. Having been raised in the community in which he currently teaches, he also viewed

himself and his father as important influences, thus highlighting his own knowledge-base and

familial ties that have supported him in his teaching career. While not directly connected to

COVID-19, these supports served as protective factors in his first year of teaching—support systems that helped him cope with COVID-related challenges.

Currently in his second year of teaching, Quincy reflected further on his induction experiences and made the following observation:

I think from your first year to your second year of teaching, there's a lot more responsibility put on you as a teacher. I think as a first-year teacher, [the school] is like, we're going to help you however we can. And then once you hit that second year, it's like, okay, we did that for the first year, so go out there and do it. There's a second-year mentor program. It's a different mentor, and he'll send emails like, "Do you need anything?" Half the time, I didn't respond to his email…, because I just didn't have time to respond… So like that transition from the first year to the second year is just a massive gap of, "we're helping you along" to "alright, go ahead and do it." And I think especially with your first year being in COVID, and now this is like, somewhat back to normal, it's just a huge leap.

In this reflection, Quincy identified how the supports offered during his first year of teaching were reduced during his second year. He indicated that things were "somewhat back to normal," an allusion to the fact that protocols and mitigation efforts were eased, and his students returned to fully in-person during the second semester of his first-year of teaching. Yet, despite things "going back to normal," there was a gulf, that arguably required additional mentorship support.

I asked Quincy a follow-up question aligned with what I had observed about the impact of COVID-19 on his ability to grow as a teacher. My impression was that despite the challenges, COVID had not been kept him from growing as a teacher. I asked him if I was correct in that interpretation. He noted:

Yeah, you're correct. Yeah, I think COVID helped a lot. I think it took that pressure off being a new teacher, because everyone else was a new teacher as well. And I think it helped a lot of being that new person and no one really trying to everyone's trying to figure who [they] are as a teacher. And I think that first year, everyone didn't know who they were as a teacher, kind of, [and] it was so fun to figure it out again. Yeah. So I think that helped being in COVID.

For Quincy, COVID-19 posed significant challenges, but those challenges were not strictly due to being a first-year teacher—these were challenges that required all educators to work together and figure out "who they were as a teacher" again. It was demanding, but it also meant that Quincy's induction into the profession positioned him as a peer to more veteran colleagues who were also encountering many firsts.

D.Mead

Formal Induction

Professional development.

In starting our interview, I asked D.Mead to share more detail about her transition from preservice to in-service teaching. She shared that she spent most of the summer preparing for the new school year. D.Mead had the opportunity to work in her classroom, so she spent the summer preparing for the multiple teaching scenarios she might encounter. On that point, I asked her, if she knew much about the modality that her district would employ in response to COVID-19. She shared: "We didn't know. Oh, I don't feel like we knew what we were doing. [For] most of that year we didn't know much of anything." In clarifying, she noted that this feeling was shared by both new and veteran teachers alike. The start of the school year was marked by a great deal of uncertainty about the best way to reopen buildings and what that would mean for teachers.

Feel that was both you and the more veteran teachers? Or do you think that was unique to the

   To better prepare for reopening, D.Mead's district opted to start the 2020-2021 school

year in September, which meant that teachers had more time to plan. Once they returned, she

engaged in a series of professional development trainings that comprised her formal induction.

About this experience, D.Mead observed:

> We had one day of in-person, introducing ourselves to each other, and the new people
>
> that came on board. They talked to us all day about stuff, you know, just the trainings, the
>
> "how to set up your computer to the printer," … So I mean, there was that! And then we
>
> had, of course, we have professional training… they had news teacher orientation. And
>
> usually that's like a whole day thing, but for us it was only 30 minutes on a Zoom call,
>
> because we could look at the slideshow, so I was okay with that.

D.Mead's formal induction was focused predominantly on the procedural aspects of teaching:

how to login and utilize various technologies, how to access curriculum, etc. She also noted that

part of her professional development included reviewing the building plan, as well as student

tiered support interventions to meet the needs of "the whole kid: socially, behaviorally, [and]

academically." D.Mead also contextualized her professional development by the modality in

which she received it, indicating that they had one day of in-person professional development,

but that other sessions were delivered through Zoom. D.Mead noted that Zoom allowed them to

"look at the slideshow," suggesting a traditional, presenter-centered mode of professional

development that aligns with the practicality of a video-conferencing platform, such as Zoom.

   I asked D.Mead to share any aspect of her professional development training that she

found particularly beneficial. She shared the following:

There was a classroom management [session] that I really liked. … She gave us ideas on how to line your kids up, and it took, like, 10 seconds. I was like, "Oh, my gosh, I have to use this! And so ever since then, are they using it. So, I mean, it's been amazing, but she was just talking about how you want to build those relationships with your kids. So that way, your behavior management, your classroom management is a lot better. You don't have to do as much, but as long as you set your standards, and they know your standards, they know what you expect,… then you're pretty much good to go. It was just a really good session. That's what I remember the most.

This professional development training had a lasting effect on D.Mead's practice, specifically her ability to implement classroom management strategies that lead to positive outcomes for her and her students. While she still had challenges with managing her class, this training gave her tangible ways in which to work through those challenges.

Formal mentorship.

As part of D.Mead's formal induction, her district assigned her a mentor teacher who worked with her throughout the year. For D.Mead, this relationship, while amicable, did not serve as a significant factor in her overall development as a teacher. D.Mead explained:

They give you a veteran teacher. That veteran teacher had me and the other new kindergarten co-worker, she had us both. And I don't know, personally, I was not like a whole fan, because that's where the backstories and all that extra would come from. So I never really sought after her.

In our conversation, D.Mead mentioned that she often refrained from asking for help because rather than receiving a concise response, she was often met with additional stories or information that did not always relate to her initial need. D.Mead was to meet with her mentor for 45 minutes

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per month, but in practice, they only met twice throughout the entire school year. Yet, despite the lack of connection, D.Mead conceded that being a mentor during COVID was a difficult task. She noted:

> I know …we were all in the same boat, so it's hard to be a mentor. You don't know what you're doing either. Like she knows what she's doing, but like [with] COVID: together, this is our first time in COVID. If you don't know what you're doing like, there's nothing you can tell us that we don't already know, or we're not already struggling with.

D.Mead delineated between a mentor's knowledge-base as a veteran teacher and their knowledge-base dealing with COVID. In the various focus group and in-depth interviews, that was a common recurring theme—the feeling that all teachers were, in essence, first-year teachers during the 2020-2021 school year. D.Mead recognized that a mentor may struggle with giving their mentee guidance when they are needing it themselves.

D.Mead indicated that, as much as possible, she would try to figure out issues on her own, rather than seeking the guidance of her mentor or administrators. In relations to her administrators, she commented:

> I'm not gonna say they threw us in there because they didn't. We have support, and I knew they could help us. But if they're trying to swim with this whole COVID situation, it's hard for us to ask for help, because so many are asking for help. They kept telling us we didn't seem like first year teachers, because we were just doing it. But to us, it was just normal.

I found D.Mead's explanation of why she avoided asking for help compelling—it was indicative of a self-reliance that stemmed from the need to not only survive, but also to be mindful of others that were trying to do the same.

Informal Induction

Collegial relationships.

For D.Mead, her collegial relationships were a significant factor in her induction into the profession. D.Mead built relationships with colleagues with whom she could relate, and with whom she could build community. A particularly important relationship in her first year of teaching was that of her instructional coach. Despite not being assigned to her for mentorship, her instructional coach provided D.Mead with continual support. D.Mead shared:

> She's amazing. … she's just so sweet! Anything we needed, anything I needed— any help showing me how to do something—anything she was just there. Any questions I had, I knew I could go to her because she had the answer. … She was also my lunch buddy at the time. So she would come pick up my kids for lunch and then take them to lunch and bring them back.

D.Mead's relationship with her instructional coach was formative for her. Despite D.Mead's self-reliance, she was not hesitant to reach out to her instructional coach for guidance or support. This included taking her kids to lunch, and providing D.Mead with practical information she could use to help her grow as a teacher.

In addition, D.Mead had teacher friends with whom she confided. Specifically, she became close to her fellow kindergarten new teacher. They were able to offer each other support during their first year. She stated:

> It was just great to have somebody there to vent to each other about what was going on…. Like I said earlier, [the sharing of] the ideas, the different things that she would do, and I'd be like, "how are you doing this? How it's working in class?" And she's

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like, "Oh, I do this—I'll send it to you." And then she was going to my room and eat[ing

lunch]. So I feel like it was an equal…partnership.

This professional friendship was important to D.Mead, and contributed to building a school

community in which she had support despite her lack of contact with her formal mentor. As first-

year Kindergarten teachers, they had much in common, and were able to share resources and

ideas to better their own instructional practices.

When I asked D.Mead if her teacher relationships were limited to her grade level or team,

she indicated that that was not entirely the case. She shared:

I'm kind of scoping. We stay pretty close to the team. I don't really go outside the team,

unless I have a question. Um, I mean, I will talk to like the other African American

educators, because there's like, two others. So I'll talk to them first to get their perspective

on stuff. But that's about it.

D.Mead's response highlights the importance of representation, as she sought potential mentors

who shared her cultural background to help process situations connected to her identity as an

African American educator. In a follow-up correspondence, D.Mead clarified further in terms of

who she seeks to help her:

These relationships were generally my family. Using their perspectives and what they

would do helped me in some situations with students where behavior has been a problem.

Some students just need a different tactic used for them.

D.Mead went on to share that seeking opportunities with other African American educators has

been limited due to differing schedules. Yet, her family has given her perspective on how to

handle issues where factors such as race may affect how she approaches a situation.

D.Mead's Support Systems

Encompassing both formal and informal induction, I asked each of my participants to share who guided them through aspects of the teaching profession, and how these support systems guided them. I based these aspects on Bartell's (2004) "New Teacher Needs Addressed in Induction Programs," as replicated in Table 2.1. D.Mead shared who guided her through the following new teacher needs: 1) procedures and expectations, 2) managerial expectations, 3) teacher's psychological development and well-being, 4) instructional components, 5) professionalism, 6) school and community culture, and 7) politics (Bartell, 2004, p. 635); refer to Table 4.12.

Table 4.14. D.Mead's Support Systems

New Teacher Need	Guide	How?
Procedures and expectations	Principal and Assistant Principal	D.Mead shared that the principal and assistant principal were the primary sources for sharing the school and district's procedures and expectations.
Managerial expectations (i.e., Classroom management, coursework management, systems management, etc.)	Fellow First-Year Kindergarten Teacher	D.Mead cited her fellow first-year Kindergarten teacher as guiding her through managerial expectations. She stated: "we talk so much to each other. And so we bounce ideas back and forth off of each other. I'm like, 'Oh, I like what you're doing. How are you doing that?' And then she told me and then she did the same thing. We just went back and forth."
Teacher's psychological development and well-being	Instructional Coach	D.Mead identified her instructional coach as being an important factor in her psychological development and well-being: "She always kept up with us, asking us how we're doing with our mental health. How should she support us? What can be done to help us this? Everything? So yeah, her for sure."
Instructional components: Teaching practices, assessment, etc.	Instructional Coach	D.Mead credited her instructional coach for helping her develop her teaching practices.

New Teacher Need	Guide	How?
Professionalism	Cooperating Teacher	D.Mead noted that her cooperating teacher during student teaching was instrumental in helping her understand the elements of professionalism within education.
School and community culture	Self and Principal	She noted that in addition to the information provided to her by the principal able the school and community culture, she also cited her own observations: "I'm just getting to know everybody, taking time to talk to everybody, talk to all my kids, parents, and just get to know them. And you get to know your community based off of that. So like, what you're dealing with?"
School politics (Defined as an understanding of the stakeholders within schools, their agendas, and the workings of the school system.	Self	She states that she learned about the politics of the school and district through observation: "Just watch. Super observing. Just watching it and seeing how people would approach different people [such as] admin. Just seeing how they handled situations and how people would approach them or talk to them. It was just like, Okay, I see what to do, what not to do, what works and what doesn't work."

When I aligned D.Mead's sources of support with her formal and informal induction, five of the seven needs were met through informal avenues. Two needs, procedures/expectations and professionalism, were met through either the district's formal induction (i.e., procedures/expectations) or during her teacher preparation program (i.e., professionalism). For D.Mead, the community of support that she cultivated for herself was far more instrumental in guiding her through her first year challenges. D.Mead cited her instructional coach as a resource twice, specifically in connection to her instructional practice and in understanding her own psychological development and well-being. While not her formal mentor, D.Mead's instructional coach helped D.Mead both improve upon her practice while also helping her take care of herself.

Currently, in her second year, these supports are perhaps more important than during her first year. Her first year of teaching ended in June 2021, and her second year started August 2021. Whereas she described the start of her first year as "slow," she shared the following

sentiment about the start of her second year: "A lot of us are just so tired. So tired." The district had built in extra time for planning and preparation to account for COVID-19, a protective factor that was decreased as they transitioned into the 2021-2022 school year, going from 1.5 hours of plan time per day to 45 minutes. D.Mead stated that compared to her first year of teaching, she was needing to take more work home due to the shortened plan time. In addition, D.Mead noted that a worsening substitute shortage has meant that teachers in her district are called to cover for other teachers. Absences due to COVID quarantines have exacerbated the need for coverage. Yet, despite these challenges, D.Mead shared her feelings about teaching:

> I genuinely love my job. And it's the kids. The adults will always get on your nerves. But the kids— if you come to work— I feel like I have good days every day or wins at least every day. So yeah, it's a hard job. But you wake up and do it for the kids.

D.Mead's exigence for teaching is in the growth she sees in her students—she "wants to see kids become successful… to be great." D.Mead's support systems, particularly the ones she chose and cultivated, aid her in fulfilling this goal despite the difficulties she has faced in her first two years of teaching.

Hattie

Formal Induction

Professional development.

Hattie described for me her transition from pre-service to in-service teaching. The summer before her first-year of teaching was one filled with both anticipation. She interviewed for her position online, although she noted that she had a couple of in-person interviews just prior to "the big shutdown," as she described it. After accepting the position with her school district, she recalled driving to her school building for the first time, over the summer:

After [accepting the position], we did a lot of communicating via email, signing lots of documents, [since] we all couldn't be together. [In late May], I took a drive over to [my school], just to see it. I had never even been to [the town] before. And so came over and just drove by the school at least. And it was kind of funny—I drove by and parked and was taking a selfie in front of the school, and my principal drives up to the school! And I was like: "it's nice to meet you for the first time!" This was great.

Unlike Quincy and D.Mead, who accepted positions within the districts in which they student taught, Hattie's first year of teaching was in a different district from where she completed her student teaching. Due to the pandemic, her connection to the district was virtual, consisting of email corresponding and video conferencing. This moment was her first in-person connection within her new district. Hattie noted that this encounter was at a safe social distance. Similar to Quincy and D.Mead's own induction experiences, Hattie's integration into her school district was framed by the various modalities they utilized to mitigate for COVID-19. It was defined by distance, be it the distance created by virtual space or the physical distance between her and her principal.

For Hattie an important feature of her formal induction was the extended time that her district implemented in order to help their staff adjust and plan for teaching through COVID-19, including how to implement mitigation protocols, as well as plan flexible lessons to align with COVID-19 protocols and students' needs. Hattie reflected on what the additional two weeks meant for her as a novice teacher:

I think we had a little different induction than what I was expecting, in terms of once we actually got started with professional development in school because of COVID. Since we had an extended two weeks, where we didn't have kids, we had a month of

professional development, basically, before school started. … I think that that actually

was a huge help as a first-year teacher, because I had so much more time to spend with

my team, talking through the year, getting things ready. Versus this year, where we just

had our normal week or five days, before school started. And… I was totally fine,

because I knew what the year looked like.

Hattie compared her own induction, where she was afforded a month of professional

development to that of the first-year teachers starting their careers a year later. Rather than a

month to plan and prepare for the new school year, they only had five days of professional

development before meeting students. Hattie observed that these new teachers "are probably so

stressed out, because [they] didn't have the time to just have to process things and understand."

Indeed, Hattie viewed this time and professional development as extremely valuable. She

shared:

I think, in hindsight, 2020 super helpful to me, because I just had a whole lot more

time to get to know the people I was working with. We also implemented a new

…assessment system… last year and so that was a lot of our professional development

time was they have us watch these videos and discuss them and things with our teams.

And so, I had a little more time to wrap my mind around that testing platform without the

stress of "You're giving it tomorrow."

For Hattie, her district's decision to extend the professional development time at the beginning of

the 2020-2021 school year had a positive effect on her ability to process the changes necessitated

by COVID-19, to build relationships with her colleagues, as well as to more fully understand her

curriculum and how she would go about implementing it.

Hattie's district facilitated most of their professional development meetings via Zoom. Hattie described the topics covered during her professional development:

> We did a lot of district policies, just general overarching, good instructional practice
> things, a lot of what we got in college I felt was kind of repeated there. And… why we
> teach how we do, and some of the John Hattie [research on] effect size and teacher
> efficacy— why it's important to believe in your own instructional abilities before you
> can teach kids.

Hattie made a connection between the district's expectations of good instructional practice looked like, and her own teacher preparation, which aligned with the district's vision. Ultimately, Hattie found these sessions to be extremely valuable. She believed that her assistant superintendent, who designed their professional development valued their time, and provided professional development that was "intentional and to the point."

Formal mentorship.

A significant aspect of Hattie's professional development was the mentor training she received in August 2020. Hattie described this training:

> We had two days of mentor training, where my mentor and I, along with all the other new
> teachers to the district, met. And we got orientations to the district and got to do all of the
> … forms, [and] got all of the policies clarified. We use Kagan here a lot, and so we did
> some practice with how to use Kagan in the classroom and why it's important to use those
> cooperative learning structures. And it was helpful to have experienced people who were
> more familiar with it there to talk to. … We …had time to discuss with our mentor
> teachers, okay, "how do you work with students? How do you build relationships with
> them?" They gave us some time to understand the curriculum: what do we teach? How

do we teach it? And so they gave us some time to look through the curriculum maps with

them, and discuss what the scope and sequence looked like.

This training helped Hattie acclimate to the instructional expectations of her district. Through

this training, she learned how to incorporate "cooperating learning structures" into her own

teaching, and received support from veteran teachers in doing so. She also had the opportunity to

work with her mentor teacher to delve deeply into their curriculum and pacing guides.

Throughout the school year, her district continued to host mentorship meetings. Hattie

indicated that the mentorship meetings varied in usefulness. She observed:

We had bi-monthly meetings. So every other month, we would meet together in-person,

all of the new teachers and their mentors. And we would all get together and just have an

hour meeting and talk through what's going on, what's coming up. So like, when we met

in January, we talked about state assessments…. What do you need to know about those?

What do you need to have help preparing for? And they'd give us some time to just talk

with our mentors and compare ideas. Sometimes he proposed topics like what's an

effective instructional strategy you have tried, and get some time to collaborate and

discuss those things. I found that sometimes helpful; sometimes it felt more like we were

trying to meet because we needed to check a box. Because what I'm doing with fourth

graders, while sometimes applicable at the high school level, like there was, sometimes, a

little less ability to connect. because I was like, okay, just the strategies you use, some

may work with my kids. But on the whole, we just have different ways that we have to

structure our days. And so they weren't always super useful. But we did get to meet and

get to see everybody, which was good.

Since she was only one of two new elementary hires, she found that at times, it was difficult to connect the needs of new secondary teachers to her own. That said, she valued the opportunities to build relationships with colleagues in other buildings.

In addition, as part of her mentorship program, she was supposed to observe teachers in the district. Yet, due to COVID, the district did not "let teachers move around" to observe in other buildings. In lieu of district-wide observations, the district would have new teachers read teaching articles, and then share their thoughts via email, or they would meet with either the assistant superintendent or another new teacher to discuss the information. Hattie would meet with the school librarian, who was also taking part in new teacher orientation. Hattie noted that this was really useful because they could apply the information learned to their specific school setting.

Hattie shared that she had a good relationship with her mentor teacher, who taught in her building. She described their regularly scheduled meetings:

> In terms of meeting with my mentor, we had a monthly checklist that our assistant superintendent provided us. And so we would go through that and then sign off on it at the end of each month and send it in. And it was really, really helpful to just to kind of keep up with what's coming up, as someone who doesn't know the scope of the whole school year and has never experienced it. It just helped me keep on pace and like it was also valuable because my mentor teacher… ended up going on maternity leave in the springtime. So that checklist also guided me and made sure that I was asking the questions I needed to when she was on maternity leave. Before she left on maternity leave, I was in her room all the time, during plan time.

Hattie and her mentor effectively used the resources provided to them by the district, specifically the checklist of important considerations and tasks, to guide Hattie's growth as a teacher. This component of her formal mentorship contributed to her ability to fulfill her professional responsibilities and expectations.

Informal Induction

Collegial relationships.

Indeed, Hattie's relationship with her mentor was formative in help her develop her teaching practice. Hattie noted that her mentor "always had an open door, which was nice." This relationship actually began before the start of the 2020-2021 school year, as Hattie's mentor teacher met with her over the summer to help her prepare for the upcoming year:

> I got in touch with my advisor, or not my advisor, my mentor. And I asked my principal about that and was able to touch base with her once in the middle of the summer. We met in-person when I came up. And that was really, really helpful. She kind of gave me a clearer picture of what it was going to be like in [my district]. And she was the first person I really got that from, which I appreciated. She gave me an overview of the topics that we teach and the sequence we usually teach them in and the curriculum that we use to teach. And so that our meeting was just super helpful to just get a little more of my bearings around, what does this job look like for me. And so that was kind of my first intro.

For Hattie, this informal induction provided her with a foundation from which to build her teaching. The help Hattie's mentor offered prior to the start of the school year allowed for an easier transition into teaching fourth grade in her new school.

Hattie's mentor would continue to play an important role in Hattie's professional growth. When I asked Hattie to describe her mentor in one word or phrase, she stated: "open and flexible." Hattie went on to describe how her mentor made herself accessible:

> Every day, she'd stopped by before she left. She's like, "What do you need?" And sometimes I was like, I don't even know what I need…. But I appreciated that she was just always ready. If I had a question, she was there and ready to answer it.

This openness meant that Hattie never had to question if she would have support from her mentor. She described how her mentor teacher would guide her through how to communicate effectively with students and families. For example, she would proofread Hattie's parent emails, offer her feedback on the best approaches to teaching lessons, and assist Hattie in breaking down new ideas or information. Of her mentor, Hattie stated:

> She was awesome. I quickly learned that I have resources in her, and five other really good teachers, so I can lean on them too. And they were super helpful. And so that was also a valuable piece that I learned and that was very helpful. And then we continued that until she left on maternity leave.

In her first year of teaching, Hattie recognized the value in collaborating with other teachers, and taking every opportunity to lean in for support, as well as learn from the experiences of veteran teachers.

Indeed, Hattie's cultivation of meaningful collegial relationships meant that she had more resources from which to learn from. As mentioned earlier, Hattie's professional development included training on John Hattie's work on efficacy. Hattie's own professional practices illustrate her sense of efficacy, and how she leveraged her collegial relationships to improve her own instructional practice. I found this to most evident in how she furthered her own education during

COVID-19 to improve her practice. While new teachers were not able to observe teachers in other buildings, Hattie tried to observe teachers in her own building, when possible. Hattie shared an example of how she built in time to observe fellow teachers:

> I was to go in and observe [my mentor teacher] on a time that we had different schedules. Because they tried to align our scope pretty well, so we had our plan times together. But that made it difficult to be able to go in and observe. And so I usually watched her Social Studies time. …I would have loved to go in and watched a strong math lesson or q something. But I didn't get to do that because we couldn't find subs to cover for that long of a time. And honestly, putting together sub plans is a pain!... And so that was a little trickier. But to combat that, since I didn't really get that observation time, I use my iPad and I would go in and set it up— I did in a third-grade teacher's room and another one of our fourth-grade teachers. I would video lessons that they did, and then watch them at home, …because that gave me a much clearer picture of "okay, how did they teach this?" It was more helpful as a first-year teacher mostly to just see what instructional strategies are they using. How are they managing behavior? How did they get kids and keep them engaged? And that was the most valuable was just seeing someone else in action.

Hattie faced numerous challenges when trying to observe other teachers' classrooms, namely scheduling conflicts, lack of substitutes, and the logistics of creating substitute plans on the rare occasion she could secure one. To remedy this, Hattie asked teachers if she could record them teaching, and would set up her iPad to do so. Hattie then spent time analyzing those videos for best practices, giving her opportunities to learn from more veteran teachers. This example

illustrates her ability and willingness to capitalize on opportunities to improve her teaching practice.

For Hattie, she relied on the openness and expertise of her colleagues to help her navigate the challenges of first year. She indicated:

I felt like in general, all of my colleagues were extremely welcoming, knowing I was a first-year teacher. Knowing it was COVID, I think it made it even more so. But everyone had an open door. Like when I said that I went and videoed some of the other teachers; one of them was a third-grade teacher, because my fourth-grade team had recommended to go watch her. She's like, she's got a really solid handle on math. And they're like, she's one that would be a really great person to observe. And so not having hardly ever interacted with her before, other than at the coffee machine, she was more than willing to let me come in and set up an iPad. And like, I appreciated that; even though we didn't really know each other, she was more than comfortable with sharing with me what she knew. And so that was just really refreshing. And I feel like that would be the case for pretty much any teacher in our building. And they were all just very open. They knew who I was, and they were more than willing to share with me what they could, whenever it was needed.

Hattie's gratitude to her fellow colleagues extended to her principal, who she credited with being supportive and open, as well. The culture of her school was such that all the teachers valued professional development and growth, and worked together towards helping each other grow professionally, and in turn, provide the best resources to their students. Hattie shared that she "planned and discussed with colleagues almost daily," noting that she "didn't think a day went by when [they] weren't talking over lunch," or that she didn't stop by one of her colleagues'

rooms, seeking guidance or suggestions. Hattie nurtured collegial relationships that subsequently supported her in being able to meet her students' academic and social-emotional needs.

Hattie's Support Systems

Encompassing both formal and informal induction, I asked each of my participants to share who guided them through aspects of the teaching profession, and how these support systems guided them. I based these aspects on Bartell's (2004) "New Teacher Needs Addressed in Induction Programs," as replicated in Table 2.1. Hattie shared who guided her through the following new teacher needs: 1) procedures and expectations, 2) managerial expectations, 3) teacher's psychological development and well-being, 4) instructional components, 5) professionalism, 6) school and community culture, and 7) politics (Bartell, 2004, p. 635); refer to Table 4.13.

Table 4.15. Hattie's Support Systems

New Teacher Need	Guide	How?
Procedures and expectations	Mentor	Hattie shared that her mentor was "the one [she] went to for all [her] questions about district school procedures."
Managerial expectations (i.e., classroom management, coursework management, systems management, etc.)	Mentor, Fourth-grade Teachers, and Self	Hattie shared: "I'd say my mentor slash other fourth-grade teachers. I talked to my mentor a lot, but I usually wanted to get a diverse array of strategies. If I tried something my mentor had suggested, but it didn't work, I go to another teacher and ask them. So my mentor or like one or two of my other fourth-grade teachers… And lots of googling."
Teacher's psychological development and well-being	Parents	Hattie admitted that she "wasn't super great about mental health, I guess, my first year. … I'm working on that one." She noted that she would turn to her parents. She stated: "My parents, I guess, would have been more of my outlet there in terms of talking to them. They were both educators, and so I did a lot more of my venting and talking through."

New Teacher Need	Guide	How?
		Hattie also noted that the principal sent out resources about mental health, but she did not use those services.
Instructional components: Teaching practices, assessment, etc.	Mentor and Special Education Teacher	"my mentor, definitely. And my special education teacher that also worked with a few of my students were my two huge people there. And then by extension, my team; we did a lot of discussion, … in terms of developing assessments for kids. If I had a question about how would you grade this, I could go to my mentor, she'd helped me out. And then with, I got a lot more of a clearer picture of like special education students. And like, I'd work a lot with my SPED teacher, … And just getting more of a perspective on how do I modify and make sure that my grades are accurately reflecting the abilities of my students?"
Professionalism	Assistant Superintendent	Hattie noted that her Assistant Superintendent set the expectations for professionalism, beginning with their initial professional development.
School and community culture	Mentor and Self	Hattie shared: "That's… a hard one with COVID, because there just was no community interaction. In terms of understanding school culture, I think my mentor, probably I could just go to her with general questions if I wasn't sure about things. A lot of it just came through my personal interactions and experiences with my kids and my families, and just observations.
School politics (Defined as an understanding of the stakeholders within schools, their agendas, and the workings of the school system.	Mentor and Fourth-grade Team	Hattie noted that her mentor and her my fourth-grade team helped her understand the political dynamics of her school and district.

Hattie named her mentor teacher as an important person who guided her through five of the seven categories listed. Similar to Quincy's experiences, Hattie was able to rely on her mentor for daily guidance and camaraderie. The assistance her mentor offered extended beyond the requirements of the formal mentor program, and that additional support was instrumental in

helping Hattie grow as a teacher. I also noted similarities to Quincy's and D.Mead's support

systems, specifically, the nurturing of collegial relationships. Much like Quincy and D.Mead,

Hattie was close to her teaching team. In our discussion about mental health, Hattie shared how

her colleagues supported her in that regard:

> In a lot of districts, it's a lot of saying in emails "take care of yourself. Don't forget to
>
> spend time with your family, …enjoy life." We can read it, but it's different into practice.
>
> I had some supportive colleagues that were like, go home, go do something for you.

Her commentary speaks to a larger culture of self-care that rings hollow without system supports

to ensure that teachers are being treated equitably and mindfully (Klein, 2022). Yet, what did

resonate were her own colleagues' advocacy for her own work/life balance. She recognized their

affirmation of not only her hard work, but also of her need to be mindful of her own well-being.

This speaks to the significance of healthy collegial relationships, and their ability to be sustaining

agents for positive practices in the teaching profession.

Currently in her second year of teaching, Hattie's induction into the teaching profession

has taught her the importance of embracing flexibility. She shared:

> When I started, I wanted to be in control of so much. And I still like inherently want to be
>
> in control of so much. But this year has been so much easier on me one because I know
>
> the school but two because I know that half the times that I plan, everything is going to
>
> go to hell-in-a-handbasket, and that's okay! I know how to roll with it now. And I feel
>
> like, it's been a lot better for me this year, because I knew that was coming, and I knew
>
> that I was going to have to adapt. … Whereas last year, I was like just trying to stay
>
> above water. And so as a teacher, I feel like I've come to value flexibility a lot more. And
>
> I've come to be able to cope with the things out of my control a lot more effectively. So if

a kid's gone, I'm not stressed about it. Whereas last year, every time a kid was gone, it

was it just felt like a whole ordeal… I think just being flexible as a teacher has been… a

huge learning point through all of this.

Teaching through the two years of the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that Hattie has had to

factor in flexibility as part of her planning and preparation. She had to work through her need to

control every situation and embrace the ambiguity that has come with the COVID-19

disruptions. Hattie's multiple sources of support have been integral to her ability to not only

survive, but continuously adapt to the changing conditions.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

I write this on March 17, 2022—two years after the WHO declared the looming COVID-19 crisis a pandemic. In many ways, life is starting to return to a relative normal. Businesses are open, people are hosting gatherings, and we can travel again. Many Americans still wear masks in areas of high transmission, but we no longer have to avoid a casual hug from a loved one. Yet, even as we start to see through the fog, it is important to reflect on what these two years have taken from us. As of March 17, 2022, 966,575 Americans have died of COVID-19 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022). Daily life, while having resumed a "business as usual" feel, still carries the bruises of two years of illness, death, and uncertainty. For teachers across the country, these past two years have been grueling. They have been at the helm of keeping schools open, implementing federal and state level COVID-19 mandates and protocols, safeguarding the health and well-being of students, while also trying to keep themselves and their families healthy. This study highlights a level of resilience among the participants that is admirable, but arguably not sustainable without proper institutional and societal supports. Chapter 5 captures the lessons gleamed from their stories in the following sections: Summary of the Study, Findings, Conclusions, Implications for Practice, Further Considerations, and Recommendations for Further Research.

Summary of the Study

Induction into the teaching profession has always been a difficult process, as novice teachers contend with multitude of challenges. In addition, novice teachers also face personal stressors that compound the effects of the challenges they face in the classroom, leaving first-year teachers to experience decreased levels of career optimism, as well as high levels of attrition (Bieler, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Ingersoll, 2003; Taylor, McLean, Bryce, Abry &

Granger, 2019). This study focuses on the experiences of COVID's first-year teachers—a unique cohort of teachers who began their careers in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now in their second year of teaching, these teachers' experiences offer powerful insights into what it means to teach in educational environments defined by crisis, as well as in environments drastically different from the ones in which they were trained to teach.

Thus, the purpose of this study was to capture the experiences of first-year teachers in the wake of COVID-19 and examine how the pandemic affected their sense of professional efficacy and various aspects of their practice. I utilized case study methodology because of its ability to allow a phenomenon to unfold and grant "access to knowledge we would not otherwise have access to" (Merriam, 1998, p. 33). I organized my case-study research into two phases: 1) examination of existing CAEP 4 focus group data, and 2) individual interviews with selected participants. A group of researchers, including myself, conducted the CAEP 4 focus groups, six in total, with teachers who were in their first year of teaching when the pandemic began. The purpose of the focus groups was to gather a broad understanding of the experiences of first-year teachers as they tackled the various challenges that arose as a result of the pandemic. In order to do this, I applied Grounded Theory to the focus group data. Four axial codes emerged: 1) Teaching Practices, 2) Teaching Values, 3) Changes to Teaching Environment, and 4) Teaching Challenges. From these codes, I defined a central concept, or selective code, that comprised their COVID-19 experiences: COVID-19 significantly altered the spatial dynamics of teaching and learning, which consequently changed the ways in which participants engaged in their professional responsibilities.

This central idea, and the axial codes that framed it, informed the questions that I asked my selected interviewees—Quincy, D.Mead, and Hattie. I chose them from the original focus

group participants because they met the following criteria: 1 and 2. I conducted two in-depth interviews with each interviewee. These interviews and observations allowed for deeper understanding of the participants' first year of teaching, and how COVID-19 affected their induction and sense of efficacy. A more thorough theoretical analysis of their experiences is provided under "Findings."

Findings

Central Research Question: How has the COVID-19 Pandemic Affected Participants' Induction into the Teaching Profession?

The initial analysis of the CAEP 4 focus group data revealed a significant selective code, which was central to all participants' experiences: COVID-19 significantly altered the spatial dynamics of teaching and learning, which consequently changed the ways in which participants enacted their teaching practices. Participants found themselves thrust into teaching environments they had never anticipated, ranging from teaching virtually via video conferencing platforms to rearranging their brick-and-mortar classrooms to accommodate for social distancing and other COVID-19 mitigation protocols. Furthermore, our participants found that students were equally overwhelmed, and that their motivation to actively engage in their educational experiences was greatly diminished.

Indeed, during our focus groups, participants frequently shared the instructional tasks they could no longer do, or that were significantly hindered, as a result of the change in spatial dynamics. I recalled Participant 1.2's struggle trying to teach preschoolers how to use scissors over a screen as a prime example of how hands-on instructional tasks were negatively impacted by the transition to full remote learning environments. Other participants shared how the lessons they had envisioned for their traditional, pre-COVID, classrooms no longer worked as planned

due to the collaborative, hands-on nature of their content areas. In addition, many of our focus group participants cited a lack of motivation and engagement in their students, a sign of the deep toll that the pandemic had on students' well-being.

This new educational landscape, for all of its difficulties, provided new teachers with, as Participant 3.2 described, "the freedom to fail"—a sense that this new teaching environment was terrain ripe for exploration. Underlying all of their experiences were paradoxical feelings, ranging from uncertainty and fear to relief and pride. For our participants, the pandemic leveled the teaching field, requiring both veteran and novice teachers to reassess their teaching practices and values. The initial focus group data, thus also captured the ingenuity and resilience of our participants. Several participants, across the six focus groups, shared a common sentiment: despite the immense challenges, they did the hard work of making it through—they found ways to work around obstacles and survive. I'm reminded of Participant 5.2's observation of how the pandemic impacted her teaching identity—she observed that it made her "tougher."

My in-depth interview questions for Quincy, D.Mead, and Hattie stemmed from this understanding of how the COVID-19 pandemic affected participants' induction into the teaching profession. In the following sections, I analyze their experiences in context to two sub-questions that are integral to framing COVID-19's impact on first-year teachers' induction experiences:

1. In what ways did participants' induction experiences inform their teaching practices?

2. How has the COVID-19 pandemic influenced participants' sense of professional efficacy and agency?

I applied two theoretical lenses to frame my interviewees' experiences: 1) critical spatial theory to describe how dimensions of physical and abstract space affected their teaching practices, and

2) social cognitive theory to inform how the pandemic affected their sense of efficacy and agency.

Critical Spatial Theory: Analysis of the Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Teaching Practices

Research sub-question 1: In what ways did participants' induction experiences inform their teaching practices?

Critical spatial theory offers a valuable lens for exploring of the larger socio-political spaces and constructs in which teachers found themselves. Unlike traditional notions of space as a finite "container with people and objects being assigned fixed positions" (Schroer, 2018, p. 1998), Critical spatial theory posits that an exploration of space also includes "the mental, including logical and formal abstractions; and … the social"—it embodies the ways in which spatial dynamics affect human activity, and conversely, how human values and activities inform the construction and reconfiguration of space (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 11; Schroer, 2018). Additionally, Ferrare and Apple (2010) emphasize that "a critical theory of space is thus necessarily relational" (p. 211), and therefore "has the potential to expose social relations that have often been taken for granted or ignored altogether by critical education analysists" (p. 211).

All three of my interviewees experienced different teaching modalities, all variations of remote and in-person teaching. In adapting to these teaching modalities, my interviewees adapted various aspects of their teaching practices, such as how they planned and prepared for their lessons, how they delivered their instruction, how they managed their classrooms, and how they built relationships with students and families.

During his first year of teaching, Quincy followed a hybrid schedule, in which he taught half of his students via Zoom, and the other half in-person each day. Subsequently, students

would attend in-person two days a week, and attend virtually three days a week. As noted in my earlier analysis of the spatial dynamics of his hybrid schedule, Quincy and his students were inhabiting three spaces simultaneously—1) their immediate physical surroundings, 2) the virtual space of a classroom, and 3) the abstract, academic space of learning. For his students, their immediate physical surroundings encompassed their homes, which meant that the lines between school and home life were essentially blurred, as indicated by their desire to show Quincy their rooms and homes. While Quincy did not view these detours as disruptive, it illustrated how the different spatial dynamics required that Quincy adapt his instructional approaches in order to engage his students, thus altering his professional practice in response to the reconfiguration of the educational space (Lefebvre,1991; Schroer, 2018).

Quincy's experience also "expose[d] social relations that have often been taken for granted," specifically the teacher-parent connection (Ferrare and Apple, 2010, p. 211). Going into his first year of teaching, Quincy assumed that most of his communication with families would be via email. However, he found that since, at least initially, parents were home with their students due to COVID-19 related work restrictions, they were assisting his students log into their Zoom classes. This meant that they would often come into the Zoom screen to talk with Quincy about their student's progress. Therefore, he found that he had more frequent and informal interactions with parents, and that he built better relationships with parents as a result.

D.Mead's schedule required that she adapt her instruction based on the modality necessitated by COVID-19 cases in her county. Therefore, when case numbers were high, D.Mead's district would implement fully remote instruction, and when case numbers were low, they would revert back to fully in-person instruction. When teaching remotely, D.Mead and her students also inhabited three spaces simultaneously—1) their immediate physical surroundings,

2) the virtual space of a classroom, and 3) the abstract, academic space of learning. D.Mead's students were much younger, and she found that the distractions presented by their immediate physical surroundings were sometimes difficult to overcome. D.Mead cited several distractions— video games, food, television—that affected her ability to effectively teach her lesson when online. The blurring of spatial boundaries meant that D.Mead had little control over the virtual learning environment. That said, D.Mead found ways to adapt her virtual environment to add the structure and routine of a traditional brick-and-mortar space, specifically callback techniques that brought the familiarity of the traditional educational space into her virtual space.

D.Mead found that building strong relationships with parents and students was a non-negotiable if she was to positively impact her students' learning experiences. She shared that she wanted her students to think of school as a fun and welcoming place. During the times in which she had to teach fully remote, D.Mead made porch visits, brought small gifts for her students' birthdays, etc. These acts made the abstract idea of school concrete and tangible—D.Mead was not simply a face on a screen; she was a real human-being, their teacher, who's tangibility transcended both spaces. This aligns with Lefebvre's (1991) conceptualization of social space as "at once work and product—a materialization of 'social being'" (p.101-102). In a literal sense, D.Mead materialized for her students as a "social being"—as a three-dimensional entity beyond the two-dimensional frame of her Zoom screen. In turn, by making herself present and accessible beyond the screen, she could build deeper connections with both her students and their families.

Of my three interviewees, Hattie had the most traditional schedule, given that she taught fully in-person from the beginning of her first-year of teaching. Yet, it could be argued that her traditional start was anything but "normal." Hattie found that she had to significantly reshape her classroom environment to accommodate for COVID-19 mitigation efforts. Much like Quincy

and D.Mead's in-person classes, Hattie had to ensure that students were social distancing, wearing masks, and following general hygiene guidelines, such as sanitizing surfaces and washing hands. Hattie also had to arrange her room in rows so that students were not facing each other, and her students had desk shields, clear plexiglass, that surrounded their desks. While her students adjusted to these changes to the traditional classroom space, Hattie found that is significantly affected how she positioned herself within that space. She had to be strategic in her seating arrangement to ensure that students that needed the most immediate support were in the periphery where she could easily be accessible.

The arrangement of her classroom, in many respects, countered the student-centered and collaborative approaches promoted in her teacher preparation program and her district's values. Seating students in rows, and limiting the amount of interaction among peers, worked against the student-centered approaches that Hattie learned in her teacher preparation program and that her district promoted. This tension between value and space speaks to Lefebvre's (1991) understanding of how "space… acquires symbolic value"—how the theoretical frameworks that guide what educators deem best practice are acted out and represented within educational spaces. Ultimately, Hattie found ways to work within her district's COVID-19 mitigation guidelines to have students collaborate and interact. For example, she allowed her students to move around the room and interact, provided that the interaction was for less than 10 minutes at any given time. Hattie still found ways to engage students in collaborative work, despite the challenges posed by the classroom space.

For all three interviewees, starting their careers at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic meant having to shift the paradigms that had structured their understanding of what it means to teach. All three interviewees noted that they had not been taught to teach in an online space—

that their teacher preparation programs were founded on the premise that they would teach in brick-and-mortar buildings with students in their immediate space. For Quincy and D.Mead, who spent substantial time transitioning between in-person and remote modalities, they felt most comfortable when working with students face-to-face. They were able to identify students' needs quicker than they could online. Hattie also experienced some of that discomfort when she had students who were quarantined who needed to Zoom into her class. She had to find a way to adapt her curriculum so that her online students could still benefit from her lessons even if they did not have the same materials. While at one time, online teaching in the K-12 educational setting was considered an anomaly, the COVID-19 pandemic required school systems to change the infrastructure of their educational landscapes.

Social Cognitive Theory: Analysis of COVID-19 Pandemic's Influence on Professional Efficacy and Agency

Research sub-question 2: How has the COVID-19 pandemic influenced participants' sense of professional efficacy and agency?

In analyzing my interviewee's teaching experiences, social cognitive theory provided a useful framework for conceptualizing their "perceived self-efficacy," or their "beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance [and] influence" (Bandura, 1994, para. 1). Bandura (1989) asserted that "persons are neither autonomous agents nor simply mechanical conveyers of animating environmental factors" (p. 1175). Thus, my interviewees' sense of efficacy and agency was contingent on the interplay of complex "personal and environmental factors" (Bandura, 1989, p. 1175). At its core, self-efficacy beliefs "constitute the key factor of human agency. If people believe they have no power to produce results, they will not attempt to make things happen" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3).

If, indeed, "persons are neither autonomous agents nor simply mechanical conveyers of animating environmental factors," then any analysis of self-efficacy has to begin with an understanding of the environmental realities of my interviewees, as well the multitude of decisions that stemmed from their educational settings (Bandura, 1989, p. 1175. As noted earlier, Quincy began his first-year of teaching in a hybrid schedule. While during his student teaching experience, he benefited from strong parental support and student attendance, his struggled with attendance when they transitioned into a hybrid model. Quincy noted that parents returned to work, which in effect, meant that students were often left alone to log into their virtual settings. He noted that "if students didn't have to [log in], they weren't going to," and he felt as if he had little control over whether his students chose to log in. When his students were in class, he tried to remedy this by frontloading information when students were in school, and assigning work for home; however, he found that this work would not always get done, and as a result, students would fall further behind.

Yet, struggles alone do not constitute a lack of efficacy. In identifying the obstacles to helping his students be academically successful, Quincy engaged in critical and ongoing reflection to improve his instruction and to work through the challenges he and his students faced as a result of COVID-19. As part of his formal and informal induction activities, his mentor was influential in helping him engage in critical reflection on his practice, as well as his role within the larger socio-political landscape of schools. He would seek his mentor's advice when adapting his teaching practices. In addition, he was intentional about building strong relationships with his students, and leading with his values; specifically, regardless of previous attendance, he was purposeful in letting his students know that "was happy they were here." This may seem like a simple gesture, but in practice, it laid the foundation for continual improvement in terms of their

academics, as well as social-emotional well-being. These attributes are indicative of his professional efficacy, and his ability to effect change despite the challenges.

D.Mead also faced significant challenges, as she tried to teach her Kindergarteners via Zoom. Unlike Quincy, D.Mead actually benefited from strong attendance; she noted that approximately 80% of her students logged in for their remote lessons. Yet, she faced challenges getting students to complete work. In addition, her Kindergarteners were easily distracted when there were learning virtually, as the comforts of home—their toys, games, and snacks—were immediately accessible and the lines between school and home effectively blurred. D.Mead implemented various techniques to bring structure to their Zoom calls; however, she expressed that at times, she felt that if a student didn't grasp a concept, then "that was just what it was." In the virtual setting, she found that she had fewer opportunities to differentiate her instruction to help students. Nonetheless, much like Quincy, D.Mead leveraged the in-person time she had with her students to ensure that they were receiving the support they needed. She was better able to connect them with support staff in the building, and differentiate for individual student needs. In addition, she prioritized building strong relationships with families and students by conducting porch visits as a way of making meaningful connections.

I go back to D.Mead's statement: "you're trying to teach through what they're going through at home," and our conversation afterwards about the applicability of this sentiment to trying to teach through COVID-19. When faced with the realities of COVID-19, D.Mead's approach to these challenges was to work through it—to do the best she could with the resources she felt she had available. While D.Mead noted that her formal induction had a short-term effect on her practice, her relationship with her instructional coach and fellow Kindergarten teacher were instrumental in allowing her to reflect and adjust her teaching practices. D.Mead's

experiences align with Jerusalem and Mittag's (1999) assertion that highly efficacious people "face stressful demands with confidence, …judge positive events as caused by effort and negative events as due primarily to external circumstances" (p. 178). D.Mead applied the lessons she learned from her in-person teaching and colleagues to improve her teaching practices in the virtual setting, understanding that some of her struggles were inevitably due to external circumstances beyond her control.

Despite teaching in-person from the start of the 2020-2021 school year, Hattie faced struggles, as well. The uncertainty bred by the pandemic posed a challenge for Hattie, as she indicated that she "wasn't able to really look ahead to the future" because she was so focused on surviving the immediate crisis. Her thoughts were always on how to make the next day work—how to keep her students safe and learning in the present. For Hattie, COVID-19 was unsettling because there were so many factors which she could not control: if/when students would be quarantined, the limitations in movement and collaboration to account for mitigation efforts, etc. She spent significantly more time planning in case a student would be quarantined, and brainstorming ways to make the content meaningful via a Zoom screen. Even then, there was never the certainty that it would work.

Nonetheless, Hattie was committed to using all resources in her disposal to provide quality education to her students, including her formal and informal induction activities. I noted that Hattie cited John Hattie's work in collective efficacy as part of her formal induction into the district. Her professional practice aligns with Donohoo, Hattie & Eell's (2018) work, which notes the powerful effect of collective efficacy on teachers' practice and student outcomes. Hattie's school district prioritized a culture of collaboration and that "reinforce[d] proactive behaviors, feelings, thoughts, and motivations" (Donohoo, Hattie & Eells, 2018, p. 42). Hattie

leaned into this culture and took every opportunity to learn from her colleagues. This was exemplified in Hattie's initiative to record fellow teachers' lessons so that she could watch and study them for best practices. Hattie was eager to learn, and knew that tapping into her colleagues' strengths would make her a better teacher. In the end, Hattie gained renewed confidence, not in what she could control, but rather in knowing that she was able to adapt to any situation in which she found herself.

Indeed, my interviewees' formal and informal induction mentorship experiences were instrumental in helping them navigate the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. They each relied on collegial relationships to engage in reflective practice that offered different perspectives on how to adapt their curriculum and strategies to meet both the needs of their students and the realities of COVID-19. Collectively, their mentors and colleagues gave them advice on a multitude of aspects pertaining to the teaching profession: best practices in instruction and classroom management; reflection on a lesson gone wrong; insights into the school and district culture and values, etc. At a time of unprecedented challenges, their mentors and colleagues were a source of stability, despite their own lack of experience teaching in a pandemic. When examining my interviewee's evolving sense of efficacy, the role of mentorship was integral in helping them fortify how they perceived their abilities to effect change in their teaching practices, and ultimately in student outcomes.

Implications for Practice

Federal and State Education Policies

As Kayyem (2020) argued in her essay "Reopening Schools Was Just an Afterthought," the pandemic revealed the essential role that school systems play, not just in educating America's future, but also in ensuring the economic viability and security of the United States.

Indeed, participants' stories referenced the complex interplay between familial dynamics, industries, schools, and federal/state responses to the pandemic. COVID-19 mitigation factors such as shutting down buildings and implementing remote learning days, posed serious consequences for families, their support systems, and their employers. Our participants' stories illustrated how they taught, while also working through and around the multitude of stressors families and their children faced.

Shy of the Department of Homeland Security adding public education to its list of 16 sectors deemed as essential infrastructure (*Critical Infrastructure Sectors,* 2020), this study illustrates what, perhaps, is already painfully evident to anyone who works in education: federal entities, such as the Department of Education, need to account for how schools function within the larger economic and socio-political infrastructure of the United States, specifically as it concerns childcare, building infrastructure, and safety protocols. Indeed, participants illustrated how they problem-solved through many challenges; yet, it serves our nation's best interest to collectively and comprehensively understand the challenges educators faced to build substantive supports for when the nation faces another crisis.

My interviewees' experiences speak to the importance of giving teachers and administrators time to prepare and plan for significant institutional changes. The late start to the school year was an example of a responsive piece of legislation, as it gave schools time to adjust to the COVID-19 related changes. Hattie noted that the extra time was a "blessing," as it gave her time to think through her routine in light of the COVID-19 mitigation protocols that she would need to follow. It also gave her time to plan and become acquainted with her team. Her experience highlights the need for state level policy decisions to prioritize the needs of schools

and teachers, specifically. As the ones implementing said policies, educators have the best vantage-point to guide policy that benefit all students and communities.

District and Building-Level Administrators

The findings from this study support the need for well-curated and executed formal induction programs that are responsive to the socio-political conditions in which teachers find themselves. For most of our participants, new teacher orientations and start-of-the-year professional development sessions constituted their initial induction to their districts and the profession. While the degree of impact, inevitably varied, participants noted that some portion of their professional development addressed how the school year would function, giving the mitigation protocols their districts were expected to follow. To this point, participants cited their principals, as integral to guiding them through these challenges, as they stepped up to the challenge of leading their buildings through substantial changes due to COVID-19, despite not always having the answers. Building principals provided the vision and coordination for their staff to implement the numerous COVID-19 mitigation protocols, adapt new school schedules to accommodate for remote learning modalities, and counsel students and families as they struggled with the COVID-19 pandemic. When administrators center the socio-political realities of their teachers within formal induction opportunities, novice teachers are better able to address the challenges those conditions pose.

This study also supports the implementation of mentorship opportunities as a protective factor for novice teachers navigating moments of crisis. Quincy and Hattie's relationships with their mentors illustrate how influential these relationships can be. In both of their cases, their mentors taught the same grade-level and their classrooms were next to their mentors. Due to this proximity, they were able to rely on their mentors informally, as needs arose. In D.Mead's case,

her relationship with her district-assigned mentor was not as strong; however, her instructional coach assumed a mentorship role for her. While their mentors were also trying to work through the challenges of COVID-19, my participants were able to lean in on their mentors' experiences to reflect and adapt accordingly. What was less effective for my participants were the aspects of mentorship programs that functioned as monthly check-ins, or was limited to readings or a book club model. In these cases, the tasks were more something to cross off the list of things to do, rather than authentic, ongoing engagement in mentorship. My participants' experiences speak to the need for administrators to invest more fully in building collegial relationships that sustain teachers' professional growth. For my participants this included: more frequent opportunities for team building and more prioritizing more time for co-planning and collaboration.

Implications for Teacher Preparation Programs

As an extension of the CAEP 4 longitudinal case study (Kansas State University-College of Education, 2022), this research exposes areas of improvement for the KSU-COE. Prior the COVID-19 pandemic, a central assumption underlying the pedagogical preparation of preservice teachers was that the educational experiences they would experience would be in-person. Our participants often noted that they had never taught virtually, nor had they been trained to do so. While increasingly, schools are moving back into traditional models of teaching, it can no longer be taken for granted that there is no need for pedagogical training and practice in virtual settings. Part of that educative process would need to include critical analysis of the spatial dynamics of schools—how their organization and the expectations of these educational spaces affects their teaching practices. Thus, this study supports the need to provide preservice teachers with diverse field experiences in multiple modalities, as well as more explicit instruction in how to teach in virtual or blended environments.

In addition, participants' experiences with mentor teachers made me reflect upon how our teacher preparation program prepares preservice teachers to cultivate meaningful professional relationships, not just with students, but with colleagues. This research speaks to the importance of collegial relationships in helping them navigate the pandemic, and the need for teacher preparation programs to explicitly address how to build and nurture these relationships. One area of improvement within field experiences, as it pertains to mentorship, is providing more guidance to university supervisors on how to build a dialectical relationship with candidates—one that prioritizes dialogue and reflection in the co-construction of goals, rather than simply giving candidates feedback. This would offer candidates the ability to practice reflective engagement with a fellow professional as a way of improving their practice.

Limitations of Study

The purpose of this study was to capture the experiences of COVID-19's first-year teachers, and to examine how their unique induction into the teaching profession affected their sense of teaching efficacy and their practices. In doing so, the experiences of my participants inform how teacher preparation programs equip preservice teachers for teaching in moments of crisis, and serve to illustrate the ways in which novice teachers need to be supported in order to overcome induction challenges, particularly in moments of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic presented. That said, there are limitations to this study. First, as an extension of KSU-COE's CAEP 4 longitudinal case study, the focus of this research was limited to the experiences of first-year teachers who graduated from their programs. Nonetheless, while the results of this research are not generalizable to other teacher preparation programs, lessons learned can serve as points of reflection for other teacher preparation programs who encountered similar challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, my interviewees—Quincy, D.Mead, and

Hattie—were all elementary teachers, and therefore their insights, while important, do not necessarily reflect the challenges secondary teachers faced. Another limitation of this study is that I was not able to observe in classrooms. Given the dimensions of space, in-person observations may have garnered further insights into how COVID-19 affect my interviewees' teaching induction experiences.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study explored the multitude ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic affected the induction experiences of first-year teachers. The experiences of the student participants illustrated the complex ways in which COVID-19 affected the spatial dynamics of their teaching environments, and how those changes impacted the ways in which they approached various aspects of their instructional practices, their relationships with students and families, and their own sense of efficacy. It also illuminated the protective factors that helped participants tackle professional obstacles. Yet, as an extension of KSU-COE's CAEP 4 case study on the impact of program completers on their students' academic growth, the findings of this study, while important, are not generalizable, and thus there are areas for research that may emerge from this study.

In order to get a broader sense of how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the efficacy and instructional practices of first-year teachers in other settings, a quantitative study utilizing survey methodology, may provide more generalizable information by which to compare individual cases. Furthermore, in addition to examining efficacy and instructional practices, survey research may also be instrumental in informing, on a broader scale, the protective factors that significantly impacted first-year teachers' induction experiences during the pandemic. Quantitative research

would offer a valuable extension to this research in order to examine, statistically, the interplay between the various variables delineated in this study.

In addition, given that this study focused predominantly on the experiences of elementary school teachers, this study could be replicated by conducting this research with secondary education participants. Such research may reveal additional themes unique to secondary teachers' induction experiences, given the developmental and academic needs of middle and high school students. Similarly, this study could be replicated with completers who attended a different teacher preparation program. Since all participants attended the same teacher preparation program, their preservice experiences will reflect that training, to some degree. Replicating this with another institution may help to further our understanding of how teacher's preparation informs how they approached the COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly, in terms of other populations with which to replicate this study, it would be worthy to understand veteran teachers' COVID-19 experiences, and how it affected their sense of efficacy and their instructional practices.

Another recommendation for future research would be to longitudinally examine the retention rates of study participants. While this study highlighted instances of resilience and efficacious behaviors, it is beyond the scope of this study to claim that these traits will lead to long-term retention. Examining what factors and variables, over time, will lead to a desire to stay in the profession is worthy of further examination.

Summary

As an extension of KSU-COE's CAEP 4 case study on the impact of program completers on their students' academic growth, the purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of first-year teachers in the wake of COVID-19 and examine how the pandemic affected their sense

of professional efficacy and practice. Data was collected through two phases: CAEP 4 focus groups and individual interviews of three selected participants. Grounded theory served as the foundational framework for analysis of the focus group data and generated relevant theory, which in turn, guided the construction of the in-depth interview questions. The analysis of the focus group revealed that COVID-19 significantly altered the spatial dynamics of teaching and learning, which consequently changed the ways in which participants enacted their teaching practices. Critical spatial theory and social cognitive theory served as the frameworks for analyzing the experiences of three first-year teachers. Their experiences also underscored the importance of formal and informal induction experiences in helping them work through the multiple challenges posed by the pandemic, specifically the importance of well-developed and sustained professional development and the cultivation of meaningful collegial relationships. This research extends our understanding of how, in moments of collective crisis, strong formal and informal induction experiences can serve as protective factors for novice teachers.

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Appendix A - Interview 1 Questions

Purpose [as communicated to participants]: Thank you for volunteering to be a participant in this study. The primary purpose of this interview is to **examine how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected participants' induction into the teaching profession, as well as how the pandemic has affected their sense of professional efficacy and agency. Findings from this research will be used in various research and publications, including: doctoral research, CAEP 4 reporting, and research articles. Names and identifying information will be redacted, to ensure anonymity.**

Semi-structured Interviews: participants will receive a consent form prior to interviews.

Questions:
1. Tell me a little bit about yourself, your school, and your classroom.

2. Let's go back to March of 2020. Tell me about your recollections of the first month of the pandemic: where were you teaching/student teaching? Describe your initial thoughts and experiences during the start of the pandemic.

3. Thinking back to your first year of teaching, tell me about your triumphs/ biggest accomplishments as a teacher—what did you feel you did really well? Tell me about your biggest challenges.

4. Tell me about how the pandemic affected your teacher practices (i.e., planning and content delivery; classroom management; classroom procedures, etc.) In what ways have your practices needed to change due to the pandemic, and how have they changed?

5. How has the pandemic affected the physical environment of your classroom? How much control did you have in shaping your classroom environment?

6. Tell me about your ability to build relationships with students and families. How has the pandemic affected your ability to form those relationships?

7. Tell me about how the pandemic has informed your ability to help students academically and emotionally.

8. Being in your second year of teaching, tell me about how the previous year has informed your practices and teaching beliefs moving forward?

9. Is there anything else you want to share that we haven't talked about yet?

Closing: Thank you for your time! I will follow-up with a time to observe you this year [if participant is teaching in a remote environment].

Appendix B - Interview 2 Questions

1. Tell me more about the transition from student teaching to in-service teaching. Describe how this transition unfolded for you.

2. Describe your district's formal induction: How did your district prepare you for the realities of teaching and the profession, as a whole?

3. Was mentorship part of your formal induction? Describe the mentor-mentee relationship.

4. As the school year started, how did your district's preparation inform your decision-making? How did it affect your teaching practices and professional identity?

5. How did you become familiar with the following:
    a. The school and district's procedures?
    b. Managerial expectations?
    c. Psychological development?
    d. Instructional practices, expectations, assessment, etc.?
    e. Professionalism?
    f. Cultural grounding of school and community?
    g. Politics of school?

6. Describe your relationships with your colleagues? With your administrators? How did COVID affect relationship-building with them?

7. How often did you plan with your colleagues? How often did you refer to them for help or assistance with issues? If applicable, can you offer an anecdote of how your colleagues assisted you through a challenge?

8. How would you describe your teaching identity? If you were to describe who you are and what you value as a teacher, what would you say?

9. Is there anything else you want to share that we haven't talked about yet?

   Closing: Thank you for your time! I may follow-up with additional questions via email.

Appendix C - IRB Modification

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION:
Title of Project/Course: Kansas Teacher Education Program
Type of Application: Modification to an existing approved application #: 8434

Principal Investigator Details (must be a KSU faculty member):
Name: F. Todd Goodson
Degree/Title: PhD/Department Chair
Department: Curriculum and Instruction
Campus Phone: 2-5904
Campus Address: 261 Bluemont Hall
E-mail: tgoodson@ksu.edu
Fax: 2-7304

Responsible Graduate Student: (Person to contact for questions/problems with the form):
Name: Eileen Wertzberger
Campus Phone: 2-6158
E-mail: ejm7777@ksu.edu
Project Classification: Other: Program Evaluation

Copy of the Consent Form: Copy will be submitted to comply@ksu.edu with this application

MODIFICATION:
Is this a modification of an approved protocol? Yes

The requested modification to "KSU Teacher Education Program" aims to expand the scope of materials gathered by the College of Education to include additional sources of data collected **for the purposes of doctoral research** and for the purposes of accreditation under the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). Specifically, this addendum seeks to collect data needed to:
1. **examine how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected participants' induction into the teaching profession, as well as how the pandemic has affected their sense of professional efficacy and agency.**
2. demonstrate program impact as defined by CAEP Standard 4: "the provider demonstrates the impact of its completers on P-12 student learning and development, classroom instruction, and schools, and the satisfaction of its completers with the relevance and effectiveness of their preparation."

In order to gather the necessary data to demonstrate the impact of our completers on their students, as well as their satisfaction with their teacher education program, we request to add data collected from focus groups**, field observations, semi-structured individual interviews** and survey materials from participants. Below we list the modifications we request to make to our current IRB:

Changes to Design and Procedures:

A. List all sites where research will be conducted: The research will be conducted via zoom with participants from various districts around Kansas, such as: Belleville, KS; Bucyrus, KS; Buhler, KS; Concordia, KS; Council Grove, KS; Elbing, KS; Fort Riley, KS; Highland, KS; Junction City, KS; Kenesaw, NE; Manhattan, KS; Maplewood, MO; Olathe, KS; Overland Park, KS; Paola, KS; Salina, KS; Topeka, KS; Wamego, KS; White City, KS; Wichita, KS.

B. Variables to be studied: Data gathered will allow us to study the factors associated with completer impact on student learning, and completer overall satisfaction with their teacher education training. **Given the unprecedented nature of COVID-19 on education, this modification seeks to examine the impact of COVID-19 on program completers, specifically on their sense of professional efficacy and teacher induction.**

C. Data Collection Methods: In addition to KSU-COE's case study research to meet CAEP Standard 4, this modification seeks to conduct individual semi-structured interviews with selected participants from the original case study. Data will also be collected from field observations, provided that we are able to observe remote learning practices. This data will be collected and examined over the span of the 2021-2022 school year.

D. No changes to this.

Changes to Research Subjects:
A. Source: All participants will be KSU-COE graduates in their first-second year of teaching.

B. Number: We currently have 30 participants, with the intent to add 30 participants each year of our CAEP evaluation cycle. This number aligns proportionately with the enrollment in our various programs. **This modification will allow for follow-up semi-structured interviews and observations with up to 5 participants from the original CAEP 4 participants.**

C. Inclusion Criteria: Participants must be in their first or second year of teaching and be a KSU-COE graduate.

D. Exclusion Criteria: Participants that have more than two years of teaching experience; potential participants that may have started at KSU-COE, but finished through another institution.
Recruitment: We recruited these participants from advisors and faculty involved in COE programs.

XIV. PROJECT COLLABORATORS:
Eileen Wertzberger will work directly with data gathering as it pertains to this modification, COVID-19 Impact. The results will be reported in her doctoral research, as well as the CAEP 4 study.

Eileen Wertzberger, Curriculum and Instruction, 2-6158, ejm7777@ksu.edu

Appendix D - Consent Form

If you are performing research involving human subjects, it is your responsibility to address the issue of informed consent. This template is intended to provide guidance for crafting an informed consent document. The Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB*)* *strongly* recommends that you model your consent form on this template. However, if you choose a different approach, it must contain at a minimum the same elements as this standard version. Language and terminology used in the consent form must be written at no more than the 8th grade level, so that the potential participant can clearly understand the project, how it is going to be conducted, and all issues that may affect his or her participation. In addition, please write the consent form in a manner that addresses your subjects directly instead of writing it in a manner that addresses the University Research Compliance Office directly. *Information on the important issue of informed consent can be found in 45 CRF 46 at* http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.html#46.116. **Federal law mandates that all signed and dated informed consent forms be retained by the P.I. for at least three years following completion of the study.**

WAIVER OF INFORMED CONSENT: *There are limited instances where the requirement for a formal informed consent document may be waived or altered by the IRB.*
45 CFR 46 states that "An IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain a signed consent form for some or all subjects if it
    finds either: *1)*   *That the only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent document and the principal ris*
             would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. Each subject will be asked whether the sub
             wants documentation linking the subject with the research, and the subject's wishes will govern; or
          2)   *That the research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for whic*
             written consent is normally required outside of the research context."

If a study employs only questionnaires and surveys as the source of their data, it may generally be assumed that to answer and return the questionnaire is an appropriate and sufficient expression of free consent. However, there are circumstances that might call this assumption into question - e.g., teacher-student relationship between the investigator and the subject, etc. However, a statement should be included on the questionnaire or survey form indicating that participation of the subject is strictly voluntary, the length of time reasonably expected to complete the questionnaire or survey form, and that questions that make the participant uncomfortable may be skipped.

Form Content

PROJECT TITLE: Full title of project. If possible, the title should be identical to that used in any funding/contract proposal.

PROJECT APPROVAL DATE/ EXPIRATION DATE: provided in the approval letter, must be in place before distributing to subjects.

LENGTH OF STUDY: Estimate the length of time the subject will be expected to participate.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR/CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Must be a regular member of the faculty.

CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS: Name, phone number and/or email address of the P.I.

IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION*: For the subject should he/she have questions or wish to discuss on any aspect of the research with an official of the university or the IRB. These are:* Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224; Cheryl Doerr, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

PROJECT SPONSOR: Funding/contract entity.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: Explain in lay terms that this is a research project, and why the research is being done.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED: Explain in lay terms and in language understandable at the 8th grade level how the study is going to be conducted and what will be expected of participants. Tell participants if they will be audio or videotaped, if they will be paid, etc.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS, IF ANY, THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUBJECT: Explain any alternative procedures or treatments if applicable.

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED: Describe any foreseeable risks or discomforts from the study. If there are no known risks, make a statement to that effect.

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED: Describe any *reasonably expected* benefits from the research to the participant or others from the research.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: Explain how you plan to protect confidentiality.
IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS: *In cases where more than minimal risk is involved.*
PARENTAL APPROVAL FOR MINORS: If minors or those who require the approval of a parent or guardian are participants, you should include a space for their consenting signature.
PARTICIPANT NAME/SIGNAUTRE: Name of research participant and signature.
WITNESS TO SIGNATURE (PROJECT STAFF): Staff signature.

If any of the following content sections do not apply to your research, feel free to delete from the consent form.

PROJECT TITLE:

Kansas Teacher Education Program

PROJECT APPROVAL DATE:	12/11/2019	**PROJECT EXPIRATION DATE:**	7/1/2023	**LENGTH OF STUDY:**	3 years

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:	Todd Goodson

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):	Eileen Wertzberger

CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS:	Eileen Wertzberger, 785-532-6158 ejm7777@ksu.edu

IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION:	

PROJECT SPONSOR:	Department of Curriculum and Instruction, KSU College of Education

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

Thank you for volunteering to be a part of this project. The primary purposes are:
1. **Examine how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected participants' induction into the teaching profession, as well as how the pandemic has affected their sense of professional efficacy and agency.**
2. for KSU-COE to gather CAEP accreditation data that will allow us **to demonstrate the impact of our completers on P-12 student learning and development, classroom instruction, and schools, and the satisfaction of our completers with the relevance and effectiveness of their preparation. The findings will be used for accreditation reports and research publications.**

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:

1. In order to assess **the impact of our completers on P-12 student learning and development, classroom instruction, and schools, and the satisfaction of our completers with the relevance and effectiveness of their preparation**, we will conduct case study research, whereby you will reflect on your preparation and practice. We will collect the following data:
* focus group interviews with completers
* survey results from completers
* any artifacts completers would like to share with us that demonstrates their effectiveness in their teaching, as well as their satisfaction with their teacher preparation program.

2. The data collected as part of the CAEP 4 case study will also inform our understanding of **how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected completer's induction into the teaching profession**, as well as how the pandemic has affected their sense of professional efficacy and agency. In addition, we will collect the following data:
* semi-structured individual interviews
* field observations of remote learning

    This data will be coded using an open-coded system in order to identify key themes associated with completer impact on P-12 student learning, classroom instruction, and their satisfaction with their preparation.

BIOLOGICAL SAMPLES COLLECTED (Describe procedure, storage, etc.):

N/A

Whole genome sequencing will not be included as part of the research

Not Applicable.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS, IF ANY, THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUBJECT:

N/A

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED:

There is no risk involved, although time for interviews might prove inconvenient at times.

BENEFITS ANTICPATED:

The participants will benefit by reflecting and demonstrating how they have impacted their students' learning, as well as how they can continue to improve their practice.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:

Any published materials will exclude names and locations of participants. Data collected will be used for doctoral research and CAEP reports, among other research publications.

The information or biospecimens that will be collected as part of this research could be used for future research studies or distributed to other investigators for future research studies without additional informed consent.

IS COMPENSATION OR MEDICAL TREATMENT AVAILABLE IF INJURY OCCURS?   ☐ Yes ☒ No

PARENTAL APPROVAL FOR MINORS:

PARENT/GUARDIAN APPROVAL SIGNATURE: **DATE:**

Terms of participation: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

(Remember that it is a requirement for the P.I. to maintain a signed and dated copy of the same consent form signed and kept by the participant).

PARTICIPANT NAME:

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE:

DATE:

WITNESS TO SIGNATURE: (PROJECT STAFF)

DATE:

Appendix E - IRB Modification Approval

KANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY | University Research
Compliance Office

TO: Dr. F Todd Goodson
        College of Education
        Bluemont Hall

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair
        Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 09/01/2021

RE: Proposal #8434.3, entitled "KSU Teacher Education Program."

        MODIFICATION OF IRB PROTOCOL #8434.2, ENTITLED, "KSU Teacher Education
        Program"

        EXPIRATION DATE: 08/26/2022

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (IRB) has reviewed and approved the
request identified above as a modification of a previously approved protocol. **Please note that
the original expiration remains the same.**

All approved IRB protocols are subject to continuing review at least annually, which may
include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced in-progress reviews
may also be performed during the course of this approval period by a member of the University
Research Compliance Office staff. Unanticipated adverse events involving risk to subjects or to
others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB, and / or the URCO

It is important that your human subjects activity is consistent with submissions to funding /
contract entities. It is your responsibility to initiate notification procedures to any funding /
contract entity of any changes in your activity that affects the use of human subjects.