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## **Cultural Reflections: The Positioning of Preservice Teachers**

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### **Abstract**

Using Harré and Van Langenhove's Positioning Theory as a framework, this qualitative study explores the beliefs of twenty-four preservice teachers (PSTs) and undergraduate education majors who positioned themselves as they observed and reflected upon everyday racial/ethnic/other cultural related acts and behaviors in reflective journals. Three themes emerged from the analyses of students' reflective narratives: PSTs as Observers, Challengers/Questioners of Viewpoints, and Social Justice-Oriented Teachers. The findings revealed that most participants positioned themselves as future teachers and reflected on prohibiting the acts of racism in their classrooms. Furthering the task of changing less than desirable attitudes, if any, of PSTs lies with teacher educators who can promote activities such as observing, journaling, and reflecting on acts involving racial, ethnic, and other cultural groups.

*Keywords:* preservice teachers, Positioning Theory, teacher education

### **Introduction**

According to Horowitz et al. (2020), about half of Americans (49%) say the country has not made enough progress on racial equality. Violence among diverse groups of U.S. residents including the increases in police brutalities on African American males (Wormeli, 2016), the ill-treatment of marginalized groups, the deportation of immigrants, the prevalence of misogyny, Islamophobia, transphobia, and xenophobia (Bajaj et al., 2016), the detention of migrant children, the trivialization of the issues of persons from lower socio-economic status and those with disabilities, and the homicide of several Indian Americans, i.e., the stereotypical model minority, draws attention to societal problems. All of these manifestations are telltale signs that there is still much work to be done to change the dispositions of people about equity and justice. With current racial incidents igniting nationwide protests, the hope for our nation is that there will be policy and societal changes. Because schools today have become more racially, ethnically, linguistically, and economically diverse, the important work of social justice must be grounded in the field of teacher education programs (TEPs), in order to prepare teachers for building a more equitable society.

According to Cochran-Smith (2010), U.S. educators are primarily White, middle class, and female, and they need to develop a positioning that contemplates individuals and socio-political contexts oriented toward social justice and critical thinking. Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2020) found that in 2017–18, approximately 79 percent of public-school teachers were White, and it is projected that by 2044, over half of all Americans will belong to a minority group (Kena, et al., 2015). Additionally, White student enrollment will decrease to less than 50%, and Hispanic student enrollment will increase to 29% of total enrollment. Society looks to its educational institutions and teachers to prepare the next generation of socially just citizens. With a nation divided, the aim of our study is to provide insight to teacher practitioners with one major obligation to ensure that preservice teachers

(PSTs) are not only aware of unjust practices in schools but that they are also prepared to shape their actions in ways that are welcoming to those who are different from themselves.

To review the previous work on multicultural and social justice teacher education, as early as 1968, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education presented issues that needed addressing (Gollnick, 1992). Close to half a century later, the tasks ask for a recommitment. Several national professional organizations are still committed to equity and inclusion of marginalized groups into the mainstream. The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, found on the website of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO, 2013), expects the teacher to use an understanding of differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusion of all students and to hold high expectations for all learners. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards' (NBPTS, 2016) Proposition 1: Teachers Are Committed to Students and Their Learning, emphasizes that learning environments must address student-diversity. Sleeter and Owuor (2011) list some interventions stating, "Courses that demonstrated positive results used multiple strategies such as PSTs writing autobiographies, reflective journals, and post experience essays, and preparing individualized action plans for implementing multicultural education throughout the program" (p. 527).

Higher education faculty face the challenge of preparing PSTs in learning about who they are in relationship to their students (Sleeter, 2016) and how to be responsive to the needs of our growingly diverse student population. In this article, we contribute to the body of literature related to PSTs examining their own identities and worldviews in multicultural education courses, particularly so that PSTs become well prepared to work with diverse students. Specifically, we explore the beliefs of twenty-four undergraduate education majors and how they positioned themselves as they observed and reflected upon everyday racial/ethnic/other cultural related acts and behaviors in reflective journals.

### **Literature Review**

To contextualize the study, three key topics, reflection, reflective journals, and Positioning Theory, were identified as vital to review the related literature. PSTs' narrative reflections of the everyday racial/ethnic/other cultural related acts and behaviors served as the research material. A brief review of reflection and reflective journals is provided studying how twenty-four PSTs "positioned" themselves as they observed and reflected upon everyday racial/ethnic/other cultural related acts and behaviors. The theoretical framework for the study is the concept of positioning.

### **Reflection**

Though reflection is a key term in the pedagogy of teacher education, there is little high-quality research on the effectiveness of promoting critical reflection in teacher education (Mortari, 2012; Gorski, 2019). The concept of reflection can be traced back to Dewey (1933) who upholds that reflective thinking is initially driven by confusion and doubt. This confusion pushes people to inquire, find, and resolve problems related to their doubt. The cognitive act that characterizes the phenomenological reflection is 'paying attention.' There is the *external attention*, which is directed on the world in an experience, and there is the *internal attention*, which consists in having the mind's eye on a particular aspect (Husserl, 1982, p. 77). According to Schön (1983), if learners can strengthen their reflection abilities not only in retrospect but in their day-to-day practice, then they will be better prepared towards a social justice stance. Therefore, improving reflective practices will better prepare learners to advocate for others and consider their positionalities in systems of privilege and oppression.

Using this notion of reflective practice and inspired by the work of Banks and Banks (2013), this study examined the journals of PSTs at a large, mid-south, U.S. university, with a focus on “what really goes on in [the] everyday lives regarding what [they encounter people] ...think[ing], act[ing], and say[ing] about the often-taken-for-granted issues of race and ethnicity” (Picca & Thompson-Miller, 2013, p. 213). The objective of our study was to investigate how PSTs reflected upon observed everyday racial/ethnic/other cultural related acts and positioned themselves.

### **Reflection Journals**

Journals are an instructional tool often used in TEPs as a strategy to promote reflection. The term “reflection” is used quite broadly by educational theorists and researchers (Clarà, 2015). In this study, we use Dewey’s definition of reflection, stated early, to examine PSTs journal writing as one way to study how teachers learn to teach (Clarke, 2004; Tsang, 2003). Oner and Adadan (2011) and others view reflective writing, often a required component in PSTs portfolios, as an essential tool in their dispositional and attitudinal development. Such reflective writing or journaling can lead to changes in performance in fieldwork.

Reflection is also a way of bringing meaning to our identities, our lives, and our worldviews. Therefore, reflective journaling is a tool to motivate PSTs to examine their beliefs, experiences, and frames of reference. O’Connell and Dymont (2013) indicate that reflective journals encourage students to take a holistic view of their learning experience. Reflective journals “empower students to practice new ways of knowing, try out different ideas in a safe space, challenge their modus operandi, and turn their lived experience, both in and out of the classroom, into learning through a reflective process” (O’Connell and Dymont, 2013, p. 19). Additionally, Hodge, Tannehill, and Kluge (2003) state that reflection through journaling is beneficial for undergraduates. In a study conducted by Mortari (2012), it was assumed that writing increased reflectivity.

Learning to teach effectively is a process that involves reflection and critical inquiry. PSTs continue to build their identities daily, while interacting with others inside and outside of the classroom. As PSTs interact with others, they engage in the co-creation of a narrative in which both have a part or a role to play. These narratives are known as positions (Harré and Van Langenhove, 1999), clusters of “rights and duties to think, act and speak in certain ways” (Harré and Moghaddam, 2003, p.8). The positions affect how PSTs view themselves in relation to their future profession, thereby leading to the framework of this study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Positioning Theory (PT) originated from the field of social psychology, however, in the past two decades, scholars have begun using the framework in educational settings. Positioning as a concept assists scholars in interpreting social interactions because it shows how an individual can position him/herself and how others position themselves in a specific context (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999). Davies & Harré (1990) defined two types of self-positioning: intentional and interactive. Intentional self-positioning is how individuals view the world from their own positions, and interactive positioning is what one person says or does to position another person, which can restrict or extend what those people can say and do.

Langenhove and Harré (1999) indicated that “positioning can be understood as the discursive construction of personal stories that make a person’s actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social acts and within which the members of the conversation have specific locations” (p. 16). PT begins with the flow of everyday life, sectioned into episodes through discourse. Episodes are “any sequence of happenings in which human beings engage which has

some principle of unity” (Harré & van Langenhove, 1996, p. 4). Episodes include participants’ visible behaviors, thoughts, feelings, intentions, and plans defined by their participant and at the same time influence what participants say and do. McKenzie (2004) sees PT as a constructionist approach to analyze how everyday incidents can help a person to co-construct information. Seu and Cameron (2013) expressed that when a person takes on a specific position, emotions are invested. In addition, the person accepts the duties and responsibilities associated with that position. Meanings evolve out of the interconnections among positions, storylines, and speech acts. PT, therefore, provides a strong framework for analyzing narratives, i.e., the “saying [writing]--doing---being---valuing--- believing combinations” (Gee, 2008, p. 6). Within the theory, a trifold conversation includes positions, storylines, and speech acts (Van Langenhove and Harré, 1999).

Because the PSTs in this study were beginning to transition to the role of teachers, it was decided to utilize three of Harré and Van Langenhove's (1998) modes of PT for the framework:

- First Order Positioning: ways that people position themselves in their ongoing storyline.
- Second Order Positioning: ways the ongoing storyline can be explicitly challenged.
- Moral Positioning: the characteristic roles that people assume within storylines based on accepted duties and actions associated with the roles. (p. 74)

The concept of PT (Davies & Harré 1990; Harré & Van Langenhove 1999; Harré & Moghaddam 2003) was a guideline to explore how PSTs position themselves throughout the writing of reflective journals and how they document their experiences by observing the race, ethnicity, and cultural acts in their daily lives. Davies and Harré (1990) use the term “reflective positioning”, which is important in explaining how PSTs position their personal and professional roles and responsibilities as future educators. Only a few studies were found using PT with PSTs. Vetter et al. (2013) studied the manner in which a male PST negotiated power by how he positioned himself, how his students positioned him, and how others positioned him. The PST was engaged in reflection after videotaping his lessons, and he learned that pedagogy involves negotiating power in the classroom. In a similar video-case study, Schieble et al. (2015) found that critical reflection enabled a White middle-class female teacher to make efforts to bridge the power differences of privilege between herself and her underprivileged students. The limited studies available on the use of Positioning Theory (PT) with PSTs as a framework, coupled with the use of reflective journals, indicate that further research is needed to understand the dynamic and fluid positions of PSTs, as they observe and reflect upon everyday racial/ethnic/other cultural related acts and behaviors.

### **Methodology**

This study explored the research question: *“How do students position themselves throughout the reflective journal writing experience, as a result of observing the race, ethnicity, and other culturally-related acts in their daily experiences?”* First, we briefly describe the authors’ positioning in the study.

#### **Researchers**

The fourth researcher, an associate professor of TESOL education, provided the two-week reflective journal writing assignment in a multicultural education course. After reviewing the first student journal entries, the researcher decided that analyzing the students’ journals would be an important addition to the field of teacher education. The other three researchers, who have lifelong interests in multicultural education, joined the research study. Throughout the semester, the first and fourth researchers met informally to discuss the challenges and successes

of the journal writing assignment and subsequently the study was formalized, and consent forms were obtained.

### **Participants and Setting**

The participants were 24 undergraduate students, preservice teachers and education majors (22 females; 2 males), in their twenties and mid-thirties, equally from rural, suburban, and urban areas, from a large, mid-south, U.S. university. While the university's student body was diverse and included students from Latino, Asian, and other origins, only two of the participants were Latinas. The students were enrolled in one of the four required courses for an add-on English as a Second Language endorsement to an educator licensure. About 50% of the participants were from out-of-state, primarily from Texas. Purposeful sampling was used in the study (Patton, 2015).

### **Assignment**

This study was conducted in mid-semester with a required two-week loosely structured assignment, adapted from Banks's journal exercise (See Appendix A). The assignment took a constructivist approach allowing students to observe and reflect beyond the classroom environment. The PSTs were asked to observe instances related to race, ethnicity, and other cultural groups in their daily lives, inside or outside of classrooms and record them in written journals. At the core of this constructivist philosophy is Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (1991) and the belief that knowledge is not given but gained through real experiences that have purpose and meaning to the learner, and the exchange of perspectives about the experience with others (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969; Vygotsky, 1978). There were no specific guidelines on how many interactions to record. The participants recorded written reflections of their observations and submitted typed field notes and reflections at the end of the two-week period.

### **Data Analysis**

Although our data analysis included some quantitative elements, such as counting the frequency of recurring themes, the study primarily employed a qualitative approach of what Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zibler (1993, p.14) term 'Categorical Content' Analysis, framed around PT, analyzing the PSTs written reflections. This method focuses on narrative analysis reading across stories to find common themes. Patton (2002) defines content analysis as, "analyzing text (interview transcripts, diaries, or documents) and qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort" (p. 453). This lens provided insights into how the PSTs positioned themselves (reflexive positioning) and others (interactive positioning).

To protect the identities, each participant had a code, UC for undergraduate course, F for female (UCF1, for instance), and the number. Males had no designation for gender (UC1). After the data was collected, each journal entry was transcribed. Later, to maintain objectivity, two of the researchers independently read and color-coded the data, using open coding and by adding narrative notes. The first round of analysis included highlighting key words and phrases, closely read in several rounds. The first and fourth researchers met periodically to discuss their interpretations. After the data was coded and interpreted, the third researcher reviewed the findings (peer debriefing) to discuss the interpretations. Afterwards, the second researcher read and interpreted the data independently. The extensive inter-coder reliability checks were conducted in an effort to increase the trustworthiness of the study.

Table 1 represents the three themes that emerged from the analyses.

**Table 1**

*Positioning Themes of Preservice Teachers*

Theme	Positioning Theory Connections
Observers	First Order Positioning
Challengers/Questioners of Viewpoints	Second Order Positioning
Social Justice-Oriented Teachers	Moral Positioning

**Findings**

**Theme 1. Positioning of PSTs as Observers (First Order Positioning)**

According to Harré and Van Langenhove's (1998), first order positioning is “ways that people position themselves in their ongoing storyline” (p. 74). A primary example supporting Theme 1 is from UCF17 (excerpt below) which documents how this PST reflected on her sorority’s recruitment process. During the sorority’s formal recruitment, the PST noticed that every time an African American girl’s picture was presented to the members, there were hardly any positive comments about how the African American girl could benefit the chapter. Because every episode of human interaction is shaped by a person’s story line, which is typically taken for granted, it can be interpreted that the PST observed her personal story line from an alternative angle, as she noticed how some of the actors’ silence resulted in exclusionary behaviors which in turn became part of her sorority’s membership selection process.

This 2nd situation occurs every August with my sorority (all members are either White, Hispanic, or Asian) when we have to do formal recruitment. What happens each year is that one of our members puts together a PowerPoint presentation with all of the potential new members' pictures that are going through recruitment here.... As a chapter, we go through each slide, say the girl's name, and say positives about the girl that would be beneficial to our chapter. Something that I have noticed that happens every time an African American girl's picture pops up on the big screen, there are hardly any positive comments. (UCF 17)

Another instance of Theme 1 is noted in UCF3’s personal classroom observation, as she noticed how young children between the ages of 3 and 5 had already begun to self-segregate based on the racial and ethnic physical features of the other toddlers in their classroom, which did not require years of social experience.

From my observations in the classroom, it was shocking to me that children between the ages 3 to 5 have already segregated themselves from people who may not look exactly like them. There were a couple instances where the teacher had to approach students and tell them to let another child play with them. (UCF3)

The PSTs observed and became more aware of personal everyday experiences in their positions with friends, educators, or family members. Additionally, the majority of PSTs were also introspecting on the speech acts or behaviors of the observations in “productive reflection” (Davis, 2006), i.e., being open to different perspectives, becoming analytical, and integrating knowledge. Gelfuso and Dennis (2014) state that the levels of reflection “follow a common pattern of low levels of reflection being considered those in which the PST merely describes an

experience to high levels of reflection as those in which the PST considers the moral and ethical dimensions of his/her experiences” (p. 2). The narratives in “Positioning of PSTs as Observers” included a variety of both low and high levels of reflection. Additional examples of representative narratives from Theme 1, Positioning of PSTs as Observers, are provided in Appendix B.

### **Theme 2. Positioning of PSTs as Challengers/Questioners of Viewpoints (Second Order Positioning)**

Harré and Van Langenhove's (1998) indicated that second order positioning means “ways the ongoing storyline can be explicitly challenged” (p. 74). UCF19’s journal narrative below highlights how she challenged a male friend’s disparaging remarks about the Mexicans who were living in his new upscale neighborhood. While confronting her friend’s comment was not an easy task, the PST reflected and recognized that our environments and social interactions can have a direct influence on a person’s speech and behaviors.

Today, I visited a high school friend that now lives in Texas. We went for a walk in the morning and while we were on our walk, he made a slightly offensive comment about Mexicans, belittling them in a way that I have never seen him do. I was bold enough to ask him why he said what he did and where this new attitude came from. He admitted that the area of Texas that he currently lives in is very prestigious and tends to look down upon Mexican residents regularly. He apologized to me and said that he was disappointed that he had unknowingly been so influenced by the people he was surrounded by in his new town. This just proves that people do adapt to where they are and who they are with. (UCF19)

The second theme of “Positioning of PSTs as Challengers/Questioners of Viewpoints,” indicates that PSTs’ identities were developing as they decided whether or not to react to discourses, opinions, behaviors, and perspectives which were either different from their own or posed a level of discomfort. This finding is in line with the cognitive dissonance that can arise in diversity courses, i.e., often questioned spaces where students grapple with resistance (Dunn et al., 2014). Positioning themselves in relation to others, the PSTs discussed the situation and either addressed or avoided the option to speak, while they sought to make sense of incongruent discourses. The statements in this section point toward White privilege—the family members of PSTs and White silence of PSTs. At times, the PSTs repositioned themselves and sought to engage in deeper social interaction, while at other times, the PSTs avoided tension and conflict. The journals allowed the PSTs to reflect and develop meaning at their own pace, in a safe setting, and without judgment. Mezirow (1991) states that a person may have disorienting feelings when making meaning during their current frames of references or when their beliefs are challenged. Disorienting dilemmas as well as critical reflection are experiences that may instigate a perspective transformation (Howie & Bagnall, 2013), and only after a transformation of perspectives, will adults understand the world more profoundly.

By challenging or not challenging the beliefs or opinions of a family member, friend, or colleague, PSTs were in the second order position, which happens when the first order positioning is challenged or questioned by others and needs to be negotiated (Van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). The PSTs described situations of feeling powerful or powerless and confronted or ignored behaviors or discourses. When PSTs communicate with, act, and challenge other family members or friends, they gain power. Gaining power can help in creating a positive sense of self. On the other hand, communication and negotiation with relatives or friends are not always easy, and sometimes lead to feeling powerless when faced with resistance (Clayton et al., 2008;

Lvovich, 2003). These narratives connect to PT which states that “one can position oneself or be positioned as e.g., powerful or powerless, confident or apologetic, dominant or submissive, definitive or tentative, authorized or unauthorized” (Van Langenhove & Harré, 1999, p. 17). Further examples of representative narratives from Theme 2, Positioning of PSTs as Challengers/Questioners of Viewpoints, are provided in Appendix B.

### **Theme 3. Positioning of PSTs as Social Justice-Oriented Teachers (Moral Positioning)**

Harré and Van Langenhove's (1998) explained that moral positioning means “the characteristic roles that people assume within storylines based on accepted duties and actions associated with the roles.” (p. 74). UCF15’s narrative documents her understanding of the critical, moral responsibility that teachers accept by not only leading by example but also addressing unacceptable behaviors related to race. She articulates being aware of herself as well as her students. In another example, UCF14 states that when dealing with gender identities and students of color, she must be nonjudgmental, open-minded, and accepting.

I hope to be more aware of myself as well as my students... one day as I become a role model. It is my responsibility to set a good example as well as stop any negative problems related to race. (UCF15)

I want my classroom to be inclusive and I don't want people to make judgments on other people based on their color or gender. (UCF14)

The third theme, Positioning of PSTs as Social Justice-Oriented Teachers, is specifically connected to moral positioning and accepted roles, duties, and actions of PT. Harré and Van Langenhove (1998) stated that moral positioning is “the characteristic roles that people assume within storylines” (p. 74). Professional identity is in the theme of teacher as moral leader, highlighted by the PSTs’ narratives in the developmental stages of their future professional roles. Abednia (2012) supports that learning to teach is mainly a process of professional identity construction rather than knowledge acquisition. According to Meijer et al. (2011), this process of professional identity could involve periods of exploration, uncertainty, and conflict. In these narratives, the PSTs articulated their moral and ethical responsibilities, positioning themselves in the accepted role of future teacher—how they would think, feel, and act like a teacher. Therefore, the journaling exercise places this study into a critical reflection assignment, because the PSTs were asked to reflect on the areas of continued growth needed to be an agent of social justice.

Through the journal narratives, it is noted that the PSTs struggled with how to capture their moral concerns in regard to their teaching and their students’ learning. The PSTs understood that as teachers they must be unbiased and unprejudiced, devoid of possessing stereotypes, while promoting equity and social justice. Sockett (2009) states that it is precisely in journaling about their own values that PSTs grapple with their dispositions to teach moral and ethical values. Additional examples of representative narratives from Theme 3, Positioning of UEMs as Social Justice-Oriented Teachers, are provided in Appendix B.

### **Discussion**

One of the most important findings of the study is that the reflective journal assignment provided an opportunity for the PSTs to position themselves in a similar type of reflective role that they could experience in their future careers as educators. The practice of journaling slowed down the PSTs’ thought processes, thereby allowing time for reflection—to notice students’ behaviors and speech, question what was taking place, and make important decisions about either stepping in by speaking out, i.e., taking an action or not and when. On the one hand, the

PSTs said they wanted to confront racism in their future classrooms, but on the other hand, some students carried out their own racist views by making excuses for family members' racism and considered white people being victimized by black people.

The sample-reflection of UCF4, "I will not allow prejudice or racism in my own classroom; it will be a loving and inviting learning environment for every race and culture," indicates that this PST had clearly come to see the issues around social justice in her daily life and had begun to see that it was her responsibility to address it. The PSTs also started addressing the complex issues of how to confront and unpack the challenges of race relations in classrooms. Alsop (2006) states that PSTs' beliefs are difficult to change, but that change is possible if their beliefs are challenged through the creation of cognitive dissonance in TEPs.

The reflective journal writing experience established a venue for inner and outer conflict, i.e., participation, and an opportunity for interaction, and possibly, for change to take place. Therefore, journaling may be a worthwhile endeavor for TEPs to offer PSTs who will be working in an increasingly diverse world. Students in the preservice stage can be hesitant and silent (Bissonnette, 2016), so journaling could provide a needed outlet. The reflective process of journaling allows PSTs to think deeply and understand the complexity of teaching, using judgments about personal experiences to choose appropriate decision-making responses in the classroom. Valli (1997) attests that reflective teachers are more likely to seek out solutions, rather than giving up. It cannot be taken for granted that PSTs will become reflective on their own. In fact, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education began promoting reflective practice as an essential component of TEPs in terms of teacher quality (Ostorga, 2006). However, according to Gorski (2016), multicultural teacher educators need very broad and basic pedagogical strategies for facilitating complex discussions about politically and emotionally charged equity and social justice issues.

In short, most PSTs fell into the first order positioning category because they "positioned themselves in their ongoing storyline" (Harré and Van Langenhove, 1998, p. 74). Some PSTs noticed incidents, refused these acts in their storylines, but they did not take actions to help reduce the behaviors. Most of the PSTs' narrative responses indicated moving forward toward cultural responsiveness, either in their day-to-day lives or in their future classrooms. Therefore, the intervention of the observation coupled with a written reflection assignment had a positive impact on PSTs and further supports Sleeter and Owuor's (2011) assertion that course interventions which include engagement strategies such as writing reflective journals have positive results.

### **Limitations**

The main limitation is that there was a small sample of participants (24) and a short timeframe, two weeks, for the observations and journaling. Second, a risk of bias existed (Creswell, 2013) because the researchers had prior experiences teaching multicultural courses. Another bias factor is that the data collection is a course assignment. Additionally, the researchers assumed that the students reported faithfully what they saw and heard and that their reflections truly indicated their beliefs about race/ethnicity and teacher responsibility.

### **Recommendations**

The results of this study have implications for PST education. The observational assignment combined with journaling provided data to support the benefits of this intervention. The *first recommendation* is for teacher educators to provide a longer period of data collection and reflection as well as triangulation of data to include not only reflective journaling, but also additional activities such as interviews, classroom discussions, collaborative writing, and

culminating reflections. A *second recommendation* would be allowing students to reflect on their growth or change of perspective both during and after the process, in meta-cognitive experiences such as focus groups, dialogues, or conversations with licensed practitioners. A *third recommendation* would be to expand the research using diversity simulation exercises (Manburg et al., 2017) to prepare PSTs for diverse, realistic situations with K-12 students, families, and faculty members coupled with reflective journaling.

### **Conclusion**

Teacher Education Programs need to prepare PSTs for the increasing diversity in our schools. Obviously, social injustices are still “out there.” Post-2019 incidents in Minneapolis, Orlando, Sacramento, Syria and the world make it clear that discussions of race, cultural identity, and other types of diversity are no longer merely topics of “interest.” These events are now the critical work of future classroom teachers. It is an obligation to make PSTs not only aware of attitudes and ideas that affect P-12 students, but also pay attention to activities that can promote a reflective disposition.

Puchner et al. (2012) are of the opinion that positive changes that ensue after interventions in courses in multicultural education may be effective for a short duration of time, because they make students aware that they must focus on issues of racism. In these thematic narratives, reflection-in-action occurred after the moment has passed. It cannot be understated that reflection is a way of making meaning of ourselves, our lives, and our worldviews. Reflective journaling is a way to motivate PSTs to examine their beliefs, experiences, and frames of reference, practices that will be replicated in their future classrooms. Therefore, following PSTs when they become in-service teachers to examine positioning is another recommended research area.

Teacher educators must continue to understand what PSTs believe, in order to better educate them to work within culturally situated communities where they may hear and see examples of discrimination toward P-12 students. PSTs enter classrooms with the idea of “changing” their P-12 classrooms for the better. But, when they enter TEPs with less than desirable attitudes, the task of changing their beliefs lies with teacher educators promoting activities such as observing, journaling, reflecting, and positioning. Intentionally designing these activities can assist PSTs to gain an increased personal awareness through noticing and questioning, developing their personal and professional identities and moral compasses, and practicing ways to step into conversations, instead of relying on avoidance and blaming tendencies. Pre- and in-service teachers must value each student by understanding and working to create classrooms that are safe, respectful, and free of prejudice.

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## Appendix A

### Journal Exercise

Keep your own racial journal. Below is a modified version of the journal instructions.

#### Instructions:

Often, we take for granted issues of race and ethnicity when talking about social interaction and relationships. These issues are an ever-present factor of our everyday lives, yet we ignore them, talk about them, or only mention them explicitly in jokes or in private settings. What we say and do in the “backstage” (or private areas) is sometimes very different from what we say and do in the public “frontstage.” This exercise will require you to think beyond your everyday interactions and to analyze your “everyday world” as a social researcher.

The goal of this assignment is to examine what really goes on in our everyday lives regarding what we think, act, and say about the often take-for-granted issues of race and ethnicity. You will keep a journal of your observations of everyday events and conversations that deal with the issues we discuss in class—including scenes you encounter, conversations you take part in or observe, images you notice and understandings you gather. The situations you observe do not need to be negative, derogatory, or discriminatory (i.e., racist) but can occur anytime when race-ethnicity comes up (or does not come up).

#### How Do I Do This?

**Unobtrusive Participant Observation:** In your observations, please use unobtrusive research techniques so that the person(s) you write about in your journal will not be aware that they are being studied. In other words, you may *not* interview anyone you observe as a researcher, but you may interact with people you usually would. Please be detailed in your accounts, yet, to ensure anonymity, it is important that you conceal all identities and disguise all names of persons you write about. Even though there will be no identifying markers in the journal, please keep your journal in a safe, private space so that it is not read by others.

**Writing Up Your Observations:** In your journal, you will be asked to emphasize (1) your observations and (2) your reactions and perception of these everyday events. Please note details, such as whether you are observing a middle-aged White female or a teenage Asian American male. It is helpful to note the approximate age, race, and gender of each person you mention in your journal.

When writing your observations, be sure to be detailed in your comments on the way in which people interact. For example, if someone makes a comment sarcastically or whispers certain words, be sure to note the sarcasm or volume exchange. Also, be sure to note the occasions when certain issues are blatantly ignored. For example:

October 27

*Monday night I was with a group of girlfriends (4 White, 1 Latina) watching TV. Sue (not her real name) mentioned another girl, Betty, and was trying to describe to the other girls who Betty was. I should mention that Betty is from Korea. Sue described her as kinda short, ponytail, and works out around the same time that we do (which describes just about every girl at our school!!!). I don't know why Sue didn't mention she is Asian--it would have made describing her a lot easier.*

If you find that you have not noticed any issues to write about, write that down as well!

**When Should I Write?** If you can, you should jot down your notes as quickly as possible after your observations, so the details will be fresh in your mind. You should make a note to write in your journal at least once a day.

Adapted from Picca & Thompson-Miller (2013).

## Appendix B

### Theme 1: Observers

UCF3: I noticed in the children's section of the library were mostly white women and their children. They had strollers and multiple children. I don't really know why I noticed that but maybe it was because there were so many of them, and I was surprised that I didn't see mothers of other ethnicities. Not only that, but I didn't see any fathers there with their children or with their mothers. I guess not a lot of dads think to take their children to the public library? (UCF11)

UCF13: when I noticed 2 little girls reading. When another little white girl came up to them, they welcomed her. However, when a little black girl came up to them wanting to read with them, the three white girls ran away. This makes me question what parents are teaching their children.

UCF13: An Asian boy wanted to work with a white boy, and the white boy said he should probably go work with the other Asian. I guess this boy was taught to only work with people that are the same race as him.

UCF 17: This 2nd situation occurs every August with my sorority (all members are either White, Hispanic, or Asian) when we have to do formal recruitment. What happens each year is that one of our members puts together a PowerPoint presentation with all of the potential new members' pictures that are going through recruitment here.... As a chapter, we go through each slide, say the girl's name, and say positives about the girl that would be beneficial to our chapter. Something that I have noticed that happens every time an African American girl's picture pops up on the big screen, there are hardly any positive comments.

UCF 19: This journal exercise was an interesting assignment that made me take notice of racial situations that occur in everyday life that are often overlooked. I was surprised by how many negative interactions I noticed once I was seeking out to find these racial conversations. I did not feel like I was exposed to this regularly prior to this assignment, but I now recognize that even in our progressive society prejudices still exist and are relevant in a variety of social situations.

UCF20: I first reflected back on John Uzo Ogbu's model of school success/failure to explain how voluntary immigrants tend to form oppositional differences with the dominant culture. For example, when I went to the library and tried to greet the Marshallese-Americans, they seemed to be more oppositional than the Latino-Americans, possibly due to the fact that we tested nuclear weapons near their home country in the 1950's.

### Theme 2: Challengers/Questioners of Viewpoints

UCF8: At least I don't have to listen to my dad talk down about people since I don't live with him. Also, he doesn't do so all the time. When he does use racial slurs, he is trying to be funny but I don't think he realizes that he is the only one laughing. My dad was brought up this way as well so there's no changing him either. Many racial remarks in the world are bad and if a person doesn't agree with them, it might be best to ignore them. Sometimes it's good to stand up for what is right, but we have to know if it is the best situation.

UCF 16: I was at my friends' house for our weekly bible study meeting, and we were talking about what we were all going to dress up as for Halloween. One of my friends in the study is black and didn't have a costume picked out. I had several great ideas for her, mostly famous black celebrities, but I didn't say them unless she brought them up first. I didn't know if it would be offensive if I said those ideas, because of the awkwardness that sometimes comes with talking about skin color."

UCF 17: What happened during this situation was that one of my coworkers at (name of school), made a remark to me about a child (African American) who was misbehaving a lot. She said, "I

don't know if he is misbehaving because he is Black, or just because his parents don't discipline him at home." After she said this, I wanted to say back to her, "What does his race have to do with his behavior in this classroom?" Oftentimes, I find myself questioning a child's behavior based on the way their parents treat them, but it is certainly not okay to use a child's race for the cause of their behavior.

UCF19: Today, I visited a high school friend that now lives in Texas. We went for a walk in the morning and while we were on our walk, he made a slightly offensive comment about Mexicans, belittling them in a way that I have never seen him do. I was bold enough to ask him why he said what he did and where this new attitude came from. He admitted that the area of Texas that he currently lives in is very prestigious and tends to look down upon Mexican residents regularly. He apologized to me and said that he was disappointed that he had unknowingly been so influenced by the people he was surrounded by in his new town. This just proves that people do adapt to where they are and who they are with.

### **Theme 3: Social Justice-Oriented Teachers**

UCF1: Segregation does exist and as a teacher it will be my responsibility to take care of this issue in my classroom.

UF3: As a future educator, it is my responsibility to ensure that this (exclusion of others) is minimal or not existent in my classroom and to know how common it is for adults as well as students to have false ideas about another individual based on race.

UCF4: I will not allow prejudice or racism in my own classroom; it will be a loving and inviting learning environment for every race and culture.

UCF10: We must continue teaching our children to not be discriminatory or use stereotypes when talking about race, because you cannot judge an individual based on what other people of their race has done.

UCF14: I want my classroom to be inclusive and I don't want people to make judgments on other people based on their color or gender.

UCF15: I hope to be more aware of myself as well as my students... one day as I become a role model. It is my responsibility to set a good example as well as stop any negative problems related to race."

## **PE Student Teachers and Technology: Perceptions of Readiness**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to ascertain whether undergraduate majors in a Health and Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) program perceived technology use as a positive attribute of their student teaching experience. A secondary purpose was to ascertain whether their perception of technology use changed throughout their student teaching experience. This research failed to show that technology use during the student teaching experience improved PETE student teachers' perceptions about technology use in classrooms. The implications for this finding support the introduction of technology into the teacher education curriculum before the student teaching semester with an emphasis on specific applications of technology during the various methods and materials course work.

### **Literature Review**

Competency in technology use has been an optional skill for classroom teachers and physical education teachers. In the past, the ability to use technology in teaching was considered positive but not a requirement for teaching success. Tomorrow's educators will be called upon to apply technology within their classrooms and gyms (Browne, 2001; Roth, 2014). Teacher educators need to understand their students' ability to use technology in professional settings (Granston, 2003; Kelly & Bishop, 2013) and to learn new technologies as they arise (Luo, Hibbard, Franklin, & Moore, 2017; Rosenthal & Elliason, 2015).

The application of technology will continue to grow in importance as a skill for success in society (Granston, 2003). A responsibility of education is to prepare citizens who can use today's technology and develop an understanding of future developing technologies. Learning how to integrate technology into daily life's roles and responsibilities are incumbent upon teachers in all school curricula. Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) faculty must also inform students regarding the use of technology to maintain its relevance to the mission of educating future citizens and leaders (Scrabis-Fletcher, Juniu, & Zullo, 2016).

### **Technology in Physical Education**

Evidence indicates that physical activity provides a wealth of benefits to children, including healthy life habits, improved concentration, enhanced bone development, improved classroom behavior, increased graduation rates, and higher educational aspirations (Ebeline & Richards, 2013). Increasing time spent in physical education does not seem to harm learning in other subjects; however, it may play a role in decreasing childhood obesity (Ebeline & Richards, 2013). One added benefit of using technology in physical education is teachers' ability to document their successes within the teaching environment better.

Appropriate technology applications within the physical education setting will become more acceptable (Kelly & Bishop, 2013; Rosenthal & Eliason, 2015; & Scrabis-Fletcher, Juniu, & Zullo, 2016). By correctly using technology as an instrument of pedagogy, there may be value brought to the learning experience by diversifying teaching styles to motivate and engage learners (Shaw, 2015).

The critical nature of a meaningful student teaching experience for developing professionals is well established (Kelly & Bishop, 2013). In most successful teacher education programs, the field placement experience comprises three elements: student teachers, university supervisor, and school site supervisor. While the terminology varies from entity to entity, the figures generally consist of the developing professional, the university program representative, and the teacher representing the local school district and managing the learning environment. This model places the most significant amount of responsibility for supervision on the local schoolteacher responsible for the setting in which teaching experiences occur. University supervisors cannot contribute as much time and effort because of competing job demands and travel requirements (Kelly & Bishop, 2013).

Recent demands for teaching and learning in settings that cut down on grouping people have emphasized using technology and distance learning methodology for teaching students in the K12 environment (World Economic Forum, 2020). Even within traditional settings and classrooms, physical education practices are changing due to the introduction of technology. McVicker (2018) has said that teachers are starting to integrate more and newer technology into their lessons to capture children's attention growing up in an increasingly tech-savvy world. Providing technologically charged learning experiences for students enhances the learning experience's possible individualization (Clapham, Sullivan, & Ciccomascolo, 2015). Commonly used tools include iPhone applications, online videos, virtual classes, gaming systems, activity monitors and trackers, and smartwatches (Kelly & Moran, 2010; McVicker, 2018). The onset of pandemic conditions has pushed the use of virtual teaching settings and methods to the forefront of the PE pedagogy world. Not only are high-quality content and meaningful teaching methods been called for during this pandemic, but there is a similar need for educators to conduct assessments to develop or refine programming for learners (Kelly, Taliaferro, & Krause, 2012)

### **Technology in Teaching**

In considering how to prepare future teachers for their field placements, considerations regarding technology that must be addressed for the arrangements to be successful. Luo et al. (2017) indicated three central topics of concern regarding technology use and future teachers' field placements. There was a question about what effect previous exposure to technology in various formats might have on future experiences. Two, they raised a question about whether exposure to technology and online learning environments would facilitate a greater understanding of prospective teachers' pedagogy. Three, would the experience with technology in future teachers' education contribute positively to the likelihood they would complete placements using technology or virtual environments. After the study, researchers reported positive results on the part of future teachers regarding the use of technology in teaching. Based on their experiences, the prospective teachers said that they would have the skills necessary to create and facilitate interactive learning experiences in the future.

The previous findings are supported by Browne's (2001) suggestion that individuals in teacher preparation programs develop higher confidence and proficiency in using technology within their classrooms. It seems most reasonable that this learning will take place during the teacher preparation program where experienced educators can mentor developing teachers. An important consideration in establishing future teachers' learning opportunities is that their sense of self-efficacy is highly context-dependent (Browne, 2001). Such a finding would support content-specific applied learning opportunities for the acquisition and refinement of technology skills.

This study aimed to ascertain whether undergraduate majors in a PETE program perceived technology use as a positive attribute of their student teaching experience and whether the PETE student teacher's perception of technology use changed throughout their student teaching experience.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Student teachers (N = 65) participated in this study during the Spring 2017, Fall 2017, and Spring 2018 semesters. Seven females and 58 males participated in the study. All participants were Physical Education Teacher Education students enrolled in the Internship Courses as part of their Health and Physical Education K-12 Teacher Certification requirements. Each student teacher taught in an elementary placement and secondary placement. Student teachers self-selected their Internship Site provided the school they selected had a site supervisor qualified to oversee the internship experience.

### **Procedures**

Researchers explained the protocol, answered questions, and asked participants to provide a signed informed consent statement following a state/regional institution's Institutional Review Board policy. Student teachers signed-out iPads from the Office of Information Systems per the ATU iPad Initiative's procedure. After receiving their iPad, each individual underwent an orientation on iPads in physical education K-12 classes conducted by PETE Faculty. Student teachers were introduced to essential functions of the iPads, how to obtain and access recommended apps on the iPad, given an opportunity to set up email and other communication tools.

The instrument used for this study was the *Pre-service Teachers' Technology Integration Instrument* (PTTII, Granston, 2004). Regarding the survey's validity, the author reported theoretical support from relevant literature for the instrument's validity. A coefficient alpha analysis, which provides an index of internal consistency, established the scale's reliability. The reliability of the subscales was .528 for attitudes towards using computers, .792 for students' perception of professors modeling computer use, .775 for access to computers at college, .810 for technology knowledge acquired during coursework, and .866 for preparation to teach with computers.

Students completed the *Pre-service Teachers' Technology Integration Instrument* (PTTII, Granston, 2004) three times throughout the semester-long student teaching experience. The first administration was before undergoing the technology orientation. The second administration was completed while changing from the first placement to the second placement (this was approximately the halfway point of the semester). The final administration was at the end of their student teaching experience. Students were encouraged to complete the PITII but not punished for failing to complete the PITII.

## **Results**

Scores for each subsection of the instrument was created by adding scores for the individual test items and generating a mean. An ANOVA determined if there was a difference between participant scores on Attitude, Access, Skills, Ability, or Modeling by year (Year) or semester (Semester). There were no significant differences in either variable's score, so data were collapsed across Year (Table 1) and Semester (Table 2). Descriptive statistics for participant scores are in Table 3.

## Conclusions

This research failed to show that technology use during the student teaching experience improved PETE student teachers' perceptions about technology use in classrooms. The implications for this finding support the introduction of technology into the teacher education curriculum earlier than the student teaching semester with an emphasis on specific applications of technology during the various methods and materials course work. Using iPads during the student teaching experience did not improve the student teacher's perceptions of technology as a tool for teachers. There was no difference between elementary versus secondary placements for the student teacher's perceptions of technology.

Based on the data from this study, several modifications to PETE programs are inferred. Student teachers need to accept the use of technology as part of their teaching experience before student teaching. A useful approach to promoting technology use in future teachers may be to have University faculty model technology use throughout the teacher education program.

Developmentally appropriate physical activity programs offer students opportunities to develop skills and attitudes to shape their physical activity behaviors. Professionals versed in the latest pedagogy and technology create meaningful learning opportunities for K12 learners (Kelly & Bishop, 2013; Rosenthal & Eliason, 2015; & Scrabis-Fletcher, Juniu, & Zullo, 2016). This professional development experience's capstone is the students' teaching or student internship experience (Kelly & Bishop, 2013).

One strategy utilized in PETE programs is introducing technology as early in the program as possible (Luo et al., 2017). Introducing technology and professionally relevant applications during the "methods and materials" coursework stage will allow future educators to sync their pedagogy and technology understandings. This combined learning experience facilitates the teacher's ability to rely upon technology as a natural part of the teaching and learning process. Such a combination of pedagogy and technology during professional skills learning will reduce teacher perceptions that technology use is contrived or artificially introduced. As the PETE student learns various pedagogy or class management skills, they should understand what role different technology modes can play in assisting them in delivering learning experiences (Browne, 2001).

To influence the learners in their charge, the faculty will evaluate, demonstrate, educate, and remediate learners to increase the likelihood of changes in target behaviors. The current study failed to appreciate the need for faculty to model behaviors for PETE students. Part of this fault was due to the newness of the technology. Faculty were not as familiar with the iPads as they could have been. Also, faculty presumed that students using smartphones would quickly adapt to tablet use. This turned out to be a faulty assumption. Future studies should invest more significant time requiring students to practice pedagogy related skills with technology as the pedagogy develops.

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**Table 1***Analysis of Test Scores by Year*

Score	F	Sig. p<.05
Attitude Scores	0.09	.75
Success Scores	1.12	.29
Skills Scores	2.22	.14
Ability Scores	3.65	.06
Model Scores	0.09	.75

**Table 2***Analysis of Scores by Semester*

Score	F	Sig. p<.05
Attitude Scores	.60	.44
Success Scores	.13	.72
Skills Scores	1.80	.18
Ability Scores	.05	.83
Model Scores	.47	.49

## Participant Responses to PTTII

Statement	Response	%
I believe iPads, tablets, or computers can improve the quality of learning that takes place in schools	Agree or Strongly Agree	96.9
Students who have access to iPads, tablets, or computers are more likely to do better than those who do not	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	18.4
iPads, tablets, or computers are important learning tools	Agree or Strongly Agree	97.0
I feel frustrated	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	87.8
Technology is not suitable to my teaching	Disagree	83.1
I have access at school	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	12.3
I have Internet access at home	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	93.8
I have used technology to	Disagree	38.5
• participate in synchronous online meetings	Agree or Strongly Agree	96.9
• develop lesson plans for my students		95.4
• teach a lesson		
My supervising teacher models iPad, tablet, or computer use in the classroom	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	13.8
My supervising teacher models iPad, tablet, or computer as a tool for teaching	Agree or Strongly Agree	15.3
My supervising teacher shows me how to teach with iPads, tablets, or computers	Agree or Strongly Agree	26.2
	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	
	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	
	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	

# **Classroom Management Perceptions Based on Teachers' Self-Reported Survey: Investigating the Impact of Classroom Management Preparation to Practical Experience**

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## **Abstract**

A study designed to understand how educators adapt to classroom management practices was conducted using an online survey to teachers in a northwestern part of the state of Arkansas. Of the 169 participants, 138 were mentor teachers (81.7%) and 31 (18.3%) were interns. Absenteeism, inattentiveness in class, talking at inappropriate times, being disrespectful/rude to the teacher, refusing to participate, and arriving late or leaving early were reported as the most often classroom management behaviors perceived as serious. The most serious disruptions were absenteeism, inattentiveness in class, talking at inappropriate times, using a computer for unrelated tasks and being disrespectful/rude to the teacher. Suggestions for the teacher in handling the disruptive behaviors are identified in the article by the following categories: Elementary (K-6) Educators and Secondary (7-12) Educators.

## **Introduction**

This study sought to understand how educators adapt to classroom management practices and examines the successful practices of the educators. Classroom management is thoroughly taught in almost every teacher education training program. However, pre-service teachers still identify classroom management as the area where they have the most difficulty (Adler, 1996: Focused Exit Interview, 2020; Brock & Grady, 1998; Greenlee & Ogletree, 1993).

Teachers who cannot effectively maintain organization and structure of the classroom will face difficulty delivering instruction. Common problems from unmanaged classrooms are disruptive behavior and students not on task. Classrooms are becoming more and more diverse each year. A school district can be considered diverse when “no one race constitutes more than 75 percent of the school system’s student body overall (Rabinowitz, 2019).” With this definition of diversity, research shows that in 2017, more than 2,400 districts in the United States public school system became “diverse” after being undiverse or extremely undiverse in 1995 (Rabinowitz, 2019). In this study, we sought to identify the disruptive classroom behaviors experienced by mentor teachers and interns and their perceived seriousness of each of the behaviors. Nineteen disruptive student behaviors were identified through a thorough review of literature. Disruptive behavior is defined as any behavior that creates a barrier for the teacher’s ability to effectively provide instruction and interferes with other students’ ability to learn. The behavior would be considered out of the norm for the classroom. Responses to these behaviors are crucial in creating an effective learning environment for the students.

## **Literature Review**

Several studies (Ozben, 2010; Ming-tak & Wai-shing, 2008; Zuckerman, 2007) discuss successful strategies for classroom management. The practices of these samples of inexperienced teachers show how well teachers are prepared to manage a classroom early on and may shed light on how to better prepare teachers for this transition in the future. Zuckerman (2007) conducted a study with 68 student science teachers during their first weeks of student teaching.

Students were asked to document a successful strategy used from a combination of 18 different proactive and reactive discipline strategies. Three strategies were noteworthy: (1) changing the pace of the lesson, (2) using the least intrusive intervention with verbal and nonverbal strategies, and (3) talking to the student one-on-one. These three strategies are common in a first-year teacher's classroom management tool belt as they serve to alleviate many behavior issues, as well as stress the importance of student-teacher relationships.

Orr, Thompson, and Thompson (1999) conducted a study to determine types of behaviors pre-service teachers viewed as inappropriate classroom behaviors. Results indicated that talking, disruptive behavior, disrespect, inattention, and not doing/refusal to do assigned work accounted for the majority of the responses when identifying behavior problems. The most successful strategy identified was verbal reprimand. Weinstein and Novodvorsky (2015) suggest when a nonverbal intervention do not work the teacher should incorporate the student's name in a verbal intervention. Stating a student's name allows the teacher to capture the student's attention and to also give clues to the student that the teacher knows what is going on.

Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers and Sugai (2008) identified five critical features of effective classroom management. Maximizing structure and predictability included high classroom structure and physical arrangement; post, teach, review, monitor and reinforce; actively engaging students; using a continuum of strategies to acknowledge appropriate behavior; and using a continuum of strategies to respond to inappropriate behavior.

Fletcher, Mountjoy and Bailey (2011) conducted a study on classroom management with student teachers and found that over 60% of the student teachers were concerned about classroom management. Similarly, a focused-group interview with student teachers at a major university also expressed concern about classroom management (Focused-Group Interview, 2020). This striking statistic further leads to the assumption that University teaching programs may not spend as much time on classroom management as needed and may need to reflect and restructure their own classroom management curriculum.

When students feel a sense of belonging with their classmates they work better together and are more on task. Positive interactions with classmates and teachers influence students' long-term social, emotional, and academic development (Chen, Jiang, Justice, Lin, Purtell, & Ansari, 2020). Additionally, when students are engaged in the classroom, they are not disruptive. Palumbo and Sanacore (2007) identified techniques to successful classroom management from classroom teachers. Successful strategies included (1) starting class on time, (2) anticipating student needs, (3) making class work integral to the lesson and focusing from beginning of class to end, and (4) handling administrative details so that taking attendance did not interfere with instructional time. Classwork and instruction being long enough to cover the entire class time was a crucial strategy seen throughout the literature reviewed. This requires more attention and work being devoted to planning. For students to be more engaged in the learning process the teacher must be focused on the details in planning and preparation. According to Palumbo and Sanacore (2007) organization is the key to the effectiveness of lessons. Palumbo and Sanacore (2007) suggest having the lesson outline on the board as soon as the students enter the classroom. In addition, Palumbo and Sanacore suggest using lesson plan summaries throughout the lesson. This can be accomplished in instructional blocks.

Ming-tak and Wai-shing (2008) identified four major components of classroom management. The four components are (1) management of the physical environment, (2) management of learning, (3) classroom procedures and rules, and (4) managing discipline. According to Ming-tak and Wai-shing (2008) teachers should develop a discipline system to deal

with disruptive behavior. Disruptive behavior is identified as harmful behavior (bullying), distracting behavior, testing behavior (challenging a teacher's authority), antisocial behavior (disengagement), and contagious behavior (talking with a classmate).

In another study, Korpershoek, Harms, De Boer, Van Kuijk and Doolaard (2016) reviewed peer-reviewed classroom management literature between 2003 and 2013. The research focused on intervention studies conducted during this time period. Their most significant finding was the "strongest effects were found for programs targeting social-emotional development, particularly on the social-emotional outcome measure." Better social and emotional skills have better outcomes with classroom management for teachers and students (Korpershoek et al., 2016).

## **Research Design and Method**

### **Procedure and Participants**

An online survey was sent to a sample of 541 mentor teachers and interns in May 2020 with a follow-up two weeks later of which 169 complete responses were obtained (31.2% response rate). A third follow-up was emailed to the invited participants. Of the 169 participants, 138 were mentor teachers (81.7%) and 31 (18.3%) were interns. Approximately 85% of the participants identified as female while 15% identified as male. Participants' ages were evenly distributed; approximately one-quarter were between the ages 20 and 30, 28% were between 31 and 40, 27% were between 41 and 50, 15% were between 51 and 60, and 5% were over 60.

The survey instrument was approved by the Institutional Review Board. The validity of the survey instrument was established using a pilot study with university interns and mentor teachers in seven school districts. One question was removed from the survey and one question was revised for clarification.

### **Demographic Information**

Participants' education levels varied. Half ( $N = 15$ ) of the interns indicated that they would be graduating with a bachelor's degree in education in the Spring or Summer 2020 semester, while the other half ( $N = 16$ ) would be graduating with a master's degree in education. Of the 138 mentor teachers, 34 had obtained a bachelor's degree as their highest degree, 90 had obtained a master's degree, two had obtained a doctorate, and eight had a specialist degree. Additionally, two mentor teachers indicated they would be graduating with a master's degree in the next semester.

Most (63.7%) of the mentor teachers had over 10 years of teaching experience, while 21.1% had between 6 and 10 years, 6.1% had between 2 and 5 years, and 5.4% indicated another option not listed. Finally, 22 of the 138 mentor teachers (16%) indicated that they had National Board Certification.

### **Classroom Context**

Three-fourths of participants had class sizes between 21 and 30, while 17% had class sizes between 11 and 20, 6.5% between 1 and 10, and only two participants had classes with more than 30 students. Fourteen percent indicated that their classes were self-paced, while 18% said that a few of their classes were and 68% indicated that self-pacing was not part of their classes. Classroom layouts varied widely as well. Nearly three-fourths of participants (74%) had tables in their room, 6.5% had a computer lab layout, 6.5% had a kitchen lab layout, and 17.2% had a layout not included in the list. Additionally, 31% of participants had a classroom layout consisting exclusively of desks.

Participants were also asked about their school location and the grade levels they taught at that time (Table 1). Overall, educators largely taught at schools in suburban contexts, and the secondary grades (7-12) were most often represented.

**Table 1**

*Participants' school locations and grade levels taught*

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Mentor Teachers</i>	<i>Interns</i>
<b>School Location</b>		
Urban	31 (22.5%)	5 (16.1%)
Suburban	83 (60.1%)	25 (80.7%)
Rural	24 (17.4%)	1 (3.2%)
<b>Grade level currently taught</b>		
Pre-K	1 (0.7%)	0 (0%)
Kindergarten	17 (12.3%)	4 (12.9%)
1st	16 (11.6%)	3 (9.7%)
2nd	20 (14.5%)	2 (6.5%)
3rd	18 (13.0%)	1 (3.2%)
4th	16 (11.6%)	1 (3.2%)
5th	19 (13.8%)	3 (9.7%)
6th	21 (15.2%)	4 (12.9%)
7th	20 (14.5%)	9 (29.0%)

8th	10 (7.2%)	5 (16.1%)
9th	23 (16.7%)	6 (19.4%)
10th	29 (21.0%)	11 (35.5%)
11th	33 (23.9%)	9 (29.0%)
12th	29 (21.4%)	7 (22.6%)

### Results of the Study

Absenteeism, inattentiveness in class, talking at inappropriate times, being disrespectful/rude to the teacher, refusing to participate, and arriving late or leaving early were reported as the most often classroom management behaviors perceived as serious. The most serious disruptions were absenteeism, inattentiveness in class, talking at inappropriate times, using a computer for unrelated tasks and being disrespectful/rude to the teacher. Suggestions for the teacher in handling the disruptive behaviors are identified by the following categories: Elementary (K-6) Educators and Secondary (7-12) Educators.

#### Disruptive Behaviors

Participants were asked to rate a list of 19 disruptive student behaviors on how serious they perceived the disruptive behaviors to be. Response options included “1 = not serious”, “2 = slightly serious”, “3 = moderately serious”, and “4 = very serious”. Participants also had the option to indicate that they have never experienced the behavior in class. Table 2 ranks participants’ perceived seriousness for each of the 19 disruptive behaviors, as well as the percentage of participants who indicated that they had experienced the behavior in class.

**Table 2**

*Participants’ perceived seriousness and frequency of disruptive behaviors*

Disruptive behavior	Seriousness of disruption (1-4)	Frequency experienced
Absenteeism	2.53	99.4%
Inattentive in class	2.52	99.4%
Talking at inappropriate times	2.49	98.2%

Using computer for unrelated tasks	2.44	92.3%
Disrespectful/rude to teacher	2.37	98.2%
Coming to class unprepared	2.33	97.6%
Refusing to participate	2.33	98.2%
Bullying	2.24	97.0%
Cell phone use	2.24	82.8%
Text messaging	2.13	75.7%
Arriving late or leaving early	2.03	98.8%
Making offensive remarks/using vulgarity	1.96	94.1%
Violence/fighting	1.96	81.7%
Dominating discussion	1.81	95.9%
Sleeping in class	1.81	89.9%
Groaning or sighing	1.79	97.6%
Cheating on tests	1.69	82.8%
Dressing inappropriately	1.51	84.6%
Sending inappropriate emails	1.48	63.9%

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Participants had the option to write-in disruptive behaviors they felt were not included in the list. Commonly alternative disruptive behaviors included student defiance, physical aggression and anger, difficulty regulating emotions, destruction of property, and yelling.

## **Teachers' Perceptions of Successful Management Interventions**

Participants were also asked to list their top three disruptive behaviors that they experienced that academic year as well as to describe the classroom management strategy they used that was successful for the behavior. Participants' responses were sometimes incomplete or included more or less than three disruptive behaviors and interventions.

Participants' responses were separated based on the grade level range they taught, which included elementary (K-6) and secondary (7-12) educators. While there were many similarities in the most commonly reported disruptive behaviors between grade ranges, the strategies the participants deemed to be successful varied. It is important to note that the actual success of the strategies participants described could not be measured; the following strategies were only perceived to be successful by this sample of educators.

### **Elementary (K-6) Educators**

**Off-task behaviors.** Elementary educators suggested creating a class schedules to which large check marks could be added, engaging students with highly preferred materials, providing flexible seating and grouping for students, relying on students' intrinsic motivation for learning, providing more praise than correction, redirecting off-task behaviors, and talking with students to build relationships.

**Talking and playing.** Elementary educators providing verbal reminders about class policies, creating an incentive system, setting rules at the beginning of the year, giving talking (or "brain) breaks between activities, using short activities and lessons, managing students' expectations about what it means to be a listener, documenting students' behaviors in ClassDojo, and using restorative practices such as pausing class for a full-class meeting.

**Blurting out.** Elementary educators suggested the use of a "blurtbeans" or star-based incentive system, reminding students of class rules, and keeping students accountable via contact with parents on ClassDojo.

**Defiance and refusal.** Elementary educators suggested creating a menu of things students "must" and "may" do to promote choice and agency, assigning roles for group members, randomly selecting students for participation, using hand signals to show agreement or disagreement, conferencing with the child and parents, sending students to a place where they can "cool down," reinforcing positive behavior, using ClassDojo to remove points and taking away students' free time.

**Inattentiveness.** Elementary educators suggested exhibiting a model photo of what "attentiveness" looks like, using phrases such as "Eyes looking, ears listening," refocusing students, using attention grabbers, having one-on-one discussions with students about how their attentive affects others, moving students' seats, getting parents involved, using engaging lessons that are not boring, moving students around, staying in proximity to students in class, employing turn-and-talk activities, setting short-term goals, providing verbal and visual prompts, implementing a reward system, engaging with students' interests, and getting to know students personally and deeply.

**Emotional outbursts.** Elementary educators suggested creating a safe place for students to calm down which may incorporate music or posters about breathing techniques, including a morning class meeting to check in on students, giving students options, providing breaks, allowing students to talk with a school counselor, using love, and talking with students.

**Arguing with peers or bullying.** Elementary educators suggested facilitating appropriate conversations, talking with the child with another teacher or counselor present, talking with

parents, promoting strategies to express feelings, sending students to office, or “just giving them the look.”

**Disrespect or arguing with a teacher.** Elementary educators suggested talking it through with students and teaching them to be respectful, figuring out the “why” behind their behavior, reminding students of the rules, redirecting students, and giving consequences.

**Absenteeism.** Elementary educators suggested calling and talking with parents to create community, welcoming students back after being gone, and saying how they were missed.

**Computer issues.** Elementary educators suggested using GoGuardian to monitor computer use, taking away students’ computer time, or discussing the issue with the student and parents.

### **Secondary (7-12) Educators**

**Phone usage and texting.** Secondary educators suggested adding a phone caddy to the classroom, reminding students to put their phone away, setting limits and explaining when phones can be used, asking students to turn their phones over, taking attendance about if their phones are in their pockets, having a charging station somewhere in the room, providing warnings and giving detention, allowing earbuds during non-instructional time, giving extra points for students who have put their phone away, or taking away the phone.

**Inattentiveness and refusal to engage.** Secondary educators suggested providing students with choices to make class interesting, creating engaging lessons that involve students, especially with movement, engaging students in conversation and trust, helping make each group member feel important during collaborative group work, and providing students with directions when they enter class.

**Off-topic technology use.** Secondary educators suggested redirecting students’ behaviors, being nearby, offering to help with the appropriate task, shutting down their computer use through monitoring software, asking students politely when to use their laptops, praising students who had them closed, and blocking improper websites.

**Disrespect.** Secondary educators suggested building relationships with students and asking them if they are okay, emailing with parents, contacting the student’s counselor, coaches, and other teachers, conferencing briefly with students in the hall, giving detention, and avoiding calling out students during class.

**Absenteeism.** Secondary educators suggested contacting the student’s parents, building relationships and respect with students, allowing time in class to do make up work so they do not feel overwhelmed, taking attendance and letting administration handle the issue, and keeping students busy until the end of the class period so they do not leave early.

**Bullying.** Secondary educators suggested making sure the student knows that bullying is not tolerated, staying vigilant, and helping students to see their peers’ strengths.

**Unpreparedness.** Secondary educators suggested giving students time in class to work, buying organizational materials for them, having dialogue with students about their ideas, talking to students before and after class about preparedness, and asking students to borrow from other students.

**Sleepiness.** Secondary educators suggested talking to students about why they are sleepy, talking loudly in class, asking students if they are feeling well, need to get up to walk around, getting water, or see the nurse, giving reinforcement to maintain engagement, and providing students with peppermints for energy. Brain breaks are used for schools with block schedule and prove as an effective incentive as well as keeping students on task for second half of class.

**Incomplete work.** Secondary educators suggested creating group contracts with students, having one-on-one conversations with students, getting to know them, checking in with them, allowing late submissions, and providing reminders through educational technology platforms.

**Student-created distractions.** Secondary educators suggested putting students in the hall, discussing how their behaviors affect others, investing in students' learning, creating a token economy system in class, addressing the behavior individually, minimizing teacher-talk in class, incorporating sentence starters such as "Raise your hand if ...", giving students more work, and ignoring them.

### **Discussion and Implications for Teacher Education**

The present study sought to understand how educators adapt to classroom management practices and examined the successful practices of educators. When teachers were asked to rank the seriousness of classroom management behaviors absenteeism, inattentive in class, talking at inappropriate times, being disrespectful-rude to the teacher, refusing to participate, and arriving late or leaving early were reported most often. This is consistent with previous studies and will likely increase as the pandemic continues. The ranking of the behaviors with the seriousness that is perceived will be helpful to curriculum developers in designing appropriate classroom management content. What educators perceive to be successful when it comes to classroom management are varying and conflicting. While it is obvious some of these strategies will work well for some students it may not work for all students. The results of the study were divided in two categories: Elementary (K-6) Educators and Secondary (7-12) Educators. Recommendations from elementary teachers were given for specific behaviors. The recommendations given will be useful for interns and all teachers. Secondary teachers had different type of behaviors with recommendations appropriate for the misbehavior. These recommendations also would be useful for interns and all teachers. The study only involved interns and mentor teachers in one particular area of the state. However, the results of the study are applicable for all areas in the state and nationally.

Given the recent events of COVID-19 and the disruption to the classroom norms, research should be conducted addressing classroom management at a distance. Professional development should focus on evidence-based classroom management strategies to use at a distance. What norms are expected with students who are virtual learning? What are the most disruptive activities when virtual learning? How should teachers address the disruptions? Dowd and Green (2016) provide practical suggestions for classroom management in the digital age. Dowd and Green explain that a teacher's role is shifting from content expert to facilitator of technology and software. Classroom teachers are more accountable in monitoring digital programs that students are using.

### **Value of the Research**

This article will provide research-based strategies for the novice teacher and/or student teacher/intern to identify and implement classroom management strategies in the classroom. Furthermore, this article provides insights on what is considered serious infractions and how often they may occur. This information will benefit classroom management professors in developing up-to-date curriculum for the course. Future studies regarding classroom management should consider the broader impact of classroom management when teaching virtually. Given the fact that the participants were practicing interns and/or teachers their responses are useful for all teachers. Teacher preparation programs should incorporate the results of the study in their senior-level professional education courses.

As more and more changes transpire in education, classroom management skills needed will also change. Teaching in a digital age on campus and off campus will necessitate the need for more research in classroom management.

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# Understanding Administrators' Perceptions on Transition Education

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## Abstract

Transition education is a required component of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Information Act of 2004, and all students who have disabilities must have a transition education plan to prepare them for life after high school. However, there are no definitive standards for transition programs, and it is unclear how administrators with successful transition education programs support those programs to make them successful. The purpose of this qualitative interview study was to examine how administrators of successful programs perceive what makes their transition education programs effective. Systems theory provided the framework for this study because administrators can impact the entire special education system by acting on their beliefs. The participants were 6 administrators from 2 different schools with successful transition programs. Two interviews with each participant were used to gather data. Data were coded using open coding and analyzed to find emerging themes. Results indicated that administrators at these 2 school sites provided various support to help their programs be successful, including funding and decision-making assistance. The administrators had a positive perception of transition education outcomes, with the belief that such programs are important and needed by students with disabilities. This study contributes to research by indicating that administrators with successful transition programs make the programs' success a priority, working to gain various supports for the programs for the transition Indicator 14. Indicator 14 requires states to report the "percent of youth who are no longer in secondary school, had IEPs in effect at the time they left school, and were: A) Enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school. B) Enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school. C) Enrolled in higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program; or competitively employed or in some other employment within one year of leaving high school." (IDEA, 2004).

## Introduction

Transition education is required by law and must be taught to students with disabilities from their 16th through their 21st birthday (Individuals with Disabilities Education Information Act [IDEA], 2004). It is part of the overall Individualized Education Program, or IEP, and it defines the move from public school to adult life. Transition education is determined by the transition plan that must be in place for each student with disabilities by the age of 16 (IDEA, 2004). A transition plan is a section of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) that outlines transition goals and services for the student in meeting his post-high school goals (Battiste, 2018). While the law says that a transition plan must be in place and that transition education must be done according to the transition plan, there is not a mandatory approach that tells schools how to deliver this education or to ensure the quality of the transition education. The purpose of this qualitative interview study was to examine and understand school administrators' opinions of transition education programs for students with disabilities who will move from high school to adulthood; these administrators' programs were deemed as successful by meeting the state set requirement for the transition.

## **Literature Review**

Transition education is required by federal law and is an important component of a student with disabilities' transition plan (Canha et al., 2013; Well, Sheehey, & Moore, 2012). Transition education programs are the way that students receive access to the services and skills indicated in their transition plans as needed for success after high school (Canha, et al., 2013; Kellems & Morningstar, 2010). Key stakeholders must collaborate together to create and maintain a proper program that provides what the student needs. Administrators are a major part of the team and provide funding and programming decisions that can dictate what services and activities are available to the student within a school (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Leader-Janssen et al., 2012). Perceptions of most stakeholders have been positive about transition programs; however, teachers in particular have pointed to a lack of support from administrators as being a major barrier to successful planning (Berry et al., 2012; Cancio, Albrecht, & Johns, 2013; Pickens & Dymond, 2015). Teachers have indicated that administrators can determine what services they can offer to their students and if the administrators do not provide much support, then the services they can offer may be limited (Green, 2015).

There has been limited research on how administrators view transition education programs in their schools. To fill the gap, we examined administrators' attitudes and opinions about transition education. Gaining this understanding may add to the understanding of how all team members view transition education. The perceptions of parents, teachers, and even related services providers have been investigated, but not administrators. Once administrator attitudes and opinions are understood, team members can then understand what needs to be done to foster good working relationships for all team members involved in transition planning, as gaining understanding as to why another person feels the way they do can open communication to foster change.

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection**

This study relies on purposeful sampling to determine the participants for this study. Purposeful sampling allows a researcher to choose participants based on specific criteria so that the attitudes and opinions could be studied in more detail (see Patton, 2002). The sample was selected using data showing how many students were receiving postsecondary education or were employed. Two schools were chosen according to the percentage of students who are determined to be attending postsecondary training at a vocational/technical school, attending a 2- or 4-year college, or who are otherwise employed based on reported data from the ARP (Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit, 2014).

### **Instrumentation**

Interviews were the primary method of data collection for this study. The interviews were broken up into two different face-to-face interviews in order to delve deeper with each administrator while not taking up too much time at a given session. Data was collected through two face-to-face interviews. The purpose of using face-to-face interviews was so we could speak directly to the participant to not only hear what they were saying but to also record their body language during the interview. Each interview was recorded with an audio device after permission was gained from the participant so that we could ensure complete data collection from each interview.

A follow-up interview to answer any remaining questions or for any clarifications was considered but not deemed necessary after data analysis. These interviews allowed me to gather data on attitudes of administrators about the transition programs in the schools.

The interview questions were open-ended questions that allowed for the participants to expound on what they know about transition education. Both interviews began with basic questions about the participants' knowledge of transition and transition education programs. Questions were based on how the interviewees viewed transition education and how their school is successful in serving their students with transition education. These questions were designed to determine administrators' attitudes and opinions on transition. Here are the questions we asked participants:

### ***Interview 1 Questions***

1. When you think of transition education, what do you think of?
2. Explain which students you think need transition education.
3. Thinking about those students you said need transition education, what is it about those students that make you think they need transition education?
4. What is your view on how important transition education is for students with disabilities?
5. Thinking about the transition education program in your school, what kinds of things are students taught in that program?
6. What skills do you believe should be included to have a perfect transition education program?
7. Explain what most students do once they graduate from high school or leave the high school setting.

### ***Interview 2 Questions***

8. How successful do you think your transition education program is?
9. Thinking about your answer to question 8, what makes you think that?
10. What kind of support do you provide for the transition education program in your school?
11. Explain how you are involved with the transition education program? What kind of input do you provide?
12. What improvements do you think your transition education program needs?
13. What are the strengths of your transition education program? What are some weaknesses?
14. What barriers do you encounter when dealing with your transition education program?
15. What do you view your role is within the transition education program?
16. Explain your value as a member of the transition education program.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

Once we chose the school sites and IRB approval was given by the university and the local IRB (Approval #03-14-17-0060555), we contacted the superintendent to receive permission to interview the administrators who oversee schools with transition-age students in the school. The administrators were middle school and high school administrators that may not work directly with the students with disabilities but are in charge of the daily operations of the school and over the programs within the school.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

The data was reviewed through transcriptions of recorded interviews as well as reviewing notes taken during the interviews. As we reviewed the data it was analyzed using codes that were developed by us to organize information. Codes were developed during the analysis of the data. Several different types of codes were developed, including value codes that allowed codes to be

developed based on the believes of the participant, and process codes, which were used to code the overall basis of the interviews (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

**Ethical Procedures**

We obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before doing any data collection. My goal for this study was to honestly report what information was given to me during data collection. All names of districts and participants was identified by code names only. There was a list presented to the IRB with original school names along with identifying code names.

**Summary**

**Review of Interview Data**

The first interview provided valuable insight into what participants perceive transition education as and how they feel about transition education. The themes that emerged from question 1, which asked what the participants felt transition education was, continue education after high school, independent living skills, transitioning from the classroom to a successful life. In question 2, the themes that emerged about which students need transition education were all students, start before student graduate/start early, and special needs students. In question 3, participants had to think about the students they said needed transition education and explain why they felt that way. The themes that emerged were students need to be able to manage the real work, there is a gap in the perception of what life is like, they process things differently, they don't know what is available, and there is a greater focus on academics and not real-world learning. Participants felt that transition education was important for students and everyone deserves a chance. The themes that emerged from the question about what skills need to be taught were daily living skills, financial skills, job skills, communication, and driving test skills. The major theme of skills needed for a perfect transition program were soft skills, daily living skills and adaptive behavior skills. When asked what most students do after high school, the participants mostly stated that they do some kind of work, trade school, college, sheltered workshop, or sit at home. There was no discrepant data collected during this interview.

**Table 1**  
*Interview 1 Questions and Emerging Themes*

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Questions	Themes
<p>Question 1: When you think of transition education, what do you think of?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing education after high school</li> <li>• Independent living skills</li> <li>• Transitioning from the classroom to a successful life</li> </ul>
<p>Question 2: Explain which students you think need transition education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start before they graduate/start early</li> <li>• All students</li> <li>• Special needs students</li> </ul>
<p>Question 3: Thinking about those students you said need transition education, what is it about those students that make you think they need transition education?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students need to be able to manage the real world</li> <li>• Gap in perception of what life is like</li> <li>• Process things differently</li> <li>• Don't know what is available</li> <li>• Focus on academics and not real world</li> </ul>
<p>Question 4: What is your view on how important transition education is for students with disabilities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extremely important</li> <li>• No more important than for other students</li> <li>• Everyone deserves a chance</li> </ul>

Question 5: Thinking about the transition education program in your school, what kinds of things are students taught in that program?

- Daily living skills
- Financial: budgeting, pay bills, checkbooks, etc.
- Job skills- resumes, interview, speaking
- Don't know
- Communication
- Driving test
- Choice-making
- Soft skills- time management, job skills, people skills, etc.
- Visit employer sites
- Life Skills 101
- Communication
- All areas of adaptive behavior: conceptual, practical, community, home living, self-care, social, functional academics, leisure, health and safety, self-direction, work
- Sheltered workshops
- Work
- College, community college, or trade school
- Jail
- Sit on front porch
- Military

Question 6: What skills do you believe should be included to have a perfect transition education program?

Question 7: Explain what most students do once they graduate from high school or leave the high school setting.

The second interview provided valuable insight into how participants perceive transition education and how successful their transition education programs are at their schools. Overall, participants felt that their transition program was successful or was improving. They believed this based on what they see in the community, successful graduation rates, and with the personnel they have running the program. All participants stated that they provided some kind of support to the transition education program in their school, with the support ranging from attending meetings, to being a voice, to providing emotional and financial support. Participants stated that they are involved by attending meetings, keeping up to date with information from the LEA (special education supervisor), serving on boards, providing support and guidance, and providing financial information. When asked what improvements were needed, participants mentioned increased community involvement, follow-up on students, expanding the program to students without disabilities, providing better information parents, and consistency within the program. Participants felt that the strengths of their program were their personnel, always striving for improvement, good graduation rates, and good facilities. Some of the weaknesses participants mentioned were low parental involvement, not enough follow through or prior planning, additional data needs to be collected, program needs to be offered to more students, more financial support is needed, more personnel needed, and better-quality curriculum is needed. Two participants did not know of any strengths or weaknesses of their programs. Participants indicated that some barriers faced when dealing with transition education program were lack of time, lack of funding, the daily struggles in just running a program, and families. Two participants did not feel like they knew any barriers that they faced with their transition education program. When asked about their role as part of the transition education team participants felt that their roles were to provide support, get students in the courses they need, and act as a committee member. Participants' answers varied when asked about their value as part of the team. The answers ranged from one participant saying they provide value input, to

another saying they are not more important than another member. One felt that they had little or minimal value while another felt like they had a high value as part of the team.

**Table 2**

*Interview 2 Questions and Emerging Themes*

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Questions	Themes
Question 8: How successful do you think your transition education program is?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful</li> <li>• As successful as parents and students make it</li> <li>• Not sure</li> <li>• Improving</li> </ul>
Question 9: Thinking about your answer to the previous question, what makes you think that?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is seen in the community</li> <li>• Parents don't want students to lose benefits</li> <li>• Successful graduation rates</li> <li>• Good personnel</li> </ul>
Question 10: What kind of support do you provide for the transition education program in your school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whatever the teachers need</li> <li>• Support: financial, facilities</li> <li>• Attend meetings</li> <li>• Be their voice</li> </ul>
Question 11: Explain how you are involved with the transition education program. What kind of input do you provide?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LEA keeps me informed</li> <li>• Attend meetings</li> <li>• Serve on boards</li> <li>• Don't really know</li> <li>• Provide support and guidance</li> <li>• Provide new information</li> </ul>
Question 12: What improvements do you think your transition education program needs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform on financial information</li> <li>• Increased community involvement</li> <li>• Increased follow-up on students</li> <li>• Expand to students not in special education</li> <li>• More district involvement</li> <li>• Increased information to parents, students and community</li> </ul>
Question 13: What are the strengths of your transition education program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistency in program</li> <li>• Teachers/personnel</li> <li>• Good graduation rates</li> <li>• Always trying to improve</li> <li>• Facilities</li> </ul>
Question 13, part II: What are some weaknesses?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low parental involvement</li> <li>• Not enough follow-through or prior planning</li> <li>• Need to be expanded</li> <li>• Additional data needs collected/maintained</li> <li>• More financial support needed</li> <li>• Additional personnel</li> <li>• Quality curriculum materials</li> <li>• don't know any</li> </ul>

## Questions

Question 14: What barriers do you encounter when dealing with your transition education program?

Question 15: What do you view your role is within the transition education program?

Question 16: Explain your value as a member of the transition education program.

## Themes

- Families
- None
- Daily struggles in keeping the program going
- Getting information out to parents
- Funding
- Lack of time
- Support
- Make sure students are in classes they need
- Committee member
- Valuable input
- Not more important than anyone else
- Little or minimal value
- Part of the team
- High value

Through both interviews, the data gathered showed the opinions and beliefs of the participants on transition education and how they felt their school's transition education program was doing for students with disabilities. From these interviews, participants indicated that transition education is important for students, while there was discrepancy between participants saying all students need transition education and some saying only those with disabilities need transition education. Participants had mostly a favorable view of transition education and the skills that they felt should be taught varied, but all were skills that help students in dealing with everyday life. The participants believed that students do something after high school, whether it was going to work, get more education, or sit at home. Every participant provided some kind of support to their transition education program at their school. While a few answers of "I don't know" were provided for a couple of questions, overall, the participants were knowledgeable about transition education and what was happening in the transition education program at their schools.

Based on the results from both sets of interviews, the administrators at the two school sites are supportive of their transition education programs. Most of the administrators believed that all students need transition education, and all felt that it was important for students with disabilities. Most administrators mentioned life skills and communication as the skills needed to be taught in transition education programs.

The results showed that the administrators who participated in this study believed that most students need transition education. All administrators were able to provide a definition of transition education, indicating that its purpose is to move students from high school to life after high school. Administrators felt that their programs were successful and were able to identify strengths of their programs. The participants were able to identify weaknesses of their programs and barriers when working with their programs. All the administrators felt that their role with the transition education program was to provide support in any way that they could. Most administrators felt that while they were involved, that their input and value to the program was minimal; however, most of them recognized that they provided funding and support for the programs.

## Implications

The findings of this study provide a starting point of how administrators perceive transition education program. In this case, these administrators are a part of the team or system for programs that are successful. According to systems theory, what affects one part of the system, affects the whole system. With the schools working as a system, where the administrators are at the top of the system, their support and willingness to be a part of a team affects the rest of the system (Meadows, 2008; Strnadova & Cumming, 2014). This willingness to work on a team by administrators, along with their attitudes and perceptions, affect the whole system, from the top down. This study provides a beginning and, if this proves applicable to other areas, provides a way to plan for best transition program development. This study provides a baseline to be used when looking at future research on how administrator attitudes and opinions affect a system within a school or on the success of transition education programs.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative interview study was to examine and understand school administrators' attitudes and opinions of transition education programs for students with disabilities who will move from high school to adulthood, whose programs are deemed as successful. Conclusions hypothesized from the data show those administrators at the school sites that had achieving transition education programs have positive attitudes and opinions of transition education and understand the need for transition education for students. These administrators were supportive of the programs in their schools. They provided whatever type of support teachers needed to help the transition education programs be successful. These two school sites had administrators with positive attitudes and opinions of transition education. Based on this study, these schools had administrators who had positive attitudes and opinions of transition education.

There were limitations to this study, which include small sample sizes in both participants and participating schools. The study looked at perceptions, which can change over time due to experiences and values. Additional studies should be completed with larger samples sizes in both participants and schools to determine if the findings remain representative of successful transition programs. This study only looked at schools that were meeting Indicator 14, therefore, completing this study at schools who are not meeting Indicator 14 may prove to provide different results, and should be considered for further research.

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