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On the Urgency of Supporting College Student Resiliency - Immediately

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Abstract

Decreased resiliency among students is an urgent problem presently facing higher education. What was once an issue of desired persistence (Burns, 2013) has become one of focused effort to teach resilience to support program enrollment and completion (Lipscomb, et al., 2021; Stoliker, et al., 2022). Following an articulated understanding of the nature of resiliency, this meta-analysis of promising literature suggests three key actions that are ready for academic programs to begin implementing: the development of curriculum to support resilience, professional development to better build and secure an understanding of resilience, and an expanded infrastructure to support fidelity of efforts. While no immediate solution presently exists, evidence in the literature suggests a very plausible framework with which to immediately move forward.

Keywords: Pandemic, resilience, undergraduate preparation

Introduction

Since the onset of the Pandemic a significant crisis has been brewing in higher education. This crisis was previously creeping up on university undergraduate programs at a somewhat slower pace, but due to the Pandemic's impact—especially with certain critical ages—the nature of this urgency has changed. The Pandemic "forced almost 1.57 billion students from across the globe, out of school" (Appukuttan & Mathur, 2022), and as they have returned to the classroom, the contrast with previous trends in learning has become tremendously apparent. Resiliency in an undergraduate program is something of a very different nature to a previous generation. MacNeily (2020) called a "mid-twentieth century version" of resilience as "the acquisition of a strong mind and body" and further called it "the ability to endure unanticipated hurdles and tribulations without cracking under the strain" (p. 227). It is likely that any professor or instructor of undergraduate students will, say quite simply, that it is just not this simple anymore. Questions over course content may go unasked; personal situations and crises may go uncompartmentalized or remedied; an unsatisfactory grade does not result in trying harder next time, but rather dropping out of an academic program. But this crisis in resiliency has now embedded itself deep in the identity of the soon-to-be college students of 2025-2026—those at the approximate middle school level whose educational needs, both cognitive and affective, suffered tremendously during the remote education of the Pandemic. This is, without question, on the radar of higher education, but a deeper urgency now exists to make ready for the impact of this phenomenon on undergraduate programs, as well as how to support these students.

Understanding the Growing Urgency

One profound fact is clear when reviewing current literature on this subject: scholarship on this issue indeed existed pre-Pandemic, but not at all to the degree of urgency and interest as it does in the present. Still, it seems helpful to ground a clear understanding of who these resilient students are, or what resiliency even is, before looking backward. Appukuttan and Mathur (2022) articulated a very succinct and effective definition of both when setting up their research framework to better understand it:

> "In quest for academic success, students on a daily basis, [encounter] various academic and social problems in the classroom settings and homes due to which, may result in subpar performances in their academics and may eventually lead the students into dropping out of education. In spite of the problems and challenging circumstances, some students manage to adjust to the difficulties and attain high levels of academic performance and success. These students are known as academically resilient students" (p. 158).

Their study, intended to better understand the relationship between academic resilience and adolescent learner achievement, ultimately painted a strong picture of this phenomenon. While they found no distinct relationship between gender and resiliency (a key question in their work), their recommendations sounded a strong call to better understand this phenomenon, and they strongly encourage educators to value "the importance of academic resilience techniques in learning outcomes and imbibing the strategies in the curriculum and assessment procedures" (p. 162).

Indeed, this has been a phenomenon under examination prior to the Pandemic—but is clearly of more interest than before. And it is important to bear in mind that pre-Pandemic scholarship on the matter did not fail to anticipate anything, and was already examining it as an issue of no less overall importance. It was, however, situated among concerns of retention in academic programs (Simpson, 2013; Bose, 2013), and in some cases promoting excellence in programs in hopes of retention (Needham, et al.., 2013). A fascinating example exists in the push for "persistence," where Burns (2013) called successful online learners "those who persist throughout the duration of an online course or programme and complete the major requirements associated with that course or programme," and after identifying various skill and personality factors, noted that "the degree to which online learners possess these 'persistence factors' determines their 'readiness' to be successful online learners" (p. 142). Thus, "learners with more persistence factors or a higher degree of readiness (self-efficacy, technology skills, and time-management skills) may be motivated to participate and persist in an online experience" (p. 143).

Simmons, Beaumont, and Holland (2018) identified four factors that clearly supported student resilience: "tutor feedback, time management, motivation and self-belief" (p. 9). While this may seem to many educators as just good pedagogical practice in the name of high efficacy, they also noted that "by developing resilience in this way students articulated how they managed to persist in their studies" (p. 11). This may offer an interesting clue to the problem at hand, moving forward: deeper student reflection and engagement with their own successes. Douce (2018), when referring to the work of Simons, Beaumont, and Holland in an Editorial accompanying their work, stated that, "what struck me as I was reading this paper was the extent to which the concept of resilience goes hand in hand with the concepts of retention and progression" (p. 1). This intriguing clue in the literature may very well portend the present day, where it seems that declining resilience may be the cause of decreased retention and slowed progression of students in academic programs. Additional work in this interesting cycle of the literature further supported and emphasized the optimization of the learning experience by leveraging strengths, mediating struggles, and improving access to learning materials (Busulwa & Bbuye, 2018; De Paepe, Zhu & Depryck, 2018; Hamdi & Abu Qudais, 2018), each of which may be a useful ingredient in curriculum development.

Smith et al. (2018) offer a very interesting example of an effort to address resilience before the Pandemic was even on the radar. Citing inconsistent results in resilience training

between 2003 and 2014, they sought to "improve personal resilience and well-being," and assert that "online delivery of resilience training has the potential of delivering effective training in a more flexible, personalized, and cost-effective way" (p. 1). Their study heavily relies on stress factors—specifically, their decline—to shine light on this. Ultimately, "the more resilience improved, the more stress and stress-related symptoms declined," suggesting that "that those in greatest need of resilience skills received the greatest benefit" (p. 4). Along these same lines, Ray et al. (2019) sought to better understand the communication of resilience information to students. Through the use of restorative narratives, they found that:

> "In particular, compared to other student respondents, students who perceived higher levels of the restorative quality of those narratives reported greater experience of meaningful affect and greater outcome expectations, indicating their perception that the advice/resources presented would help themselves and others deal with challenges experienced while at the institution" (p. 277).

Ultimately, their findings suggest that such narratives "increase students' desire to seek more information about prevention resources" and promote "recommending and sharing the prevention-based content" among each other (p. 279). These two examples offer different but fascinating examples that imply the need for learning infrastructure devoted to training, and to communication.

Understanding the Immediate Actions Needed

Fortunately, scholarship during and at the emergence from the Pandemic, has taken a stronger tone of action, no doubt prompted by the urgency of the issue. While previously discussed scholarship offers more subtle nuggets of insight, these are far more explicit in their implications. Palma-Gómez et al. (2020) developed a protocol for a study design which was intended to improve coping skills, well-being, and depression/anxiety prevention. Their initial meta-analysis of literature (the most promising part of this work) suggests that "the interventions with the greatest effect for depression and anxiety in university students are cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), mindfulness-based interventions and other interventions (such as art, exercise and peer support)" (p. 1). And additionally, "several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of resilience interventions in reducing depressive or anxious symptoms in youth, adolescents, and university students" (p. 1)—and this appears to be even more effective when combined with wellness and mindfulness education. Their meta-analysis also suggests that internet-based online interventions can be just as effective (p. 2). Their online intervention modules were devoted to: "autonomy, self-acceptance, mastery of the environment, purpose in life, positive relationships, and personal growth," and ultimately aimed to teach "skills and strategies to cope with stressful everyday situations in order to improve resilience, promote self-efficacy, and increase well-being" (p. 5). While results were impacted and delayed by the Pandemic, the meta-analysis is informative, and the study design is promising.

Lipscomb et al. (2021) were highly interested in professional development (specifically, for early childhood teachers) designed to better understand and respond to trauma—which they explicitly link to a decline in resilience. They note that "to be trauma-informed, organizations, programs, and systems must not only be aware of the widespread impacts of trauma, but also recognize its signs, integrate knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and resist re-traumatization;" furthermore, programs that work with children should be "trauma-responsive, and to nurture resilience through their everyday interactions with children, should also be feasible across all types of ECE [Early Childhood Education] programs" (p. 3). When comparing

the effect of participation in their *Roots of Resilience* professional development program, their findings "revealed that participation in *Roots of Resilience* was associated with moderately-sized increases in emotionally supportive teacher-child interactions and modestly-sized reductions in children's negative engagement and increases in math scores" (p. 8). They ultimately assert that "teachers need additional, focused supports to help them in their efforts to nurture children's resilience during the early years" and that *Roots of Resilience* "holds promise to help fill this gap" (p. 11).

Stoliker et al. (2022) note "a general lack of knowledge on the efficacy of resilience training programs, especially concerning individuals working in stress-inducing environments," but add that "nevertheless, recent findings highlight the potential benefits of resilience training for mental health and well-being" (p. 756). The purpose of their implemented online resilience resource (ORR) in a nursing program was "to help students and trainees, as well as individuals with more work experience, proactively build personal resilience and to promote healthy psychological functioning" (p. 756). Their examination of this 6-8 hour course, completed independently in one or more sessions, is a fascinating example to examine in that it involved multiple cohorts, with baseline data collection—plus "one-month post-ORR training, and three-month post-ORR training" (p. 758). Their findings, inconsistent with the literature, were inconclusive in that they were not able to link the ORR to improved student resiliency—yet they still insist intervention and training can be helpful. And they believe the key may lie in greater emphasis, longitudinal study, and especially in efforts to improve the efficacy of such work over longer periods of time (p. 762). In other words, their intervention may have been too short, and without enough post-intervention monitoring. Thus, any such system deployed in an academic program should be designed with longer-term implementation and fidelity in mind.

Immediate Recommendations and Concluding Discussion

Based on the above understanding of the immediate actions needed to address the phenomenon of decreased resiliency, three key recommendations appear ready for academic programs to immediately consider at the present time: 1) the development of learning components—traditional or online—designed to improve resiliency (i.e. Palma-Gómez et al., 2020), 2) increased professional development designed to understand and respond to issues of resilience (i.e. Lipscomb et al., 2021), and 3) emphasis on implementation dedicated to fidelity (i.e. Stoliker et al. (2022). While there is not necessarily a one-size-fits-all solution suitable for any academic program, nor does the reviewed scholarship point to a set of off-the-shelf components ready for assembly, this meta-analysis of recent scholarship does indeed suggest that ample evidence exists for a clear conceptual path forward, a clear set of guidelines for educators seeking to either build infrastructure into existing programs, or to make changes to existing programs. It is, therefore, appropriate to recommend that academic programs immediately begin the exploration and development of curricular elements supporting resilience, the relevant professional development to better understand and respond to issues of resiliency, and a critical belief in the fidelity of implementation.

MacNeily (2020) also said that according to the previous generation it ultimately "doesn't matter how many times you get knocked down" and that "what really matters is how many times you get back up" (p. 227). This generation's college students now, without question, require explicit guidance in how to fall down, and how to get back up. But falling down and getting up can no longer be an assumed skill, a value of a generation—or even a pedagogical approach. Lipscomb et al. (2021), by contrast, called resilience "a process of positive adaptation in the face

of adversity" (p. 2). Higher education, and undergraduate programs specifically, must indeed adapt, must indeed increase their readiness to support issues of resiliency and immediately put support structures in place if program viability and student outcomes are to be assured. College students deserve the appropriate support structures that will help them be successful, and higher education must recognize the changing nature of resiliency—indeed, its more profound post-Pandemic nature—and urgently begin to implement these support structures in academic programs.

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Engaging Students in Online Classes: Successes and Challenges

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Abstract

This study investigated students' reported successes and challenges in an online class. Students were enrolled in an undergraduate course with the same instructor. All assignments and communications were identical. The study aimed to determine what factors lead to student success and what factors students perceive as challenges in an online class. The research questions were: 1) What factors influence students' success in an online/virtual learning class? and 2) What challenges and problems do students face in an online class? There were 157 participants in the study, all from a major land-grant institution in the southeastern United States. Results indicate that most students still prefer on-campus learning when given a choice. In addition, students perceive time management and an organized and caring professor as significant factors contributing to successful online learning. Finally, students perceive challenges as being isolated from other students, time management, and keeping up with the coursework.

Keyword: Online learning, time management, professor involvement

Introduction

As higher education institutions transitioned to online learning in the last three years, instructional delivery and learning dynamics changed. While the increase in online class enrollment was primarily due to a pandemic, universities saw the feasibility of continuing some online or a combination of online/on-campus courses. Online learning is described as learning at a distance. The student may attend class virtually from a library, coffee shop, dorm room, or anywhere with Internet capabilities. Synchronous learning occurs when the instructor and the students are logged on and communicating simultaneously. Synchronous learning and teaching allow the instructor to conduct class "live" and meet with all students simultaneously. Students are required to log in at the same time. Asynchronous learning occurs when students log on independently of when other students log on. Students still have deadlines but can choose when and how long to complete assignments. The instructor can post recorded lessons and chat with students independently at various hours. An asynchronous delivery course is advantageous to students who require additional hours to complete assignments. Synchronous delivery courses are better suited to students needing scheduled instructor communication.

Review of Literature

This past year, most college students were enrolled in at least one class online. A 2006 study by the Sloan Consortium reported that 3.2 million postsecondary students in the United States took at least one online course (Barrett, 2010). By 2015, the number had increased to 5,828,826 million students (Online Consortium, 2015). A study by Baxter, Callaghan, and McAvoy (2018) reported that 29.7% of all students completed at least one distance course in higher education.

How an online class is designed and developed impacts student engagement. Efforts should be made to mirror the learning experiences to an on-campus course. Instructors and students should consider the technical tools, personality, and resources to succeed in an online

class (Burd & Buchanan, 2004). For instructors, online teaching transfers face-to-face skills to an online format (Al-Mohair & Alwahaishi, 2020). Aisami (2020) describes an online course as one where students can perform online any course activity that is typically assigned in a traditional classroom.

Features typically used by instructors in online/virtual learning classes are discussion boards, ZOOM, pre-recorded lessons, chat rooms, live lectures, personal class websites, and video presentations (live or pre-recorded). In addition, in online/virtual learning courses, students communicate with the instructor via video chat/video conferencing/ZOOM, email, text messaging, or telephone. In a survey by Research.com, 67% of American college students used their mobile device to complete all or some of their classroom assignments (2023). Some "flipped" classroom formats are readily incorporated into online/virtual learning classes. The instructor is more active in a traditional class setting, while the student is passive. In online learning, the student must accept responsibility for completing class assignments.

One of the biggest challenges in engaging students is for the students to feel that the instructor is present (not physically). Being present in an online class ranges from sending/responding to emails immediately, sharing information with the students, and providing quality feedback. Feedback should address the mistakes and emphasize the mastery of the skill (Brown, Bull, & Pendlebury, 1997). When an instructor provides a personal touch, whether an introductory video or mailing birthday cards to students, a personal connection with the students begins.

Methodology
Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to determine what factors lead to student success in online learning. The following research questions guided this study:
1. What factors influence students' success in an online class?
2. What are the challenges and problems students face in an online course?

Participants

Participants in this study were enrolled in an introduction to technology class at a land-grant university in the southeastern United States with a student population of 27,558. The students represented the university's total population, with all the university's colleges represented.

Survey Instrument and Procedure

The 35-item survey to assess successes and challenges in online classes was administered to 157 college undergraduate students enrolled in an introduction to technology class with the same instructor. One-hundred eighty students were invited to participate in the study, resulting in an 87% response rate. The pilot study did not reveal any significant issues. Students were invited to participate in the study by clicking on the survey link. Students could opt out of participating by not clicking on the survey link. The data were analyzed using the Qualtrics software program.

Results of the Study
This section provides an analysis of data collected from the participants.

Demographics. Demographic data revealed that 58 (37.66%) were sophomores, 40 (25.97%) were juniors, 39 (25.32%) were seniors, and 17 (11.04%) were freshmen. Three students did not respond to the question. One hundred eleven (70.70%) respondents were female, while 46 (29.30%) were male. Most of the respondents were between the ages of 19-30 (153/97.45%), followed by three students (1.91%) in the 41-50 age category and one student (.64%) in the 31-40 age category. The majority (80/50.9%) of the students were enrolled in five or more courses, 42 (26.75%) in 3 – 4 courses, and 35 (22.29%) in 1 – 2 courses. Students (118/75.16%) prefer an asynchronous online class compared to a synchronous (39/24.84%).

Online Learning Format. Most college students still prefer the on-campus format. Most (87/55.41%) of the students preferred on-campus learning, while 33 (21.02%) selected online learning. Thirty-seven (23.57%) students stated that the learning format did not matter.

Figure 1
Online Learning Format
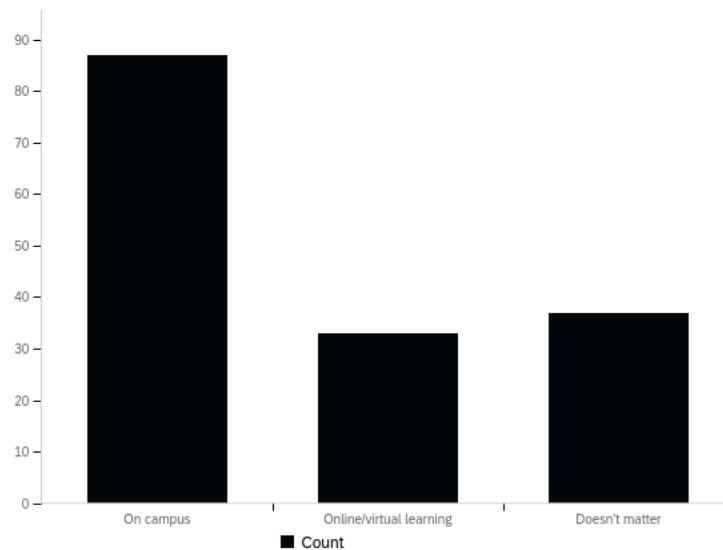
Online Environment. The online environment has a significant impact on the success of student learning. Students were asked to respond to several options on where they completed their assignments. Students were able to respond to more than one choice. The total count of options selected was 270. For example, the option "off-campus in a home or apartment" received 136 responses (50.37%), "on campus, study areas such as a library or dorm" received 75 responses (27.78%), followed by "on campus, computer lab" with 32 (11.85%), "off campus, work location" (23/8.52%), and Other (4/1.48%).

Figure 2
Online Environment
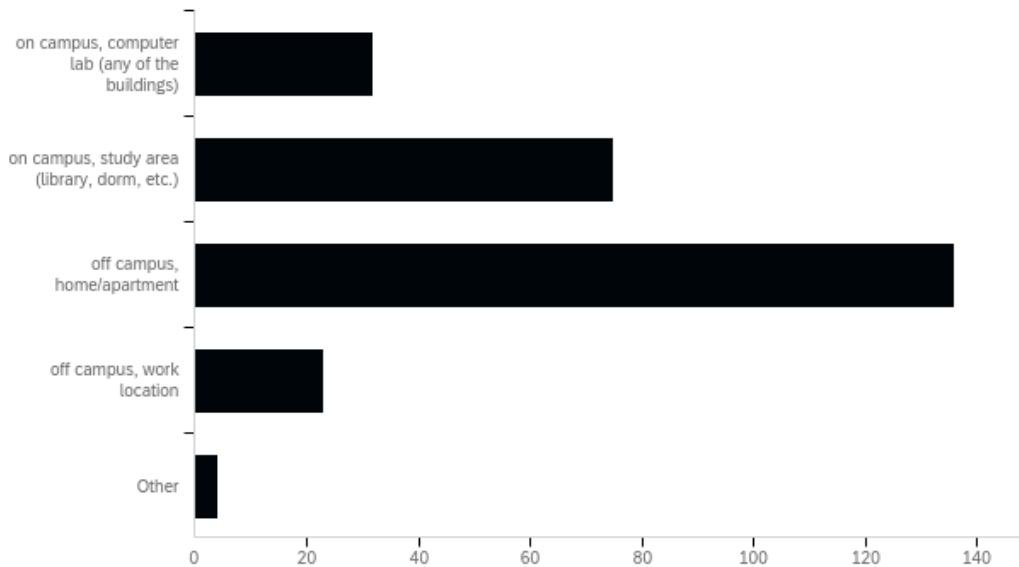
Technology Tools Used by Students. Overwhelmingly, Blackboard (Learning Management System) is utilized by almost all students. The technology tools most used by students in order are (1) Blackboard (148/33.79%), (2) digital textbooks (98/22.37%), (3) Google Sites (75/17.12%), (4) Google Apps (58/13.24%), and (5) Google Classroom (52/11.87%). Students had the option to choose "Other." Seven students chose "Other" and indicated using Word, Excel, Microsoft Teams, and ZOOM.

Figure 3
Technology Tools Used by Students
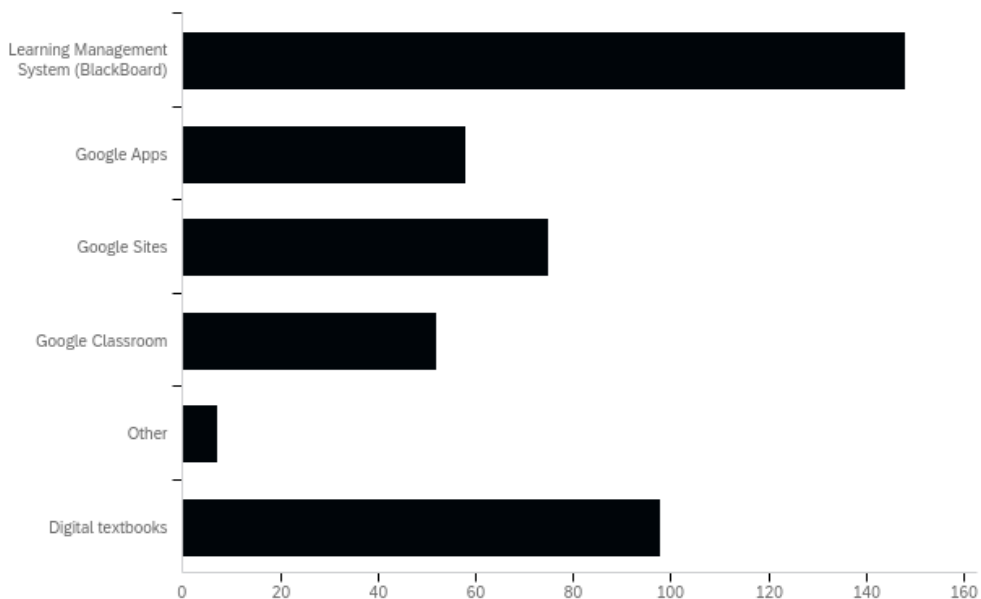
Technology Tools Used by Instructors. From a list of standard technology tools, students were

asked to check the box next to each technology tool listed if their instructor had utilized it. Again, each student would check several options. The following technology tools most used by instructors, as reported by the students, in order are (1) Discussion Board in Blackboard (133/19.91%), (2) pre-recorded lessons (128/19.16%), (3) office visits via ZOOM or other virtual methods (103/15.42%), (4) video presentations (98/14.67%), (5) live lectures (82/12.28%), (6) personal class website (59/8.83%), and (7) breakout chat rooms (64/9.58%).

Figure 4
Technology Tools Used by Instructors
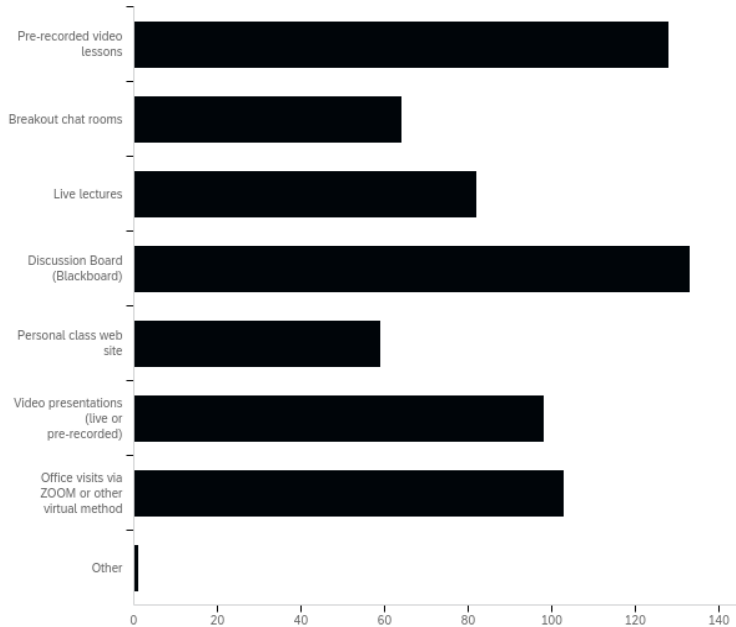
Communication. Communication is vital for any student enrolled online. Most students (145/59.92%) prefer to communicate with their instructor by email, followed by video chat/video conferencing/ZOOM (56/23.14%). Text messaging (27/11.16%) and cell phone (14/5.79%) were the least preferred communication methods.

Figure 5
Communication Method
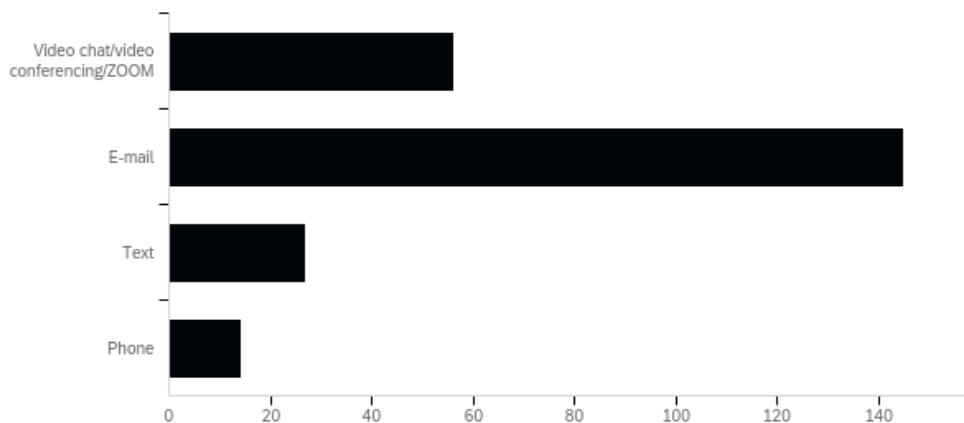
Most students prefer updates/reminders from their instructors every two-three days

(88/51.59%), followed by once a week (39/24.84%). Twenty (12.74%%) of the students reported they preferred once a day, while 17 (10.83%) did not care.

Figure 6
Communication Assignment Reminders
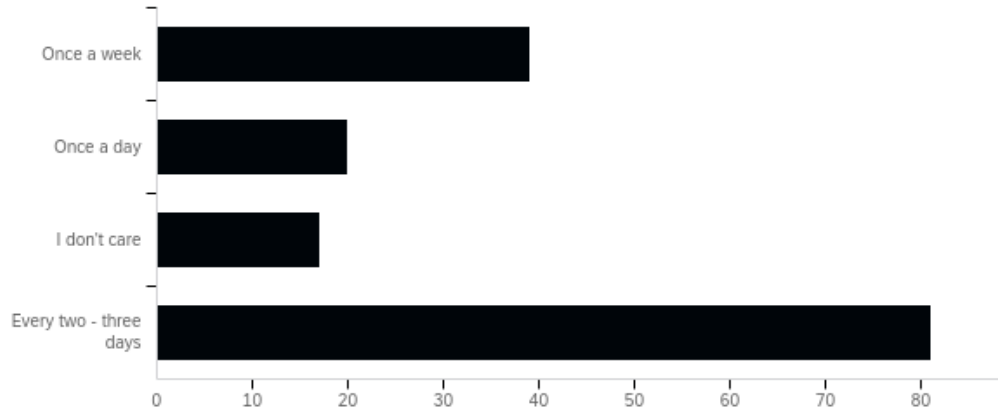
Students were also asked how often they had one-on-one email discussions with their instructors. Over ninety-eight (62.42%) students reported rarely conversing with their instructor via email. In comparison, 56 (35.67%) students said they discussed using email weekly (once or several times a week). Three (1.91%) of the students reported they had never had a one-on-one discussion with their instructor via email.

Figure 7
Communication Frequency
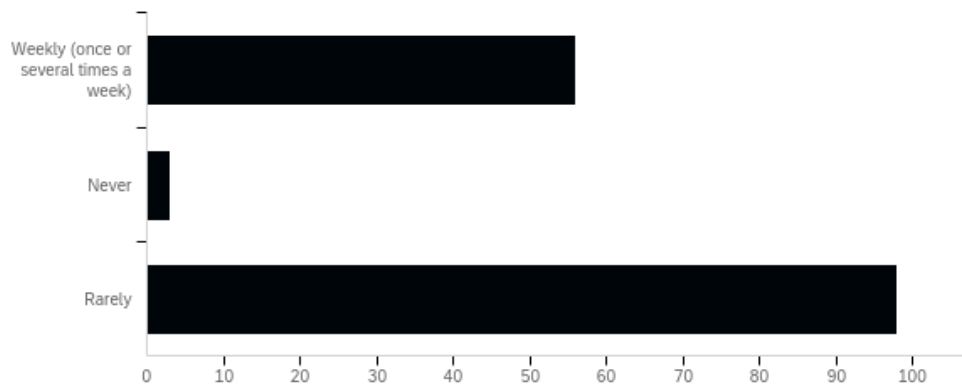
Similar responses were reported when students were asked how often they had discussions with their instructors over the phone, including text messaging. One hundred three (65.61%) students never had discussions with their instructor over the phone. Only 49 (31.21%) of the students responded they rarely have discussions with their instructor over the phone, and five (3.18%) reported they had discussions with their instructor over the phone weekly.

Figure 8
Communication by Phone
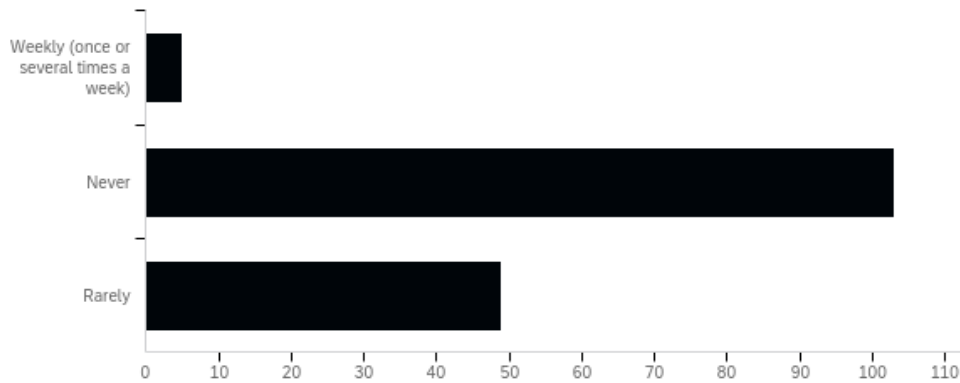
Similar to one-on-one discussions with the instructor via email and telephone, students seldom had discussions with instructors via ZOOM or Microsoft Teams. Most students (116/73.89%) rarely had one-on-one discussions utilizing ZOOM or Microsoft Teams. In comparison, 35 (22.29%) of students stated they never had discussions with their instructor using Microsoft Teams or ZOOM. Six (3.82%) students reported having Microsoft Teams or ZOOM meetings weekly with their instructor.

Figure 9
Communication with ZOOM/Microsoft Teams
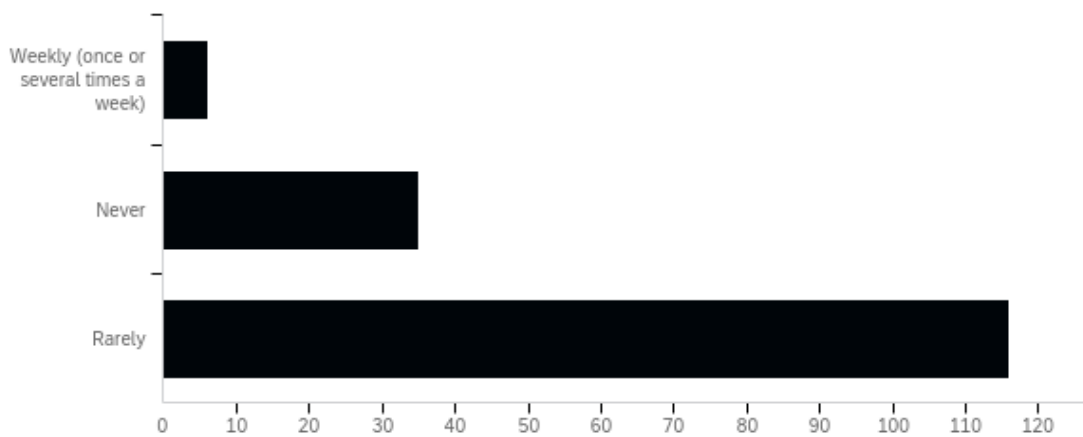
When asked how important face-to-face communication with instructors was while learning remotely, 58 (36.94%) students responded it was moderately important, while 15 (9.55%) responded it was extremely important. Conversely, only 25.48% (40) of the students felt it was slightly important, followed by 22 (14.01%) ranking it very important and another 22 (14.01%) of the students ranking face-to-face communication as not at all important.

Figure 10
Communication Face-to-Face
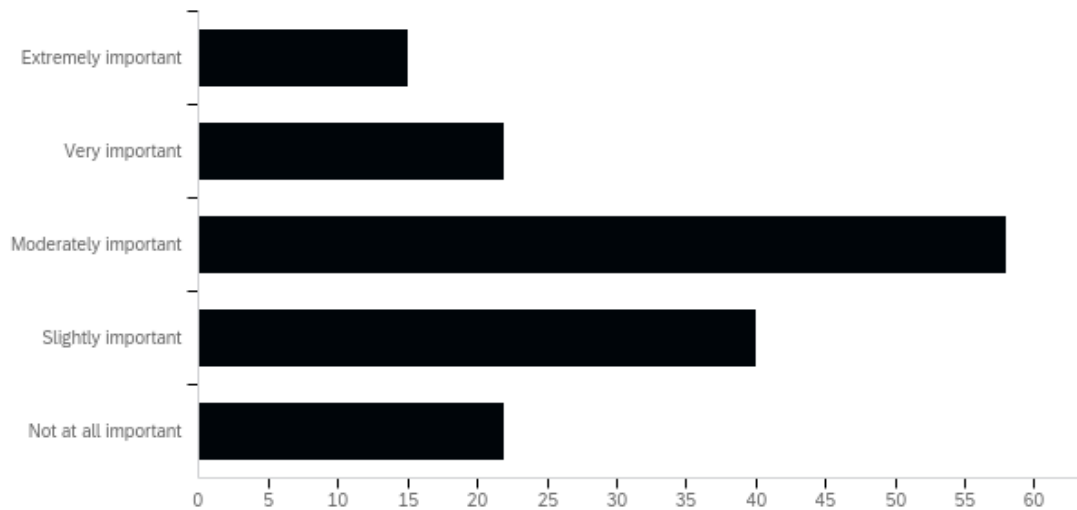
Participants were asked, "What communication method do you normally use to communicate with your Instructors?" The communication method generally used to communicate with instructors is email. Of the 157 participants, 152 (96.82%) reported that email is the most common communication platform. Four students (2.55%%) stated ZOOM was, and one student chose "Other" with a comment, "go see them."

Figure 11
Communication with Instructors
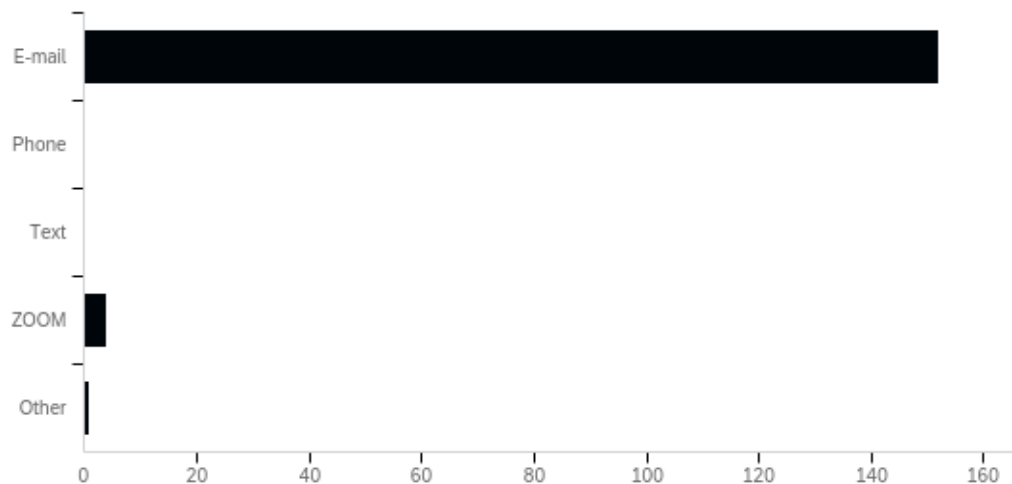
Completing Class Assignments. Participants were asked, "How many hours per day do you normally use the computer to attend virtual classes/complete assignments?" Students typically spend an average of 2.89 hours on Monday completing coursework, followed by an average of 2.75 hours on Wednesday. The other averages reported were Thursday (2.74), Tuesday (2.64), Sunday (2.49), Friday (2.37), and Saturday (1.64). The least time spent on coursework was Saturday.

Figure 12
Completing Class Assignments
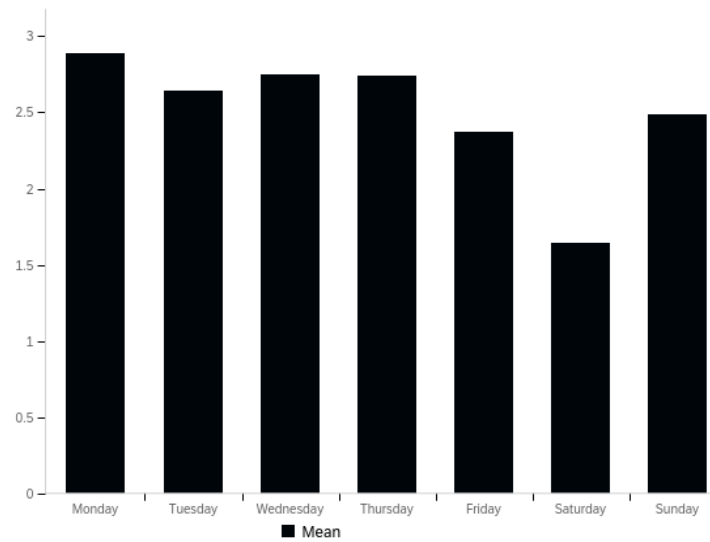
Feedback from Instructors. One impact on student engagement is feedback from the instructor. Participants were asked, "Reflecting on the courses you are enrolled in this semester, how often do the Instructors provide feedback from assignments?" Ninety-three (59.24%) of the students reported they received feedback from their instructor weekly. Thirty-four (21.55%) of the students reported receiving feedback monthly; however, 30 (19.11%) never received feedback.

Figure 13
Feedback From Instructors
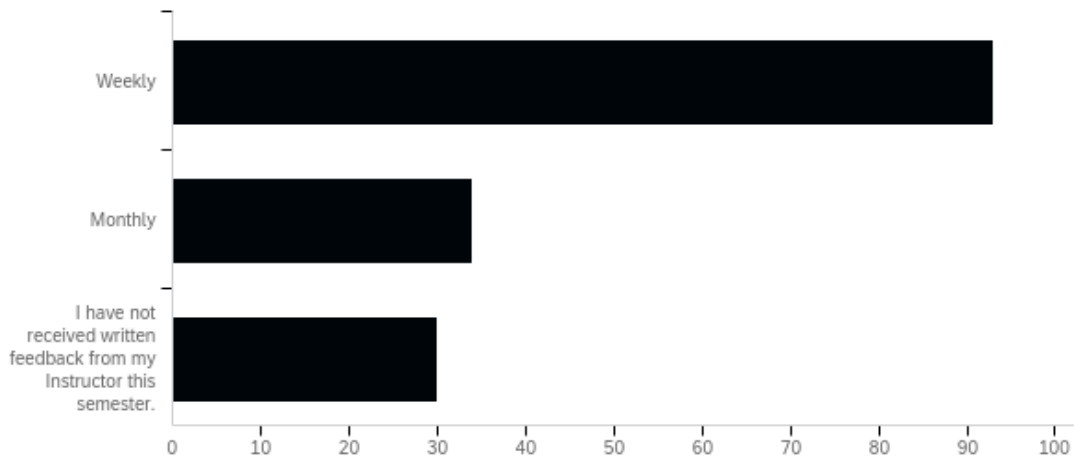
Concerns of Students. The challenges of the students vary. Participants were asked, "What is your top concern with being in an online/virtual learning class?" Overall, the top concern mentioned was keeping up with deadlines (mean 3.17), followed by keeping up with coursework (mean 3.01), understanding assignments (mean 3.01), not having a connection with the instructor (mean 1.95), and not being with my classmates in person (mean 1.38).

Figure 14
Concerns of Students
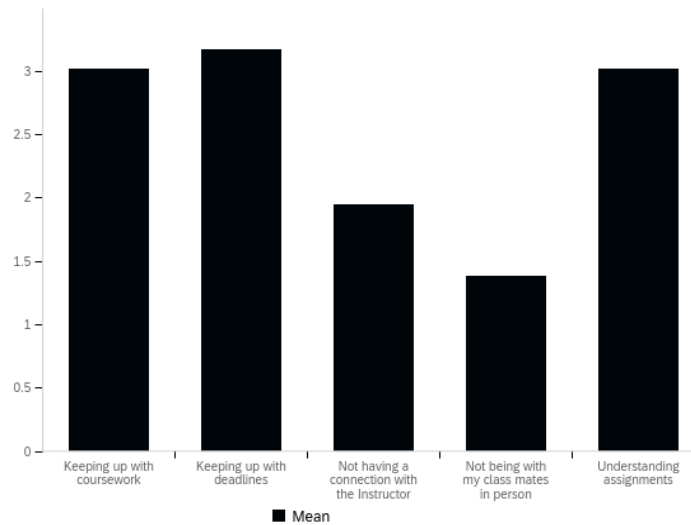
Factors That Contribute to Successful Online/Virtual Learning. Based on the literature review, students were provided with a list of factors contributing to successful online learning. Participants were asked to rate the factors that contribute to successful online/virtual learning. In order, with the most important factor listed first are: (1) organized instructor (mean 4.42), (2) time organization, keeping up with assignments and due dates (mean 4.33), (3) appropriate technology (4.10), (3) caring instructor (4.10), (4) assignments are specific (mean 4.03), (5) timely grading and feedback (mean 3.96), (6) communication with the Instructor; Instructor responds to email quickly (mean 3.87, (7) reminders of assignments from instructor weekly (mean 3.86), (8) assignments posted two weeks or more in advance (mean 3.68), (9) interesting course materials (mean 3.55), and (10) willingness of instructor to meet via ZOOM or on campus (mean 3.13). In addition, appropriate technology and caring instructor received the same number of responses.

Figure 15
Factors That Contribute to Successful Online Learning
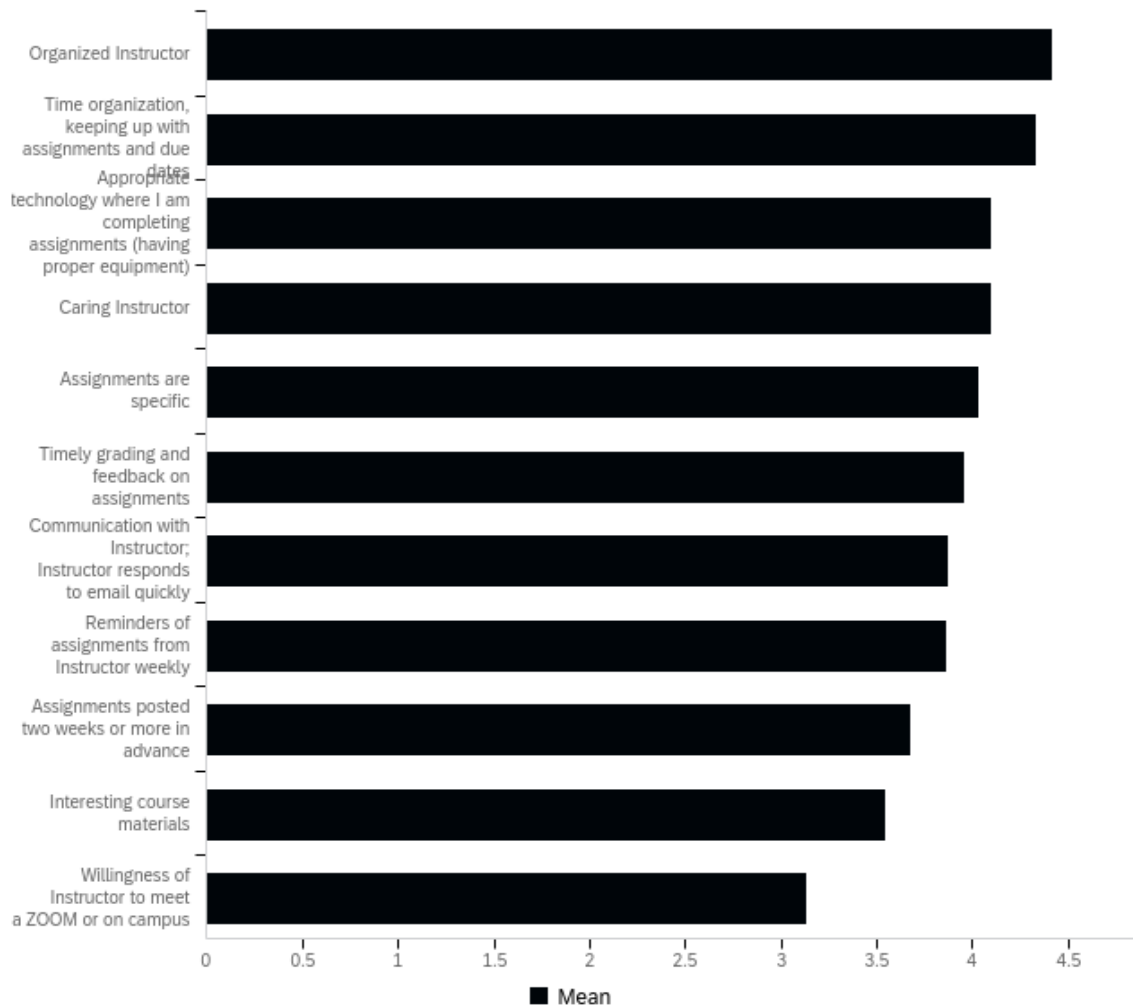
Discussion

This study examined college students' perceptions of online learning and the relationships the online environment, technology tools, and communication have on online learning. In addition, student engagement was measured by analyzing the responses to the survey questions.

The majority of the participants were female and between the ages of 19 – 30. Most of the students were at the sophomore classification. Based on the data analysis, college students prefer the on-campus format. This is consistent with Zulfiqar, Siddiqui, and Mahmood (2020) findings. The study revealed the online environment has a significant impact on student learning. Most students enrolled in an online class complete their assignments off campus. The most common learning management system utilized is Blackboard. The popularity of higher education is growing, with around 80% of the share of usage of Blackboard among U.S. universities and over 50% among all universities worldwide (Pishva, Nishantha, and Dang, 2010). In addition, the Blackboard feature "Discussion Board" is widely used by college instructors teaching online classes. While various forms of communication are available;

however, email is the preference for college students.

Taking an online class can be challenging for many students. There are concerns about not understanding the assignments, meeting deadlines, and having an understanding instructor. These are all valid concerns of students that the instructor should address. The study also revealed that most students complete coursework on Mondays and Wednesdays on average. Instructors should consider this when planning an online presence. While most students prefer to communicate with their instructor via email, they rarely converse with their instructor via email. Students also reported that they prefer updates/reminders on assignments every two – three days. In comparison, students stated that face-to-face communication in an online course was only moderately important. Students reported that it was by email when they needed to communicate with their instructor. Instructors provide feedback weekly; however, some students stated their instructor never provided feedback. This would be a level of concern for students. The top concern mentioned was keeping up with deadlines. As we discuss factors contributing to successful online/virtual learning, having an organized instructor was the most important factor. To alleviate concerns of students keeping up with deadlines, instructors should be organized and implement a system where students know the deadlines/due dates.

It should be noted that this study was limited to one university and one instructor; however, several different sections of the same course were surveyed. Future research should include other geographic areas and smaller enrollment institutions to be used for comparison.

There has been a lot of research in this area in recent years. As colleges and universities adapt to technological advances, more and more courses will transition to online/virtual learning. Understanding what has proven successful for online student learning will assist new instructors in adapting to the online environment.

Recommendations for Online Instructors

This study attempted to identify the successes and challenges of college students enrolled in online classes. Students are most likely to be successful in an online course if they are engaged with the instructor. Recommendations listed below are suggestions for the online instructor with student engagement as the focus.

1. Announce on the first day of class that online office hours are Monday and Wednesday. Be specific on how the student can arrange for an office visit. Give students the option of using email, ZOOM, Microsoft Teams, or another method.
2. Once a month, offer a ZOOM "Chat Session" or "Coffee Break." This allows students who wish to feel more engaged to connect with the instructor and other students. Ideally, meeting on campus is preferred if possible.
3. Post an introduction video to the course on the first day of class. Share with the students your time organization tips. Offer tips on how to keep up with deadlines and due dates.
4. Provide feedback weekly, whether by email or Blackboard.
5. If teaching in real time, utilize interactive platforms to keep students engaged.
6. Utilize the Discussion Board in Blackboard for class discussions and for students to share their work.
7. Develop a Google Sites web page. Post supplemental information, examples of student work, time organization tips, assignments, videos, recorded lectures, and presentations.

8.   Work through an assignment using a digital tool such as Screencastify so that students can visualize how to complete the assignment.
9.   On the first day of the class, have students complete a "Getting to Know You" survey. Ask for information, such as preferred name, birthdate (no year), etc. Mail students a birthday card on their birthday week. This is important for student engagement!
10.   Throughout the semester, provide written feedback to the students regarding their coursework.
11.   Post student examples on the class website.
12.   Record an introduction to the assignment weekly. Address issues that may arise in completing the assignment.
13.   Provide collaboration opportunities for all students. For example, you could provide an assignment that encourages a group of students to work in Microsoft Teams or ZOOM.

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Transformative Teacher Preparation through Paid Yearlong Residencies: Program Design to Implementation

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Abstract

Educator preparation providers (EPP) are committed to providing day-one-ready educators to meet the needs of their students. While school districts are facing high teacher turnover rates, EPPs are likewise facing a decline in those enrolling in their programs. In response, an EPP at a regional university in Arkansas partnered with local districts to launch a residency model and increase access to and quality of teacher preparation. The EPP launched the program with 17 residents in two school districts. Residents were hired and paid as district employees, paired with highly qualified mentors in a co-teaching model, and provided intensive support from a district-embedded clinical faculty member. Since the launch, the residency has expanded to include 58% of eligible EPP candidates in a paid clinical experience. This examines the structures and processes considered as part of the residency design from launch to full scale implementation.

Keywords: Yearlong clinical experience, Paid residency, High-quality mentors, District-embedded clinical faculty.

Introduction

High teacher turnover and low retention rates are not problems unique to education in Arkansas but are trends shaping the landscape nationwide. Evidence suggests the teacher shortage is driven both by high turnover rates and a decline in the number of educators entering the profession, as reflected in the decreasing number of students enrolling in educator preparation programs (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2022). As is often the case, those most adversely affected are minorities and other underserved populations. Most education experts agree that while the shortage is widespread, it often impacts certain geographic regions and student populations more than others, particularly rural and urban districts and those with a high proportion of students of color and from low-income families (Fermanich & Finster, 2023).

In response to the critical teacher shortage and need for stronger preparation practices, many teacher preparation programs have designed residency models to improve the recruitment, training, and retention of highly qualified educators (Pike & Carli, 2020). In most cases, teacher residency programs provide intensive pathways into the profession that focus on rigorous classroom experience with a candidate's coursework integrated into a yearlong placement alongside an expert mentor teacher. Teacher residencies have proven that, when implemented effectively, they better prepare teachers, increase retention rates, and positively impact student achievement (Hirschboeck et al., 2022).

One particular Teacher Residency Program (TRP) was developed at a regional university in Arkansas to build and sustain a pipeline of diverse highly trained educators through embedded coursework, quality mentors, and intensive support, who are committed to teaching in districts within the region. The design and implementation of the TRP was a collaborative effort between the university's educator preparation provider (EPP) and local district partners in an effort to

bridge the disconnect between educational theory and classroom practice. Each aspect of the TRP was strategically designed to create a shared vision for best practices that align university coursework and true classroom experiences.

To launch the TRP, the EPP partnered with two local districts to offer fully paid yearlong clinical experiences. Residents applied to the TRP, interviewed with district administration, and if selected, were hired as a resident teacher within the district and provided financial support. Mentor teachers were jointly selected by the EPP and districts and compensated for the additional expectations. The EPP also developed a clinical faculty role to serve as a liaison between the university EPP and school sites (Petti, 2013). Rather than being housed on the university campus, the clinical faculty member was embedded within each district, taught program coursework and provided intensive support to both residents and mentor teachers through observation, feedback, and coaching.

Partnership Formation

Designing effective teacher preparation programs requires collaboration and genuine partnerships between universities and the communities they serve. Educator preparation providers (EPPs) have long argued that reciprocal partnerships between university programs and school districts are required to build effective models (Kretchmar et al., 2018). Petti (2013) labeled this as a shift from transactional partnerships in which districts "took" a student teacher, to a transformational partnership in which the experience was transformative for the resident, mentor, EPP, districts, and most importantly, the K-12 students.

The Teacher Residency Program (TRP) is a different approach to teacher preparation designed to place district collaboration at the forefront of both design and implementation of teacher training. For the TRP launch, the EPP partnered with two local school districts to place teacher candidates in yearlong residencies fully paid by district funds. Districts were purposefully selected based on certain characteristics and commitment. Student demographics closely mirrored one another in both districts with total enrollments around 4,000 including diverse populations of which 65% of students were non-white and 70% were low-income. In contrast, one district had the budget to envision the residency as an opportunity to engrain candidates in the school culture, while the other district had low teacher retention and was interested in the improved preparation that residency offered. Both districts were steadfast in their dedication to collaborating with the EPP on all phases of the TRP design and implementation.

Ensuring that the partnership between the EPP and districts was mutually beneficial was a cornerstone of the TRP. As such, the design of the TRP was tailored to the specific needs of each district. This flexibility in decision making was supported by Kretchmar et al. (2018) who found the success of a residency model requires finding a balance between being adaptable to a variety of partners and implementing clear expectations and structures for residents. One district paired residents with mentors five days per week, while the other paired residents with mentors for four days and used residents as substitutes in the district every Friday.

As part of the launch and ongoing partnership, the EPP and district leadership communicate and collaborate regularly regarding logistics, embedded courses, professional development, and support for residents. Motivated to maintain a mutually beneficial partnership, the TRP engages in quarterly leadership meetings that include essential stakeholders to review resident performance data and discuss program improvements. The significance of such a reciprocal partnership leads to shared decision-making and oversight regarding both resident and

mentor teacher selection (Schaffer & Welsh, 2014). The immediate review of candidate performance data allows the EPP to make responsive instructional decisions and address deficiencies in the moment.

Clinical Faculty Liaison

Effective supervision is a critical component of the yearlong residency and district partnerships. Appropriate supervision of teacher candidates participating in the yearlong residency strengthens the linkage between university coursework and K-12 classrooms (Schaffer & Welsh, 2014). The university's educator preparation provider (EPP) designed a new clinical faculty role embedded within the partnering school districts to work directly with residents. As a full-time university faculty member, the clinical faculty member teaches residency seminars and other teaching methods courses within the EPP. Effective EPPs utilize faculty who both teach and supervise candidates, immersing themselves along with the candidates in the school sites (Darling-Hammond, 2005).

Supporting Petti's (2013) findings, the clinical faculty member emerged as the critical role in the successful implementation of the Teacher Residency Program (TRP). The clinical faculty member conducted weekly classroom walkthroughs and multiple formal observations on every resident within the district and provided critical coaching and feedback to residents to help apply new learning to practice. Residents met weekly within their district for Professional Learning, a two-hour seminar course led by the clinical faculty modeled after a district-level professional learning community (PLC) where they were able to share ideas and debrief their experiences in the classroom.

A major strength of both school partners noticed by EPP leadership was the districtwide PLC commitment and collaboration among staff. Modeling the weekly resident seminars after these processes allowed for relationship building within a cohort of educators to share experiences and brainstorm solutions. The emphasis on collaboration was designed to mirror the PLC mentality while also providing the opportunity to embed selected topics and focused research necessary for resident learning.

Mentor Matching

Securing clinical placements for teacher candidates has long been an issue that has plagued educator preparation providers (EPPs), often resulting in placements made only because university personnel ask friends or colleagues to "take" a student teacher out of a sense of loyalty or even guilt (Petti, 2013). However, one of the greatest strengths of a residency model is the joint selection of mentor teachers and residents with both the EPP leadership and district administrators involved in decision making (Valente, et al., 2022). Mentor teachers chosen to participate in the Teacher Residency Program (TRP) were selected in partnership between university EPP leadership and district administrators based on jointly established criteria. A coaching mindset and willingness to co-teach were imperative qualities for TRP mentors. Because extended yearlong placement in a classroom with a single mentor is a pillar of a residency model, the mentor teacher is central to the model's effectiveness (Marshall et al., 2020).

During the TRP launch, residents and mentors in one district co-taught Monday through Thursday and acted as substitutes in the district on Fridays. In the other district, residents and mentors co-taught Monday through Friday. The TRP utilized six specific co-teaching strategies and trained all mentors and residents how to co-plan, co-teach, and co-assess students. In a departure from the traditional gradual release model used in a student teaching setting,

co-teaching requires that both the resident and mentor are actively involved in all aspects of instruction. Along with the required co-teaching training prior to being assigned a resident, mentors also participated in ongoing workshops with the clinical faculty throughout the academic year that included calibration and norming on the observation rubric used by the EPP, critical conversations, and coaching strategies. Mentor training also provided residents with dedicated time to run the classroom alone, lead all instruction, and manage student behavior.

An emphasis on effective matching between mentors and residents was a critical facet of the TRP design. Residents who have a positive experience with their mentor tend to have a more positive experience during their residency year than residents with a less than ideal mentor relationship (Marshall et al. 2020). Thus, both EPP leadership and district partners focused heavily on the pairing process. Residents submitted resumes and were interviewed by district administration who were able to get a sense of personality and fit for the school culture. The interview process provided valuable insight into a resident's personality and preparation that was nonexistent in previous placement models. District and EPP leadership were then able to match mentors and residents based on qualifications, personalities, and coaching styles.

Financial Support

Multiple studies point to financial barriers as the leading impediment to enter the teaching profession. Not only does this include the cost of tuition, but the potential costs of participating in field experiences (Fermanich & Finster, 2023). Teacher residencies have emerged as an effective strategy for increasing candidate accessibility and support when thoughtfully designed. For recruiting and supporting teachers of color, who are disproportionately impacted by student loan debt and the financial burden of a yearlong clinical experience, the monetary support provided by paid residencies is critical (Hirschboeck et al., 2022).

In the Teacher Residency Program (TRP), residents were hired and paid as employees of both districts. While traditional student teachers spend a substantial amount of time in the classroom, the TRP provided residents the perspective of an employee of a particular school environment. As seen in other residency models, this intensive access led to deeper understanding of the implications of systems-level decisions on teaching and learning (Kretchmar et al., 2018). As employees, residents had access to and participated in a variety of activities outside of the normal student teaching expectations including district curriculum, district professional development, parent teacher conferences.

Residents were also required to begin their classroom experience on the same day as all district employees, allowing them to be available on the first day of school, a practice that is not utilized with traditional student teachers. Not only did this allow for critical resident learning like how to structure the first day of school and develop classroom routines, but also provided additional days of income. Upon graduation from the TRP, both districts agreed that residents could stay on staff and continue working with their mentor or act as substitutes for the remainder of the school year to continue receiving pay.

Regional Retention

While the financial support incentivizes the residency for participants, it may also have long term impacts on teacher retention in the region. Residency models, with longer and more intensive clinical experiences, increase teacher retention (Huguet et al, 2021). Valente et al. (2022) found that a yearlong experience helped residents decide if they wanted to teach in a particular district, and those who did accept a position where they completed their residency

cited familiarity with the school context and fondness of the culture as reasons for accepting the job. In the launch of the Teacher Residency Program (TRP), one district hired 100% of the residents as teachers in the district immediately upon graduation. In the other district, three of eight residents accepted teaching positions within the district. Reasons for declining positions varied, including some who chose to work in districts closer to their homes as they were commuting over 60 miles one way to complete their residency. All residents who had passed their licensure exams were hired upon graduation.

Scaling the Model

During the initial design and implementation of the Teacher Residency Program (TRP), processes and procedures were major initiatives. In recognition of the work involved in a total transformation of teacher preparation, the university's educator preparation provider (EPP) chose to strategically partner with only two districts and engage a small number of residents for the launch. The next step is scaling the TRP for all EPP candidates.

The EPP offers licensure programs in elementary education, middle school education, secondary education, agriculture education, music education, and physical and health education. For the launch, only elementary, middle, and secondary education candidates were eligible to apply. While 66 candidates needed clinical placements, only 46 of those were among the three licensure areas eligible to apply for the TRP launch cohort. Of those 46, 19 were already in a position that allowed them to complete their clinical requirements with pay and continue in their roles (as paraprofessionals or teacher of record support roles). A total of 17 residents were hired to participate, with nine in one district and eight in the other.

Part of scaling the TRP includes additional university-school partnerships. Three additional districts partnered with the EPP to participate in the TRP under the same pay structure as the two original districts. The EPP also made the decision to expand the TRP to all licensure areas, making all candidates in their final year of preparation eligible to apply for paid residency positions.

Interviews and selections for the next academic year have already shown tremendous growth in the TRP. A total of 32 residents were hired for the 2023-2024 academic year plus an additional six hired as paraprofessionals, representing 58% of candidates in their culminating EPP clinical experience. With five district partners and the increased number of residents, the EPP has also hired two additional clinical faculty members to scale and sustain the TRP.

Implications

Researchers consistently agree that the quality of the teacher is the most important factor in student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Schmoker, 2006; Petti, 2013). While there may be disagreement on where to place that responsibility, it is undeniable that improving teacher quality is a mutual goal of university educator preparation providers (EPPs) and school districts. The success of this Teacher Residency Program (TRP) contributes to the literature identifying how authentic partnerships between university EPPs and school districts offer significant benefits to all (Kretchmar et al., 2018).

Approaches and processes used in the TRP can be replicated and adapted by other EPPs to develop residency models suited to the unique needs of their local students and communities. Other programs may also consider ways to implement a clinical faculty-like liaison role within their institution. This could include additional research into the benefits of university faculty teaching embedded coursework within partnering districts.

While this focused on the design and implementation of a single teacher residency program, the implications may be applicable to other residency models. All EPPs should strive to employ innovative strategies that increase access and quality of teacher preparation in an effort to improve student learning outcomes.

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Living in Two Worlds of Scholarship

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Abstract

The research agenda is a long-held staple of professional academic life. It is as much a professional obligation as it is a personal decision–and as current literature suggests, it is subject to the context of current times. Recent decades have seen a clear rise in the complexity of the accreditation process and the degree to which it has intertwined with academic life, impacting the degree to which professors conduct scholarship with a focus on the personal research agenda, or conduct scholarship directed toward accreditation. In the field of education, this can have a significant impact on faculty in an Education Preparation Provider (EPP) unit. Is this simply an issue of planning or setting the research agenda in the age of overwhelming accreditation? Or is it something more significant impacting those who have a stake in the production of knowledge in their field. Following an understanding of the nature of the research agenda in current times, this article attempts to shed light on the possible pull between a personal research agenda and an accreditation-based research agenda, and how this may ultimately be impacting scholars.

Keywords: research, research agenda, professors, accreditation, scholarship

Introduction

The research agenda is a long-held staple of professional academic life. From the establishing of a research agenda due to a professor's academic field, to strategies for advancing knowledge, to agency or advocacy in the field (Zhang & Horta, 2023), the research agenda is as much a professional obligation as it is a personal decision. Recent decades have seen a clear growth in the complexity of the accreditation process and the degree to which it has intertwined with academic life. This has, subsequently intertwined accreditation with the role of the research agenda. And this has direct implications on the degree to which professors conduct scholarship with a focus on that personal research agenda, or conduct scholarship directed toward accreditation. This may simply be a crisis of planning or setting the research agenda in the age of overwhelming accreditation, or it may quite literally be a crisis of scholarly identity among those whose professional lives have a stake in the production of new knowledge in their field. This article seeks to discuss the current state of the research agenda and shed light on the scholarly reality of those academics currently experiencing a pull between a personal research agenda and an accreditation-based research agenda.

The Research Agenda

While current views or definitions of the term vary, examples seem to ground it in a traditional definition, and then interestingly suggest a trend of flexibility concerning the need for, a vision of, or how a research agenda should unfold in a particular field. Meyer et al. (2023) note that, "although the term *research agenda* is used widely across the medical sciences, natural sciences, and social sciences, it is rarely defined in the literature;" they prefer:

> "...a definition developed by the IES-funded Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands, which defines a research agenda as a description of the topics and research questions that a researcher, research team, or partnership plans to explore, typically over the course of 3 to 5 years" (p. 123).

And they further add that "the purpose of a research agenda is to serve as a road map" for the research plan, but should also be flexible in light of changes to policy or emerging issues in the field (pp. 123—124). This suggests a concrete plan with a concrete timeline, yet the need for flexibility.

Santos and Horta (2018) noted (when citing Ertmer & Glazewski, 2014) that research agendas can be conceptualized as "a combination of strategic problem-solving frameworks and the operationalization of actions to pursue research goals" and "can be seen as both strategic and tactical" (p. 652). It is interesting to note their hesitation to lay down a concrete definition of a—further suggesting a need for flexibility in current times—when noting:

> "Individual choices concerning research agendas shape the advancement of knowledge in each discipline and field of knowledge, but in today's complex and uncertain world, where academics face careers with increasingly non-linear paths and re-shifting boundaries…these choices are also defined by career considerations and sets of organizational incentives and constraints" (p. 652).

And, still further, they suggest "that research agendas may not be designed solely for the sake of knowledge advancement itself, but rather are prepared to cope with sets of environmental constraints and incentives that influence the potential of any research agenda" (p. 462). In a later work, Zhang and Horta (2023) reiterated that the notion of a research agenda is long known, long held, but added (again, leaning on the work of Ertmer and Glazewski, 2014) that they can "reflect academics' preferences, strategies, and agency in terms of both broader (strategic in nature, e.g., career) and narrower (operational in nature, e.g., research methods) objectives and practices when deciding and pursuing research goals" (p. 106). They further expand and underscore the apparent flexibility with eight additional ways that academics seem to presently pursue a research agenda: "(1) scientific ambition; (2) discovery; (3) conservative; (4) divergence; (5) convergence; (6) mentor influence; (7) tolerance for low funding; and (8) collaboration" (p. 106).

Definitions are not entirely cut and dry in larger research methodology texts either. Denzin and Lincoln (2018), for example—leaning heavily upon Guba's (1990) conceptualization—saw the research agenda as a series of agenda items: intellectual agenda items, which are "international, national, regional, and local" events; advocacy agenda items, where the research addresses social policy issues, "federally mandated ethical guidelines," and critiques outdated knowledge (pp. 892—893); operational agenda items that "build productive relationships" with professionals and professional organizations; and ethical agenda items, which are "an empowerment code of ethics" that is inclusive of diversity, positive, compassionate, and seeking of social justice (p. 893). McGregor (2018) also saw the research agenda in a multifaceted manner, as a battle of ideology versus paradigm, where "ideologies come before paradigms," where "ideologies are understood to be cultural blueprints," and where paradigms "are thought patterns for interpreting the world shaped by the blueprint" (p. 13). This would suggest that it is multifaceted, and shaped by several factors—specifically, the ideology or ideologies to which one subscribes, and certainly also by one's cultural context.

The Importance of Traditional (and Accreditation-Based) Scholarship

Those who serve the professoriate very typically serve through teaching, research, and service. While this is, of course, what many would consider "Promotion and Tenure 101," it also points back to fundamental qualities in the profession that value teaching, and value knowledge production in the field. While service can vary by calendar, committee vote, or personal

preference, it does contribute to field knowledge and leadership through activity—or more local support among the various tiers of a university system. Despite differences in the teaching load at an R1 versus R2 institution, these views of the professorial reality are relatively common. Yet, no matter the configuration or the percentages by which one divides their time, the view on scholarship can and must always point back to the production of new knowledge and contribution to the field.

Professorial scholarship through a research agenda is ultimately all about greater knowledge construction and contribution to the field—something that should always be considered the cornerstone of academic life. Be it a full-time endowed research appointment at a major university, or a full teaching load at a two-year institution, scholarly potential always exists to some extent. In the traditional sense, this scholarly potential will likely be directly situated in the reality of a professor's academic area and will most certainly be impacted by the personal interests and the passions of said professor. Indeed, it is the "road map" that Meyer et al. (2023) suggest, executed strategically over time, and reflects a professor's "preferences, strategies, and agency" as Zhang and Horta (2023) suggest. Traditional and familiar indeed—and very much in the hands of the professor to set and execute with these factors in mind. And, as an interesting note, many would argue that scholarship only improves one's teaching in one's area, which certainly benefits students.

Without question, the age of accreditation has changed this for those in the field of higher education and Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) units. Gone are the days when time spent on the research agenda was solely at the whim of the professor's "preferences, strategies, and agency." Now a significant portion of that time seems to float in and between the worlds of service and research. There is, of course, no disputing the importance of the accreditation process. For all its complexities—overcomplexities in the opinions of some—students and stakeholders and lawmakers certainly deserve to know that an academic program does what it claims to do, and also does to a high degree of quality. This would ideally fall within the world of service. But as accreditation has become a highly data-driven and analytical process, it seems only natural that it would tap the scholarly experience and potential of concerned faculty. Clearly, this points to the advocacy agenda items that Denzin and Lincoln (2018) mention, particularly where scholarship addresses policy mandated guidelines. And if a research agenda aimed in this direction betters the accreditation process—as well as a specifically accredited program—all the better. And as a parallel note, accreditation serving a program in which students are enrolled, will obviously benefit one's teaching as well, and eventually students.

Potential Direction and Concluding Discussion

But professors—especially those in tenured or tenure-track positions—cannot simply shut off their personal research agenda. While some may consider themselves teachers first, the belief in being a producer of knowledge in one's field is most certainly present, and furthermore, most certainly passionate. Some may choose a traditional research agenda, some may balance it with accreditation with varying degrees of difficulty, and indeed some may welcome it. But the question remains: is this a change, an adaptation in the professional field and lives of professors? Or is it a crisis of scholarly identity? And this crisis may very well be one where current academics are placing accreditation first in their field and professorial life, as opposed to the (ideally passionate) view of knowledge production in their academic area. A shift in this can have a profound impact on the overall nature of scholarship, in which direction it points, and the manner that academics pursue the research agenda—and even under what constraints.

Murphy (2006) noted, when examining 56 empirical studies on education and leadership preparation programs, that at the time of publication direct evidence of external funding existed for only three studies. And:

> "It appears that professors who engage in research on preparation programs continue to do so out of their back pockets, relying on (a) the good will of current and recent graduates to complete surveys or sit for interviews and (b) residual documents associated with preparation programs (e.g., admission records)" (p. 65).

To many who have devoted valuable scholarship time and energy to accreditation-based purposes, this most certainly holds true. While Murphy saw this as problematic from a standpoint of producing quality research on program support, one could actually argue that there is an even greater collateral academic impact in that not only is the accreditation-based research agenda not sufficiently funded, but the time spent on this, instead of a traditional research agenda, precludes external funding for traditional research, as well. More specific to literacy, Roller (2001) suggested that "a research agenda, while necessary, is not sufficient to improve reading achievement" and that "if we know that children are struggling to read and we provide them with inexperienced beginning teachers, paraprofessionals, or special educators with no specific training in reading, we cannot expect our research agenda to have impact" (p. 205). Taken together, these two examples suggest that perspectives on the research agenda mentioned earlier (Santos & Horta 2018; Zhang & Horta, 2023; Meyer et al., 2023; etc.) may indeed be correct when they point to a multifaceted view of the research agenda, as well as the importance of political and social advocacy when setting one.

Despite these considerations, what remains is still the ever-present role of academia and the ever-present truth inherent in the life of an academic: the production of new knowledge. Does the professoriate face a current crisis where attention to the larger spheres of knowledge production is at risk of dilution due to the ever-growing role of accreditation in scholarly life, and the growing pathway between it and the research agenda? Accreditation clearly matters to academic programs in education and is not going away any time soon. Its presence may indeed be a permanent reality for the profession and the field in general. And if this is the case, scholars clearly must face the need to figure out how to better merge these two worlds. If indeed there is a current crisis of identity where the research agenda is concerned, current academics must resolve this and find a balance between the personal desires of a traditional research agenda, and the impact of accreditation's presence. This is not easy, and this without question impacts the professional lives of many. But it appears evident that these two realities must somehow merge. Academics must somehow find a true equilibrium for the good of their academic field, and also for the learners that benefit from the scholarly activity of those executing a research agenda.

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A Discourse Analysis of the Science of Reading Through the Lens of a Social Media Twitter Hashtag

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Abstract

This qualitative virtual ethnographic study was conducted to explore the discourse around the science of reading through the lens of a social media Twitter hashtag known as #scienceofreading. Participants for this study were Twitter account holders that entered the discourse topic of the science of reading using the #scienceofreading. This study analyzed the roles of the participants involved in the discourse, the stimuli that created discourse, and the discourse patterns or themes around educational issues, educational research, or educational information about the science of reading through the lens of the social media Twitter #scienceofreading.

Keyword: Twitter, Science of Reading, #scienceofreading

Introduction

Reading instruction trends have been described as a swinging pendulum in United States history, swinging back and forth from two competing notions of best reading instruction known as phonics and whole language (Slavin, 1989). With the social media phenomenon that has exploded in recent years, discourse through social media has given the opportunity for individuals to present their collective thoughts, ideas, opinions, and information about educational trends and issues daily. In the past two years, the 'science of reading' instruction has become a pervasive topic among reading and literacy professionals in PreK-12 and higher education ("Policy Statement on the 'Science of Reading'", 2020). Given a rebirth of the 'reading wars', going back more than 200 years, literacy educators continue to struggle with reaching a consensus about effective approaches to reading instruction for normally developing students as well as effective interventions for struggling readers (Castles et al., 2018). Thus, disagreement about common approaches to instruction such as whole language, phonics, and balanced or comprehensive literacy are currently the focus of many social media outlets.

Review of the Literature

Trends and issues associated with different approaches for teaching children to read have evolved over a span of sixty years (Soler, 2016). Within the cycle of changes in the history of reading instruction, developmental maturation of the field has occurred with an overall positive trend (Alexander & Fox, 2004). Marton and Booth's (1997) study reported the view of learning and of reading has become increasingly differentiated and integrated, which indicated a developmental progression toward greater understanding. Despite the progression of maturation in the field of reading instruction, without an overarching developmental theory in reading instruction, differentiation in research and practice may continue to be conflicting rather than complementary (Alexander, 2003).

Slavin (1989) indicated that the pendulum swings in education from one idea to the next, because sufficient time for the research results to be reported is not given, and ideas are being adopted before the research results have time to be reported. Because of these pendulum swings, different views have developed by many stakeholders including educators, parents, students, and

researchers, causing wide gulfs of beliefs in literacy instruction (Tseng, 2012). Trends and issues within the reading literature reflects the influence of sociopolitical forces outside the reading community as well as inside the reading community. Some examples of outside forces that have served as change agents in reading instruction history are the transformational effect of baby boomers and Sputnik on reading research and practice in the 1950s and 1960s, and the example of the impact of significant governmental funding for cognitive research on the reading research agenda that occurred in the 1970s and 1980s. In addition to these examples, reading instruction has not been immune to the effects of the accountability movement, needs of the linguistically and culturally diversity of students, as well as the effects of technology. All examples have the ability to transform the landscape of reading research (Valencia & Wixson, 2001). In closer analysis of the recent reading eras, researchers have examined the big patterns that emerged from the span of reading research years and the major shifts within the eras related to "hot literacy topics." Not surprisingly, in the latest *What's Hot in Litera*cy report, the topic of early literacy skills is once again in the top five most critical issues in literacy instruction (ILA, 2020).

One such belief permeating the field of early literacy is the importance for educators to merge the evidence from the science of reading, which can be defined as the knowledge gained from research on best practices in the classroom, with intentional pre-service training, and ongoing professional development for teachers to carry out the complex demands of reading instruction (Moats & Foorman, 2003).

The study examined the discourse around the topic, science of reading. The definition of the term science of reading lacks a common definition through educational research but is recognized in multiple articles to be a part of the phonics instruction movement under the bottom-up reading model theory. In this study, science of reading was explored through the lens of a social media Twitter hashtag.

Social media explosion

Along with the educational shifts across the years, there has been an increase in social media use. Social Media is defined as forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos). Social media has undergone a massive developmental phenomenon. Pew Research Center began tracking social media in 2005. According to their study, there was only 5% of American adults using at least one type of platform of social media. By 2011, that number rose from 5% to 11% of all Americans using at least one type of platform. In Pew's 2018 study, results revealed that 69% of Americans use some type of social media platform. In their latest study, Pew Research Center (2019) concluded that the U.S. adults who say they use specific online platforms or apps has statistically unchanged from the 2018 report, despite the controversy over privacy, fake news, and censorship on social media. The explosion of social media has revealed not only a change in society but also the way that society interacts with internet media and has caused neuroscientists to begin examining the use of social media and the connection to social cognitive processes, which can lead to understanding of communication within social media environments (Meshi et al., 2015). To determine any phenomenon of social media explosion in the interest of the science of reading, an exploratory Twitter search located the first use of the hashtag #scienceofreading in 2012 and yielded one use in one tweet. A more current exploratory search in January 2020, yielded 1,187 uses of #scienceofreading in tweets in one month.

Purpose of Twitter

Social media tools such as Twitter are a communication system that enables people to share ideas with thousands of people in an instant (Supovitz et al., 2017). Twitter, founded in 2006, is often referred to as a micro-blogging social network site and is considered one of the top 10 most-visited websites on the Internet, with over 330 million monthly active users (Clement, 2019; Gil, 2020). According to Pew Research from 2019, Twitter has a special breed of users consisting of a population of younger, more highly educated, and wealthier than the general public users (Hughes & Wojcik, 2019). Twitter is one of the most popular social media sites and is considered as an online news source and a platform where people can communicate in short messages called tweets. A tweet is a short message that is made up of 280 characters or less and is used to post short messages for anyone who follows someone on Twitter ("How to Tweet," n.d.). Millions of Americans use Twitter to break and comment on news, dissipate official pronouncements, organize campaigns, and protests or just give updates of what is on their minds (Hughes & Wojcik, 2019).

Twitter offers a unique feature of a communication medium, in which Twitter users can follow others, be followed, or have a reciprocal relationship with users (Supovitz et al., 2017). Twitter users have the ability to send out messages in three ways. First, users can initiate a message called a tweet. Second, users can use a technique called retweeting, which refers to the verbatim forwarding of another user's tweet, and users disperse the messages by reposting them through their account. A third type of messaging is a divergence of tweeting and retweeting, called mentioning. Mentions include references to other user's tweets. The mention brings attention to another user's tweets and can occur anywhere within a tweet by using the @ symbol, which connects to the Twitter user's username, also known as a handle. All three communication types are deemed powerful because they have the ability to introduce information to new audiences on the platform (Boyd et al., 2010).

When generating dialogue between users, the tweet can be preceded with the '@' sign and a user's name (i.e., @GeorgeWashington). These types of messages are not considered private but can only be seen by those who have reciprocal relationships. Reciprocal relationships are when users follow each other and they both receive each other's tweets (Supovitz et al., 2017).

Twitter uses an organizational tool of conversations or dialogue known as hashtags. Hashtags precede text and are identified by the use of the pound sign symbol (#), and are used to organize the Twitter dialogue, in order to follow specific topics or discussions and guide users in what can sometimes be a difficult path of continuously streaming tweets of information (Humphreys, 2016). Twitter streams are searchable by hashtags, which is the basis for this research on the #scienceofreading. *Figure* 2 gives a detailed explanation of each of these areas and provides a visual for the Twitter platform.

Social media influence

Izuma and Adolph (2013) completed a study that involved the investigation of how people were influenced. The researchers studied the participants' prior beliefs and initial likes and how these initial beliefs and likes could be influenced by others' thinking. The results were that our attitudes and preferences can be highly influenced by other people's attitudes and preferences but there was still a strong connection of the influence being based on the person's prior beliefs. The study also concluded that one single encounter can result in an influential change in a person's attitude and can change their thinking (Izuma & Adolph, 2013). Thus, one

social media post has the potential to change one's thinking, including and not limited to thoughts around the topic of the science of reading instruction.

Social media marketing uses the term influencers. An influencer is considered to be someone who has influence in a specific community. With social media, it pertains to any product or agenda in which someone is trying to market. The influencer believes that what they are trying to push out to the public is a good thing and wants to influence others to purchase, follow, or agree with what is being posted on the site (Garland, 2018).

Social media growth has caused a tremendous growth in communication. With the large amount of communication across social media communities, comes the need to understand what is being communicated within the discourse (Abbasi et al., 2018). Discourse analysis is defined as:

> An explicit theory of information and analysis focuses on explicit theory formation and analysis of the relationships between the structures of text, talk, language use, verbal interaction or communication, on the one hand, and societal, political, or cultural micro-and macro-structures and cognitive social representations, on the other hand. (Gee, 2011, p. 88)

Critical discourse analysis will contribute to the understanding of patterns and themes in social situations and institutions and help bring clarification and motivation behind the language (Fairclough, 2013).

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to seek and examine the discourse around the science of reading topic. In this study, science of reading was explored through the lens of a social media Twitter hashtag. From the findings, this research (1) identified the participants involved in the discourse of the topic, (2) identified stimuli that creates discourse around the topic, and (3) informed the reading community of the patterns and themes around the topic, science of reading. The following research questions were explored through this study:

1. What are the roles of the participants involved in the discourse around the science of reading on Twitter?
2. What stimuli creates discourse around the science of reading on Twitter?
3. What are the discourse patterns or themes around educational issues, educational research, or educational information about the science of reading through the lens of the social media Twitter #scienceofreading?

Overview of Methodology

The data used for this study was existing secondary public data found on the social media platform Twitter. The data scraper If This, Then, That (IFTTT) was used to retrieve the existing data from Twitter and then uploaded data into Google Sheets to analyze the discourse around the topic science of reading. The preliminary analysis of the qualitative data allowed patterns and themes to emerge and then be coded and analyzed for frequency and significance. The data was then analyzed to answer the specific research questions for this study.

Participants

The participants for this study consisted of any person that had an account on Twitter and entered the discourse topic of the science of reading using the #scienceofreading contained within their tweet or attached to their tweet. Participants were not invited nor recruited to this

study, but rather were observed in a public social media platform of Twitter through virtual ethnography. Participants throughout this study received pseudonyms to protect their identities. Participants consisted of Twitter data from the month of December 2019 and the month of May 2020. In the month of December 2019, there were a total of 1,278 tweets with a total of 587 different participants and the month of May 2020 consisted of 1,413 tweets, with a total of 792 different participants. Participants varied in their roles and occupations including teachers, scholars, publishing representatives, and parents and individuals involved in advocacy for reading instruction.

Data Collection

Data was accessed from two months of data being automatically downloaded for 24-hour cycles using the IFTTT applet. Looking at data from November 2019 to May 2020, there were a total of 8,474 Tweets. December and May yielded the largest data and were selected as the two months to analyze for this study. Data collection included the use of the If This Then That (IFTTT) applet which allowed scrapping of Twitter data. Once the applet was created on IFTTT, the Twitter data was automatically downloaded into Google Sheets for collection and analysis. Data collection included social media Twitter tweets that were linked to the specific hashtag: #scienceofreading. The tweets connected to this specific hashtag were the only data accessed. IFTTT automatically downloaded Twitter hashtag data into Google Sheets and each tweet was divided into user, the tweet, the link to the tweet, and the date of the tweet. Since the role of the participant was not automatically given in the scrapped data, research of the participants' roles had to be identified by observing each participant's profile and adding it as a category on the Google Sheet. Data was coded in Google Sheets. Codes were assigned to data relevant to the research. Codes were then reviewed and grouped for similarities.

Research Question 1: What are the roles of the participants involved in the discourse around the science of reading on Twitter?

Two different months within a five-month span were analyzed and coded to determine identified roles of participants involved in the discourse of the science of reading topic for this study. Both December 2019 and May 2020, had the category of educators as participants, but December had more educators involved in all the frequency tiers of overall tweets, original tweets, and retweets. May's educator category did not tweet as much overall, nor did they produce as many original tweets or even retweets around the science of reading topic. The Covid-19 pandemic may have affected the lower tweets for educators since many teachers were scrambling to learn and manage online teaching. Educators could have been so overwhelmed with the changes that Covid-19 brought to education, that they did not have the time nor the attention to devote to social media. The Professionals associated with an educational business category was more active in the month of December 2019 than in the month of May 2020, ranking in top positions in three different frequency tier categories in December and only ranked in a top position in one category in May 2020. Advocates went from third place in participants in December 2019 to the top participating category in May 2020. Though there were still a variety of educators in both months, the month of May 2020 focused on a specific identified role as being the top participant in the frequency tier of overall tweets of 10 or more known as an advocate of a non-profit professional organization. Overall, educators were the top identified role participants for December 2019 and advocates were the top identified role participants for May 2020. The results of this research question will be combined with the results of research question

two, to determine which identified role participants are the participants that are having discourse around the science of reading topic.

In December 2019 the participants were organized into frequency categories as shown in Table 1 *Top December 2019 participants of "overall" tweets (original and retweets) with $\geq$ 10 tweets categorized by roles* and in Table 2 *Top December participants of "overall" tweets (original and retweets) with 4-9 tweets categorized by roles*. In each category, the desegregated data is displayed in the appendix of this study for a deeper analysis.

Table 1
Top December 2019 participants of "overall" tweets (original and retweets) with $\geq$ 10 tweets categorized by roles

Identified Role	Number of Participants per Role	Total Tweets	**% of Dec. Tweets
Educators	6	105	
			8.22
Professional associated w/Educational Business (the individual's account)	5	83	
			6.49
Advocate	4	47	3.69
Educational Business (Business Group Account)	2	28	2.19
No Identified Role	1	16	1.25

Note. *Top December participants categorized by roles that tweeted 10 or more tweets including original and retweets for the month of December. **Percentage of total amount of December tweets including original and retweets (1278) ***All percentages are rounded to the nearest hundredth percent.

Table 2
Top December participants of "overall" tweets (original and retweets) with 4-9 tweets categorized by roles

Identified Role	Number of Participants per Role	Total Tweets	**% of Dec. Tweets
Educators	23	138	
			10.78
Advocates	16	88	6.88
Professionals in an Educational Business	9	56	4.38
Educational Business (Business Group Account)	7	38	
			2.97
No Identified Role	4	18	1.41
Reporters	1	4	0.31

Note. *Top December 2019 participants categorized by roles that tweeted 4-9 tweets including original and retweets for the month of December. **Percentage of total amount of December tweets including original and retweets (1278) ***All percentages are rounded to the nearest hundredth percent.

In May 2020 the participants were organized into frequency categories as shown in Table 3 *Top May 2020 participants of total tweets (original & retweets) with > 10 tweets* and in Table 4 Top *May 2020 participants of total tweets (original & retweets) with 4-9 tweets.*

Table 3
*Top May 2020 participants of "overall" tweets (original & retweets) with > 10 tweets

Identified Role	Number of Participants per Role	Total Tweets	** % of May Tweets
Professional with an Educational Business	2	38	***2.69
Advocate-Non-Profit Professional Organization	1	38	2.69
Advocate-Group	2	29	2.05
Educational Business	2	29	2.05
Advocate-Individual	1	15	1.06
Educator-Secondary	1	14	0.99
Totals	9	163	11.53

Note. *Top participants are participants that tweeted 10 or more tweets including original and retweets for the month of May. **Percentage of total amount of May tweets including original and retweets ***All percentages are rounded to the nearest hundredth percent.

Table 4
*Top May 2020 participants of "overall" tweets (original & retweets) with 4-9 tweets

Identified Role	Number of Participants per Role	Total Tweets	% of May Tweets
Advocates	21	120	8.49
Educators	21	102	7.21
No Identified Role	8	41	2.9
Professionals in an Educational Business	7	39	2.76
Educational Business	5	26	1.84
Other	4	18	1.27

Note. * Top participants are participants that tweeted 4-9 overall tweets including original and retweets for the month of May. **Percentage of total amount of May tweets including original and retweets. ***All percentages are rounded to the nearest hundredth percent.

The categories of the identified roles encompass a variety of different roles participating in the discourse on the topic of the science of reading on the social media Twitter platform. Identified roles given by the participants themselves determined the categorization. Table 5 gives examples of identified roles of Twitter participants' profiles and the coding of the roles that occurred based on the given identification information.

Table 5
Examples of Identified Participant Roles Coding

Example Coding	Example Profile Information
Educator-Higher Education	Ex. Participant 1 @Ex.Participant1, Professor, ABC University. Teacher/Writer/Poet. It's called the American Dream because you have to be asleep to believe it. "X" City, (Participant link) Joined February 2011.
Advocate-Individual	Ex. Participant 2 ~ Dyslexia Advocate @Ex. Participant2 $0 Volunteer-Advocate for Equitable Literacy Instruction. Mom of a #FAPEdenied dyslexic. Founder @ABC. #StructuredLiteracy #OrtonGillingham "X" City, Joined January 2011
Professionals Associated w/Educational Business (The Individual's Account)	Ex. Participant 3 @Ex.Participant3 Senior Vice President of Customer Success for "ABC", and a proud native "X". Spending my days working hard, dreaming, and hopefully getting wiser with age! "X" City, Joined November 2013
Educational Business	Ex. Participant 4 @Ex.Participant4 -solutions company that specializes in delivering explicit instruction & a solid academic foundation for PreK–8 reading & language arts. "X" City (Business website link) Joined June 2013

Note. Pseudonyms were given for names of participants, schools, and locations.

Research Question 2: What stimuli creates discourse around the topic science of reading on Twitter?

Two different months within a five-month span were analyzed for discourse stimuli for this study. For the purpose of this study, the month of December 2019 and May 2020 were analyzed to determine the top four ranking stimuli categories. Overall, the opinion stimuli and promotional stimuli were analyzed, coded, categorized and emerged in the top four categories for both months. The opinion category dominated the month of December 2019 with 48.83% of the total associated tweets and promotional stimuli dominated the month of May 2020 with 49% of the total associated tweets placed in the number one ranking spot. Again, it is important to note that the Covid-19 pandemic caused teachers to push their teaching online and most were not prepared for the drastic change in teaching nationwide. Teachers may have been overwhelmed by technology takeover in teaching and their time may have been consumed with their online teaching rather than utilizing their time in social media. To determine if research is part of the discourse of the science of reading topic, the research category was also analyzed and coded to determine the ranking. The research category, based on the definition of research for this study defined earlier, did not rank in the top four categories of either month but rather only had 1.10% of the total associated tweets for the month of December 2019 and only 0.78% of the total associated tweets for the month of May 2020. These findings signify that the majority of stimuli that caused discourse around the topic of the science of reading was based primarily on opinion

stimuli rather than research stimuli and a large portion of promotional stimuli exceed stimuli in one month over opinion and research.

The month of December 2019 had a total of 1,278 tweets and the month of May 2020 had a total of 1,413 tweets, with each tweet having a stimuli and again, not necessarily a separate stimuli, meaning the same stimuli could come from multiple tweets. The top stimuli categories and subcategories that emerged from both months are discussed in detail in this study as well as the frequency and percentages of total tweets (see Table 7 December 2019 Identified Stimuli Categories with frequency and percentages of total tweets and Table 8 May 2020 Identified Stimuli Categories with frequency and percentages of total tweets).

Table 6
Examples of Identified Stimuli Coding

Coding category of stimuli	Example of stimuli	Example of stimuli within tweet
Opinion	Article: *Prominent Literary Expert Denies Dyslexia Exists; Says to 'Shoot' Whoever Wrote Law on It*	Ex. Stimuli 1 Reconsider the tone policing and respectability politics of #dyslexia #scienceofreading responses to Richard Allington's talk blogs.edweek.org/teach…@educationweek Prominent Literary Expert Denies Dyslexia Exists; Says to 'Shoot' Whoever Wrote Law on It https://t.co/MbvBVvz1Js?amp=1
Promotional	Amplify Podcast	Ex. Stimuli 2 Crack the code with the #ScienceofReading today! In this webinar, examine what we know about brain science, how you can apply this knowledge to help every student learn to read, and what effective reading instruction looks like in practice. Register here: https://t.co/DcrkzwgFB2
Resources	YouTube video of dyslexia specialist modeling vowel pairs/syllable types 0.58sec	Ex. Stimuli 4 @participant1 @participant2 @participant3 #WeareXXX #XXXatHome #ScienceofReading Participant 5, dyslexia specialist at XXX brings us Part 4 of 6. Syllable Type Vowel Pairs. Please retweet and share the knowledge of the science of reading.
Professional Development	4 images of teachers working in teams during professional development at their school	Ex. Stimuli 5 Our investigation of the science of reading continues. Teachers throughout the district representing our different buildings engaged in research and evaluation of programs of reading curriculum today. @XXXSchools #WeAreXXX

		#scienceofreading #decodingANDcontentknowl http:XXX
Research (Peer Reviewed Article)	https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3704307/ and excerpt from article	Ex. Stimuli 6 Inside the Letterbox: How Literacy Transforms the Human Brain by Stanislas Dehaene, Ph. D @StanDehaene Link: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3704307/ #ELAchat #ScienceofReading #BrainScience

Note. Pseudonyms were given for names of participants, schools, and locations.

For the purpose of this study, two categories were highlighted and described in detail. It is important to highlight the comparison and contrast of the opinion category, which ranked as the top stimuli category for December 2019, and the promotional category that ranked as the top category for May 2020. Both categories are also in the top four stimuli categories for both months. Other categories will be identified and listed below in tables three and four with stimuli frequency of associated tweets and percentage of total tweets. In addition, the research category will also be described below for both December 2019 and May 2020 to compare with the top ranking categories for both months based on the topic of the science of reading instruction to determine the amount of research in the discourse.

Table 7

December 2019-Identified Stimuli Categories with frequency and percentages of total tweets

Identified Stimuli Categories	Frequency of associated tweets with stimuli	Percentage of Total Tweets for December 2019
Opinion	624	48.83
Promotional	223	17.45
Persuasive	84	6.57
Professional Development	44	3.44
Informational	40	3.13
Resources	39	3.05
Acknowledgement	15	1.17
Research	14	1.10
Seeing help	14	1.10
Surveys	12	0.94
White Paper	12	0.94
Employment	5	0.39
Donations	4	0.31
Inspirational	4	0.31
Position Statement	2	0.16
Quizzes	1	0.08
Other	141	11.03

Note. December 2019=1278 total tweets for the month. Other are tweets that were not relevant or no longer exists on Twitter.

Table 8
May 2020-Identified Stimuli Categories with frequency and percentages of total tweets

Identified Stimuli Categories	Frequency of associated tweets with stimuli	Percentage of Total Tweets for May 2020
Promotional	692	49.00
Resources	236	16.70
Opinion	188	13.31
Persuasive	93	6.58
Informational	45	3.18
Acknowledgement	20	1.42
Inspirational	15	1.06
Surveys	13	0.92
Research	11	0.78
Donation	10	0.71
Educational News Article	9	0.64
Professional Development	7	0.50
Quizzes	7	0.50
White Paper	3	0.21
Legal News	2	0.14
Political	2	0.14
Other	60	4.25

Note. May 2020=1413 total tweets for the month. Other are tweets that were not relevant or no longer exists on Twitter.

Research Question #3: What are the discourse patterns or themes around educational issues, educational research, or educational information surrounding the topic of the science of reading through the lens of the social media Twitter hashtag science of reading?

The most significant amount of two-way discourse came from the contentious discourse around an opinion article. Contentious discourse was scattered throughout tweets but very concentrated in the month of December 2019. "When we know better, we do better" discourse was woven through opinion, promotional, and research stimuli to encourage the shift to science of reading. Disparagement discourse came in the form of promoting science of reading by making derogatory comments against others' product, philosophy, or ideas and was found highly in the opinion category. Marketing discourse was woven throughout all stimuli both explicitly and implicitly to not only promote the topic of the science of reading, but to promote specific companies, events, and products associated with science of reading materials and services. Academic discourse was the lowest frequency of discourse for both months. The discourse was limited and provided mostly comments that supported the science of reading, rather than two-way discourse. The participants involved were consistent with question one results, where the high-frequency identified role participants were the same categories of participants that transmitted discourse among the highest-ranking stimuli for both months. It is important to note that professional development for teachers often happens in the summer and could be attributed to the number of promotional stimuli and marketing discourse to promote opportunities for

teachers in the month of May 2020. Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic brought a different need in professional development which may account for the large number of promotional stimuli and marketing discourse that occurred in the month of May 2020 and attributed to the low frequency of educators participating in discourse in the month of May 2020 due to their overwhelming change in online teaching.

Conclusion

The findings of this virtual ethnographic qualitative study resulted in a unique view for readers to view the discourse of the science of reading through the lens of a social media Twitter hashtag. The study results determined that there are diverse participants that engaged in the discourse on the science of reading topic but educators, professionals associated with educational businesses and advocates were the highest frequency participants in the months of December 2019 and May 2020. The study results determined that the stimuli that caused the most discourse for the month of December 2019 and May 2020 were the categories of opinion and promotional and the category of research ranked at less than 2% of the stimuli across both months. The discourse that surrounded the top stimuli of opinion and promotional came in themes of contentious, "when we know better, we do better," and disparagement. Empirical research discourse was very limited in the findings of this study.

With the science of reading topic being a part of social media discourse, the reading community needs to be aware of how to engage in this discourse and how to bring the science into the conversation, as well as become a collaborative community that supports each other to achieve the goal of literate children in our society. The National Academies Press (Bonnie et al., 2017) suggested that the purpose of formal engagement and interaction is "to facilitate the exchange of information, knowledge, perspectives, and preferences among groups that differ in expertise, power, and values and help them find common ground" (p. 25). The reading community should use this type of transactional public engagement to build a foundational community of the dissemination of reading research, as well as implementing and generating new knowledge about the science of reading instruction for all prek-12 schools (Solari et al. 2020).

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Preservice Experiences Teaching Social and Emotional Lessons and its Impact on Student Behavior in Elementary Classrooms

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Abstract

If it is expected that educators teach social and emotional learning lessons in their classroom, then we must equip them during their educator preparation programs with the knowledge and skills to do so. Preservice teachers require training in managing their social and emotional well-being as well as experience in teaching social and emotional learning to best understand the connection between rapport-building and sustaining a positive classroom environment for the students they teach. This mixed methods study analyzes the reflections of preservice teachers during early field experiences after they taught a social and emotional learning lesson. The reflections centered around their perceptions of the impact such a lesson had on the children involved as well as the overall classroom environment and behavior management throughout the lesson.

Keywords: Preservice teachers, social and emotional learning, reflection, teacher preparation, classroom management

Introduction

This mixed methods study identified experiences of preservice teachers within their junior year of an educator preparation program at a state university in the South-Central region of the United States. The participants involved in this study were engaged in the planning and implementation of an interactive lesson focused on a social and emotional learning competency with elementary students set in each of their elementary school field placement for the semester. This study was designed to analyze the experiences and perceptions of preservice teachers during early field experiences to determine the effectiveness of a social and emotional learning lesson and the impact such a lesson could potentially have on the children involved in regards to student motivation, engagement and overall behavior management.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are: 1. Describe which CASEL (www.casel.org) competency was chosen by the mentor and preservice teacher to focus on during a social and emotional learning lesson from the following: responsible decision making, self-awareness, social-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills. 2. What are preservice teachers' reactions and perceptions of their elementary students' overall feelings while participating in a morning meeting?

Literature Review

Social and emotional learning includes lessons in emotional management, effective problem solving, and positive relationships. There are five core clusters of social and emotional competencies which are: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (Roger Weissberg et al, 2015). The Collaborative for Academic,

Social and Emotional Learning or CASEL defines social and emotional learning as specific skills that all children and adults need to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (2023). These skills provide us all with the ability to understand and regulate emotions and aid in understanding the emotions of others (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

Through enhancing teachers' social and emotional skills, value can be placed on the need for incorporating these skills with their own students in an effort to foster community, increase student motivation, and to improve overall classroom management and student behavior. According to Gregory and Fergus, implementing social and emotional learning lessons into daily schedules creates healthier school environments and enhances educators' overall abilities to teach students these social-emotional competencies (2017). With the implementation of a curriculum infused with social and emotional learning, teachers spend less time focusing on student behavior and more time on academics (2017). Through these types of interactive and team-building lessons within the classroom setting, the teacher can strengthen social and emotional learning competencies needed for students to feel success and build the classroom community. These experiences aid in improving teachers' overall ability in delivering instruction to their students. When behavior does not inhibit the instruction, more time is placed on learning (2017). As students' social and emotional needs are met and students feel validated, behavior in the classroom may improve, and student learning may increase (Sorbet & Notar, 2022).

The role of the relationship between teachers and students is a strong predictor of student behavior (Poulou, 2017). Empathy, trust, and acceptance within these relationships are the major contributors to students' emotional growth and development (Colley & Cooper, 2017). Social and emotional learning lessons that focus on the five competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making encourage students to gain awareness of their emotions, give students strategies to handle conflict, and instruct them in how to work cooperatively with peers (CASEL, 2023).

According to Durlak et al. (2011), educators that embrace and promote social-emotional learning teach students to exhibit positive attitudes, improve overall behavior, and increase academic performance. Such lessons also develop school connectedness and overall student engagement, and both are important for building relationships within schools (Usakli & Ekici, 2018). When educators provide and encourage a caring community at school and teach social and emotional learning skills, a cycle develops where positive interactions can create further positive interactions. This can create a culture where students and teachers respect one another and enjoy being together which motivates both teachers and students to do their very best (Edutopia, 2011).

Teaching students how to share, develop empathy for one another, excel in challenging situations, accomplish goals, and control impulsive behavior are equally as important as teaching academic skills. Anderson (2015) found that educators should view social and emotional skills as an integral part of their daily lessons and curriculum. Each skill should be modeled by the teacher and by peers, coached in small groups or individually, practiced, and then retaught often in order for students to fully acquire an understanding of the skill being presented.

Schonert-Reichl (2017) confirmed that social and emotional skills can be "taught and measured and can promote positive development and reduce problem behaviors within the school setting" (p.138). Incorporating social and emotional learning within a classroom setting creates a healthier learning environment, while strengthening educators' own social and emotional competencies. Consequently, this leads to improved teacher abilities when it comes to

instructing students (Gregory & Fergus, 2017). As this cycle of learning continues, the overall experience of all involved improves.

Despite the need for social and emotional learning within the classroom, teaching these social and emotional competencies has not been a main point of focus in most teachers' pedagogical training in the past. If social-emotional learning is an important lifelong skill that we teach to elementary students, then it should be an important skill we continue to develop in our teachers. To maintain teachers in the education profession, we must focus on their social and emotional learning (SEL) development (Scott, 2023).

Social and emotional skills of educators include specific competencies that should be met and demonstrated for their students. Educator SEL includes the skills that adults need in order to manage stress and create a safe and supportive classroom for their students. It is the overall well-being and emotional state of the adult in a school setting and includes the skills and mindset that adults need to effectively teach, model and coach SEL for their students. The five social and emotional competencies for educators include: balance and boundaries, examining identity, exploring emotions, cultivating compassionate curiosity, and orienting towards optimism (Transforming Education, 2020).

Teacher preparation programs have begun educating preservice teachers on the role that emotions and social relationships take in learning as well as establishing specific and appropriate expectations for children's and adolescents' social and emotional development (Melnick & Martinez, 2019). Some educator preparation programs have begun to instruct preservice teachers in these areas to provide them with the tools they need to best support the students they service and their own personal growth. According to a study by Melnick & Martinez (2019) there have been several implications regarding educator preparation programs that included infusing social and emotional learning into their preservice teacher programs of study which include:

1. Developing teacher candidates' own social and emotional competence.
2. Helping teacher candidates set the stage for SEL by teaching them to develop safe, inclusive, and supportive classroom environments.
3. Integrating the teaching of SEL into courses on academic curriculum.
4. Developing strong university-district partnerships to improve a focus on the social and emotional dimensions of teaching and learning throughout the teacher preparation process.
5. Providing time for faculty to integrate practices that support SEL effectively in their coursework (2019).

There are also additional implications for school districts and schools who are in partnership with preservice teacher programs. Partnership schools create opportunities to generate a buy-in from mentor teachers witnessing the social and emotional learning lessons within the classrooms. This can create further professional development in SEL that is job-embedded and ongoing. Such experiences provide opportunities for social and emotional learning to begin with adults learning these skills followed by these skills then being taught explicitly and integrated throughout academics (Melnick & Martinez, 2019).

Educator preparation programs are a logical place to educate preservice teachers on social and emotional relationships in learning, emotional development, and in ways that teachers can support students' growth (Melnick & Martinez, 2019). Traditional preservice teacher training includes providing tools and skills needed so that they can be prepared to handle all of the classroom challenges that come their way. Preservice teachers benefit from supervised

experiences that foster their own social and emotional learning so that they are able to provide these same lessons to their own students.

Teaching social and emotional skills and competencies has not generally been a main focal point in most teachers' pedagogical training although there is a strong push for SEL to be taught with academic content knowledge in the classroom (Scott, 2023). In preservice teacher preparation programming or in district-wide professional development, teacher's well-being, stress-management strategies, and resilience have very rarely been specific skills taught or measured. It is believed that a teacher's well-being and own social and emotional learning affects their personal experiences in the classroom and can have a daily impact on the students that they teach. Teacher well-being and their own social and emotional skills have continued to be of utmost importance in today's classroom, especially when considering teacher burnout and teacher retention as main concerns.

Approximately 40-50% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years of beginning their teaching career (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2012). Many teachers leave the profession due to teacher burnout. Three key dimensions associated with teacher burnout in classrooms are: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. These dimensions connect to social and emotional competencies and highlight building resilience in how to cope with emotional and interpersonal stresses and challenges (Scott, 2023).

Classroom management and student behavior are also contributors to teacher burnout when defining areas of frustration and exhaustion. More positive approaches have been identified over time to address the impact of student behavior on student engagement in the classroom. One such approach is PBIS, or Positive Behavior Intervention and Support. PBIS is defined as a tiered framework for supporting students' behavioral, academic, social, emotional and mental health (Center on PBIS, 2023). When PBIS is implemented with fidelity, it can improve social and emotional competence, academic success, and the school climate as well as improves teacher health and well-being (Center on PBIS, 2023). Such programs as this can provide a more positive approach to learning and managing of student behavior that lends itself to an improved educational environment within the classroom.

Another approach in building a positive classroom environment came from Ruth Charney in 1991 when she co-founded The Responsive Classroom Approach. The Responsive Classroom Approach is a

"student-centered, social and emotional learning approach to teaching and discipline. It is comprised of a set of research, and evidence-based practices designed to create safe, joyful, and engaging classrooms and school communities for both students and teachers" (Responsive Classroom, 2023).

In 2002, Ruth Charney also wrote the book *Teaching Children to Care*. This book, focused on teaching children empathy, respect, and to care for one another. The book provides the basic essentials for providing a "responsive classroom" throughout the entire school year. The Responsive Classroom Approach focuses on providing educators with skills and knowledge to be able to effectively engage their students in academics, provide a positive learning community, effectively manage students, and gain a developmental awareness for the children that they teach in order to provide their students with the opportunity to develop strong academic and social skills and are able to thrive (Responsive Classroom, 2023).

One aspect of The Responsive Classroom Approach includes a type of social and emotional learning lesson known as the Morning Meeting (Kriete & Davis, 2014). The Morning Meeting is typically taught during a set time each day. Morning Meetings provide students with a

social and emotional learning lesson centered around one of the five CASEL competencies and incorporates sharing feelings, emotions, and building rapport and community with their peers within their classroom (Responsive Classroom, 2023). These meetings are most effective when incorporated into the daily classroom schedule.

The format for a Morning Meeting contains four sequential pieces and should last approximately 30 minutes or less. These four sections of a Morning Meeting are as follows: greeting, sharing, activity, and news and announcements. The students engage in introductions or greetings, followed by a short sharing on a given topic that the teacher models first and then allows the students time to share in a variety of ways. The most engaging part of the Morning Meeting is the third part of the lesson and includes a team-building activity centered around the social or emotional lesson. The fourth and last part of the Morning Meeting is the Morning Message, which is a transition time to refocus the students on the next part of their day and to help them to understand that the Morning Meeting is coming to an end (Kriete & Davis, 2014). These meetings can be centered around one of the five CASEL (2023) competencies which are: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.

By establishing Morning Meetings into the daily routine of the classroom, the teacher can set a positive tone for learning while also establishing a climate of trust within the classroom. Morning Meetings motivate students by addressing their social and emotional needs (Kriete & Davis, 2014).

Preservice and inservice teacher training in social and emotional learning and specifically training and experiences in more positive approaches such as Positive Behavior Intervention and Support or Responsive Classroom Approach provides necessary tools for building safe spaces for learning and student engagement in the classroom. In order for educators to best meet their learners' basic needs and to connect with their students, they must immerse themselves into the diverse population of their classroom, understand their students' backgrounds, and get acquainted with their students in order to instruct them (Sorbet & Notar, 2022). Educator SEL is necessary to understand the need for these connections. Training in SEL is needed in order for educators to best provide SEL lessons to the students that they teach. Without social and emotional development in educators, their students cannot partake in social and emotional learning experiences in their classroom environment.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 Reciprocity of SEL benefits between teachers and students represents the conceptual framework for this study. In this framework the teacher increases their own social and emotional learning through training or experiences which then allows the teacher to provide lessons such as Morning Meetings and other social and emotional learning opportunities to their students. These lessons increase student motivation and engagement which further improves overall classroom management and student morale. The morale improves as a result of the feelings of accomplishment and acceptance by their peers through the interactions that social and emotional-focused lessons such as Morning Meetings provide. With increased morale and motivation comes students' increased desire to be in the classroom. Students wanting to be present in the classroom and excited about learning could potentially impact instructional time spent disciplining students. As discipline decreases and positive behavior increases, the teacher is able to provide instruction that increases student motivation and morale which can directly impact teacher satisfaction. With increased teacher satisfaction and motivation comes the

possibility of decreased teacher burnout and could also impact teacher retention. As teacher satisfaction increases through these experiences, teacher social and emotional learning (SEL) can increase as well which can then increase their own students' SEL as well.
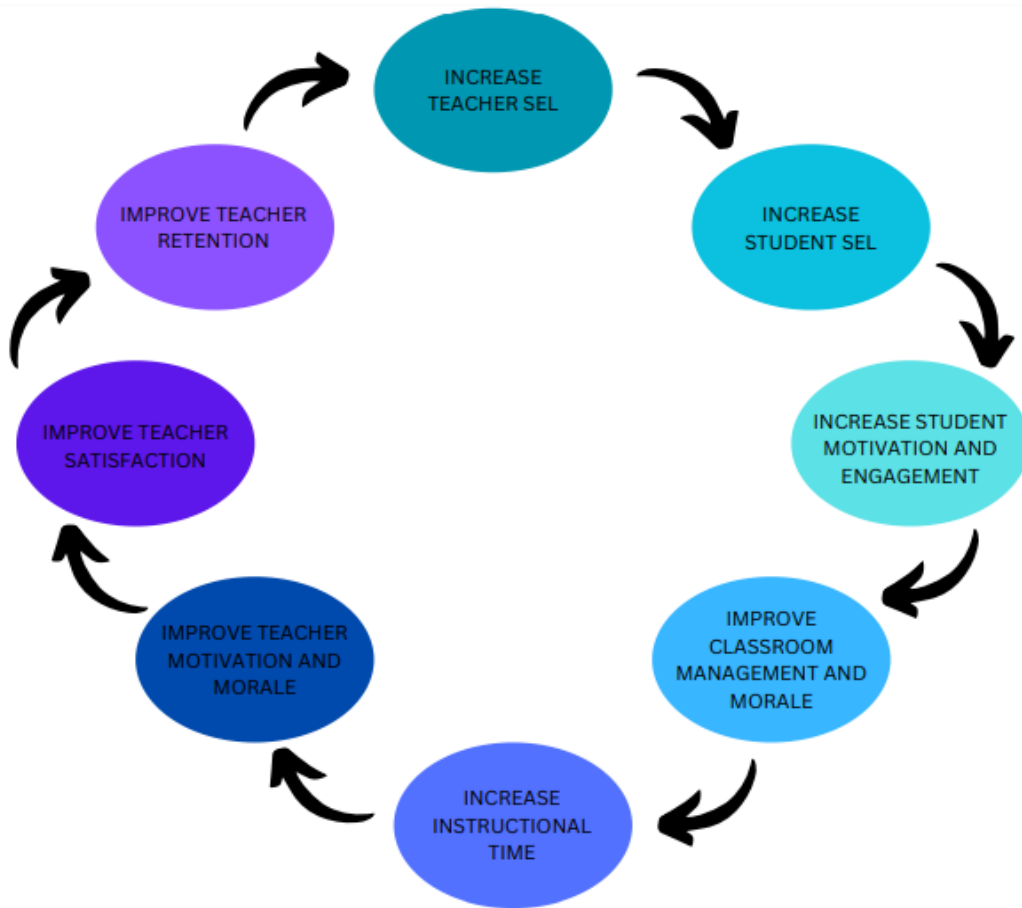
Figure 1 Reciprocity of SEL benefits between teachers and students

Methodology

This mixed methods study analyzes experiences of preservice teachers through interactive learning strategies such as social and emotional learning-centered Morning Meetings and experiences while planning and implementing such a lesson with elementary students within preservice teachers' individual field placements in K-6 grades in a public school setting.

The researchers collected enrollment data for demographics of the preservice teachers enrolled within this course for the purposes of this study. The researchers quantitatively analyzed the data regarding the number of preservice teachers enrolled and which grades they were placed in within the K-6 grade levels. The social and emotional learning competency from CASEL that was chosen for the lesson by the mentor teacher of the field placement classroom in which the preservice teacher was placed for the semester during this course was also identified.

Hermeneutic phenomenology, the phenomenology used in this analysis of the study, is the phenomenology type that is focused on the subjective experience of specific individuals within a study (Kafle, 2011). Upon completion of the preservice teachers' field-based Morning

Meeting, the researchers analyzed the written reflections of preservice teachers and identified themes that emerged within the qualitative data. The responses from the reflections were then disaggregated into three thematic categories. After further analysis, the researcher was able to note commonalities and differences within the three themes that emerged.

Instrumentation

Prior to instructing the lesson in their field placement, the preservice teachers submitted a Morning Meeting lesson plan to the instructor. The lesson plan outlined the four parts of the lesson and included one or more of the five CASEL (2023) competencies that would be addressed in the Morning Meeting. The four parts that are traditionally included in a Morning Meeting are the greeting, sharing, activity, and news and announcements and the preservice teachers addressed all of these (Kriete & Davis, 2014). After this lesson plan was scored and feedback provided, the preservice teachers were to set a time and date to teach their lesson in their mentor teacher's classroom.

Preservice teachers in this course individually planned and implemented their Morning Meeting in their field placement classroom and videoed themselves doing so under the guidance of their mentor teacher. This was their very first lesson that was taught within their junior year of their K-6 teacher preparation program as part of initial licensure. This experience provided a means for the preservice teachers to engage with the students they serve within their public school community, practice classroom management routines and procedures while engaging learners, and become better acquainted with the students they were assigned to teach.

After the lesson was taught, the preservice teachers enrolled in this course were instructed to then view the video of themselves teaching and write a reflection about what they observed themselves doing regarding their teaching and the reactions of the students involved in this Morning Meeting lesson. Preservice teachers also solicited feedback on this lesson from their mentor teacher as a way to gain ongoing support in areas of needed improvements for preservice teachers.

Upon completion of the Morning Meeting lesson preservice teachers completed an online reflection as part of their overall grade and experience. Preservice teachers reflected on the following questions: (a) Describes which CASEL competency was addressed and why. (b) Describe the greeting, sharing, and activity and what was done in each component of the Morning Meeting. (c) Describe the overall feeling and reaction of the children to the Morning Meeting. (d) Incorporate feedback from your mentor on the lesson implementation and impact on the students.

For the purposes of this study the researcher focused on the following two areas of the reflection: (a) Describe which CASEL competency was chosen and (c) Described the overall feeling and reaction of the children to the "Morning Meeting."

Sample

There were a total of 21 participants for this study who were enrolled in this course in the fall semester of 2022 at a state university in the south central area of the United States as a required component for initial licensure in Elementary Education. All 21 participants were female in this particular semester. This three-hour course was a junior level course that was required for both the special education and elementary education programs of study and focused on positive classroom environments. This course met twice a week for one hour and fifteen minutes in a face to face setting on the university's campus. A field placement was also assigned

in conjunction with this course in which the preservice teachers visited on Tuesdays throughout the semester from 8am to 2pm each week. The grade levels in which the preservice teachers were placed included grades kindergarten through sixth.

Data regarding the elementary placements within grade levels (Table 1) included the following: four preservice teachers were placed in a kindergarten class, three were placed in a first grade classroom, three were placed in a second grade classroom, three were placed in a third grade classroom, four were placed in a fourth grade classroom, three were placed in a fifth grade classroom, and one was placed in a combined fourth/fifth grade classroom. There were no preservice teachers placed in a sixth grade classroom in this particular semester. This is most likely due to the junior block field coordinator placing our students within the K-5 classrooms which is what is typically used during the junior block elementary field experiences.

Table 1
Grade level placements of preservice teachers

Grade level	Number of Preservice teachers placed
Kindergarten	4
First	3
Second	3
Third	3
Fourth	4
Fifth	3
Fifth/sixth combo class	1
Sixth	0
Total	21

This project was completed by 21 preservice teachers in their junior year. These preservice teachers each taught within a range of 15-22 students per classroom which was a combined 420 or more elementary students in grades K-5 during this semester. This course typically has 40-45 students divided into two sections of the course which impacts approximately 840 or more elementary students in any given semester. This particular semester showed a decrease in enrolled students in this course. Researchers attributed this low enrollment to possibilities of Covid-19 concerns and a decrease in enrollment at the time as students were beginning to return to face to face instruction on campus and overall enrollment was lower than usual.

Findings

Data gathered from research question 1. Describe which CASEL competency was chosen by the mentor and preservice teacher to focus on during a social and emotional learning (SEL) lesson from the following: responsible decision making, self-awareness, social-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills showed a variety of responses with one major competency being chosen the most. Mentor teachers were asked which competency they would like the lesson to be centered on by the preservice teacher. Four mentor teachers recommended that more than just one skill be covered in their class lesson.

Data showed an overwhelming number of mentor teachers chose relationship skills (48%) as the social and emotional learning competency most needed in their elementary classroom. Self-management (20%) was chosen as the second most needed area of SEL. Social

awareness (16%) and self-awareness (12%) were thought of as less important but ranked above responsible decision making (4%) with only one mentor suggesting responsible decision making to be a needed skill in their classroom (Table 2).

Table 2
CASEL Competency Categories

CASEL Competency	Frequency of competency chosen	Percentage of competency chosen
Social awareness	4	16%
Self-awareness	3	12%
Self-management	5	20%
Relationship skills	12	48%
Responsible decision making	1	4%
Total competencies chosen	25	100%

For research question 2, What are preservice teachers' reactions and perceptions of their elementary students' overall feelings while participating in a morning meeting, there were three themes that emerged. These three themes were: (a) *positive reactions and feelings of success*, (b) *misbehavior and classroom management concerns*, and (c) *other behaviors noticed*. Of these three themes, most of the interns in this study responded with (a) *positive reactions and feelings of success*. There were slightly less comments regarding (b) *misbehavior and classroom management concerns* and few comments addressing (c) *other behaviors noticed.*

Table 3 provides data regarding the theme of (a) *positive reactions and feelings of success* from the reflections written by the preservice teacher including positive experiences noted during the Morning Meeting. This theme was the most prominent throughout the preservice teachers' reflections. Within this theme there were three main subheadings noted. These subheadings were: great experience/enjoyment, engaged/participated, and positive/ motivation. Such positive reactions and feelings of success included one preservice teacher reflecting on an elementary student who they overheard saying that they "wished we could do this every morning", and another described every student except one "engaged and participating" during the lesson and stated that the children "laughed a lot, and got along with their peers." One reflection included feelings of elementary students during the Morning Meeting and noticing the students "overall enjoyed the Morning Meeting." A reflection discussed the partnerships at work in the classroom stating "they seemed to like getting to share with their partner and the class and some of them liked getting to play a game that everyone was involved in during the activity." Another reflection mentioned the participation of the children in the Morning Meeting and that they were "excited to do the Morning Meeting and enjoyed it." One preservice teacher noted how engaged the elementary students were in that the students were so excited to be doing something other than school work". The reflections of the preservice teachers indicated in these positive comments a sense of student engagement as well as building community amongst the students during the lesson.

Table 3
Preservice teachers' reflective comments regarding childrens' positive reactions toward the Morning Meeting

Preservice teachers' comments regarding childrens' positive reactions and feelings of success:

Great experience/enjoyment
"Many of my students later on said that they wished we could do it every morning."
"My morning meeting from the kids point of view went great! "
"I feel that the students overall enjoyed the morning meeting. They seemed to like getting to share with their partner and the class some of their likes and liked getting to play a game that everyone was involved in during the activity."
"Overall, this was a great experience, and I have found that this group of students respond really well to physical activity.
"I think the students enjoyed the meeting,
 "The students enjoyed every moment of it and begged me to do this every week I am here, as well as if they could play hot potato with the pumpkin next week."
"...the students I could tell loved it as well
"The students seemed to really enjoy sharing with me and each other and they loved the activity.
I think the meeting went very well and it was so great to see how happy and excited they were to do something different in the morning."
"The children were excited to do the morning meeting and enjoyed it.

Engaged/Participated
"Every student, except one, was engaged and participating through the whole morning meeting. The students loved the activity so much they asked if we could do more another time."
Throughout the morning meeting, all the children seemed to participate, they laughed a lot, and got along with their peers."
"The students were so excited to be doing something other than school work."
"They were very excited to get to participate in it. A lot of the students really got into it and even the kids who struggled to participate in class were participating"
I feel like went well, and the students were well-behaved and engaged."

Positive/motivation
 "In the end, I feel like the students generally learned some positive things in the activities…"
 "At the end of the meeting I feel like all of the students were in a good place and ready to learn and the morning meeting itself I showed an example of what a handshake could look like and I think this really helps motivate the students.
"To me the overall feeling and reaction of the students during the morning meeting was very positive. They seemed to like that they were able to be out of their seats.
Overall though I think it went really well and the students were respectful considering there are 28 students in this class and there is not much wiggle room!"

There were slightly less comments regarding (b) *misbehavior and classroom management concerns.* Table 4 further provides data regarding the misbehavior and classroom management concerns that preservice teachers reflected about during this study. Within this

theme, two subheadings surfaced which were talkative and overexcited. Preservice teachers made note that they recognized some students were "fidgety", and had "side conversations", and some were "overly excited." One preservice teacher noted that the elementary students "were all extremely excited for me to do a Morning Meeting with them and they became very talkative. They were energetic and pumped but a little bit too much for what we were doing." Another preservice teacher stated in their reflection that "some kept having side conversations, messing with my iPad, getting out of the circle, or causing distractions." One additional comment noted in the reflection was "because my morning meeting involved a lot of moving around the room, the students really liked it. Although, because the students aren't used to being out of their seats, they misbehaved a little bit during the morning meeting."

Table 4
Preservice teachers' reflective comments regarding misbehavior during the Morning Meeting

Preservice teachers comments regarding misbehavior noted and classroom management concerns
Talkative
"They were very talkative and fidgety because they were very excited to be in groups, not have to sit at their desks, and that I was doing something with them for the first time. "some kept having side conversations, messing with my iPad, getting out of the circle, or causing distractions" "they were extremely chatty." "The students were positive, but seemed disinterested." "they became very talkative."
Overexcited
They were energetic and pumped but a little bit too much for what we were doing." "The overall feeling and reaction from the children was a lot of excitement. At one point I even had to remind them not to raise their hands until after I said what the choices are Although, because the students aren't used to being out of their seats, they misbehaved a little bit during the morning meeting." "They were all extremely excited for me to do a morning meeting with them.

Table 5 shows that there were some interns who reflected on (c) *other behaviors noted.* There were two subheadings in this group which included confused/frustrated and shy/hesitant. One reflection indicated the kindergarteners "seemed somewhat confused at first during the Morning Meeting." Another preservice teacher noted that "some of the students were frustrated that they couldn't build a tower out of the popsicle sticks, but they still were communicating and trying to work with their teammates and it seemed like everyone was enjoying the activity overall." One other reflection indicated "I think they enjoyed doing this but were a little more shy when it came to sharing the handshakes with the class." A preservice teacher also noticed that a lot of children were "hesitant to giving their partner two compliments" initially and provided further examples so they then were more willing to relax and participate and began to "loosen up."

Table 5
Preservice teachers' reflective comments regarding other behaviors during Morning Meeting

Preservice teachers comments regarding other behaviors noticed

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Confused/frustrated
"The kindergarteners seemed somewhat confused at first during the morning meeting…"
"When I grouped the students into groups I didn't clearly say how it was supposed to be done so the students got confused and did it wrong."
"Some of the students were frustrated that they couldn't build a tower out of the popsicle sticks, but they still were communicating and trying to work with their teammates and it seemed like everyone was enjoying the activity overall.

Shy/hesitant
"I think they enjoyed doing this but were a little more shy when it came to sharing the handshakes with the class.
I noticed a lot of children were hesitant to giving their partner two complements but when I explained that the compliment could be as simple as "I like your shirt" they seemed to loosen up."

This data shows that during the social and emotional learning lesson the majority of preservice teachers noticed positive reactions and feelings of success among the elementary students they taught and they noted particularly great experience and enjoyment, students being engaged and participating, and positive behavior and motivation.

While misbehavior such as being talkative and overexcited were noted, these misbehaviors exhibited by the students did not overpower the positive reactions of the students involved. The overall feeling from the reflections was that the students involved in the Morning Meetings were most likely not used to participating in such an engaging activity and the talkativeness and overexcitement probably were contributing to this factor. Preservice teachers can conclude that the more often these types of engaging lessons are done with students, the more experience they have and may become accustomed to the procedures and a bit less excitability while maintaining the interest and engagement.

In the area of other behaviors noted, preservice teachers noted in their reflections that some students were confused and frustrated as well as shy and hesitant to participate initially. Such confusion was addressed as a preservice teacher reflected on the need to be clearer and more specific when giving directions to elementary students. Other reflections mentioned that there was a need to state expectations for behavior for the elementary students before and during the morning meeting lessons. These ideas are positive gains for the skills of educators as they understand and identify ways to improve classroom management and maximize student engagement.

Conclusions

This study highlighted preservice teachers' perceptions of elementary students experiencing a Morning Meeting as a way for them to witness the connection between social and emotional learning (SEL) lessons and building a positive classroom environment. The preservice teachers in this study completed this assignment within the fifth through sixth grade classrooms with a mentor teacher overseeing the experience. Of the five CASEL competencies to choose

from, mentor teachers mostly suggested to preservice teachers to center their social and emotional Morning Meeting lessons around relationship skills as that was the primary concern among most of the mentor teachers who participated this particular semester.

The elementary students in this study reflected on a variety of student behaviors during the lessons. Preservice teacher reflections indicated that overall the elementary students enjoyed these learning experiences and were excited to participate in them. Behaviors noticed by the preservice teacher included excitement, laughing, and feeling overjoyed. Preservice teachers noted how excited and willing most of the students were to participate.

Some initial shyness and uncertainty were noted throughout the lessons. Reflections also indicated some students exhibiting off-task behavior and overexcitability during the lessons. Contributing factors for these behaviors include students not being accustomed to this type of engagement and peer interaction typically in their classroom setting. Preservice teachers in this experience reflected that overall the Morning Meeting lesson provided positive learning experiences for the students and they witnessed the students wanting to be engaged in the learning with one another.

Limitations

There was some initial pushback for our students to implement the Morning Meeting in the field placements as mentor teachers do not typically do these activities due to administrator and curriculum time constraints. Some mentors did not allow them to have the full 20-25 minutes to teach the Morning Meeting as requested initially, but shortened it to allow them to have 15 minutes to teach this lesson. Other limitations might include last minute changes in schedules of the school day which may have shortened these lessons in some classes depending on the mentor teacher's schedule.

Implications of this Study

The results of this study show some positive impacts as reflected by preservice teachers in regards to initiating a social and emotional learning (SEL) lesson such as a Morning Meeting with students in the elementary classroom. This study shows that lessons such as these can foster a sense of classroom community and increase student motivation while enhancing their learning experiences. Preservice teachers in this study noted the value in social and emotional learning and its connectedness to the excitement and motivation of their students. Preservice teachers could move forward with this experience and determine that lessons centered around SEL competencies are necessary for the well-being of their students and for building a community of learners in their future classrooms. Preservice teachers could refer to this experience and make connections to the impact that social and emotional learning experiences could have on their ability to effectively invest in their students and manage their classroom on a daily basis. Preservice teachers could look to positive approaches to classroom management as ways to build community and rapport with their students in their future classrooms.

Recommendations for Future Study

Recommendations for future studies might be to survey mentor teachers to identify who, if any, were currently teaching social and emotional learning lessons such as Morning Meetings in their classrooms and which of those were more supportive of preservice teachers initiating such lessons in their classrooms. Another direction could include a look at the initial willingness of the mentor and their thoughts and ideas regarding such a lesson and their reactions and

reflections after witnessing the actual lesson with their students.

Final Thoughts

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is a very "hot topic" in our educational world today but it has also been a topic of conversations for many years. Educator preparation programs must highlight the importance between teachers getting to know their students socially and emotionally as well as being equipped to provide skills to their students to best navigate their emotions in a social setting. The only way for teachers to serve their own students in this capacity is to be trained in how to do so. It is the responsibility of educator preparation programs to provide authentic field experiences for preservice teachers to actively engage in initiating such lessons. This is the only way that preservice teachers will come to realize the impact that investing in their own community of learners will provide.

It is through educating and training preservice teachers in SEL and then encouraging them to model these skills for their students that we are able to provide students with the tools they need to become more self-aware, have self-management, have social awareness, develop relationship skills, and make responsible decisions. Ongoing training throughout the profession in these key areas of social and emotional learning are necessary for developing educators to truly be able to meet the needs of the students they teach. Once graduated and hired, the responsibility of social and emotional training must be ongoing and provided by the school districts for educators.

This study highlights the deep connection between students' desire to be engaged in their own learning as they interact with the peers and teacher in the classroom. There is also a direct connection between social and emotional learning and classroom management. Positive learning environments improve students' desire to learn and their "want" to be involved. As these preservice teachers continue to identify ways to best manage behavior and organize students in the classroom, they may now consider social and emotional learning and more specifically, The Responsive Classroom Approach (2023) and Morning Meetings as a way to foster community, enhance learning, and increase student motivation.

If it expected of the teacher to be truly competent in their own SEL in order to best provide social and emotional learning through positive experiences in team building, conversations among peers, and fun, engaging interactions for their students, then ongoing training is crucial in them doing so. Educators that are trained can effectively provide SEL lessons that enhance students' motivation and desire to be present in their learning environment. Students who are motivated and want to be present, feel valued and invested in and have a lasting positive learning experience can, in turn, provide teachers with increased SEL and a positive teaching experience as well.

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