

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF SECONDARY TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES WITH
A MANDATED TRANSITION TO AND FROM SYNCHRONOUS ONLINE INSTRUCTION

by

Susan P. Lyman

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand secondary teachers' experiences with an unexpected transition between in-person teaching and virtual modalities for secondary educators in New York public schools. The theory that guided this study was Schlossberg's transition theory which provided a lens through which to understand the shared experiences of making an unplanned transition from face-to-face teaching to online platforms. The study was qualitative and followed a phenomenological research design. The setting for this study was multiple public school districts in Nassau and Suffolk Counties on Long Island, New York. The sample was 10 secondary public school teachers from different content areas. I used Moustakas' transcendental phenomenology procedures to analyze data collected from interviews, journal prompts, and a focus group. Findings showed the importance of support in the educational process, especially in times of emergency remote instruction. There was a continuous feeling of uncertainty throughout the transition pertaining to technology and how long remote instruction would last. A major finding of the study was that human connections are supreme in the teaching world, especially in times of crisis.

Keywords: COVID-19, online learning, secondary education, technology, transition

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Gabriel, my late mother, Irene, and my husband, Dan. Thank you to my father, Gabriel, for always believing in me and supporting my aspirations in life. Thank you to my late mother, Irene, for always guiding me in the short time we spent together. Thank you to my husband, Dan, for your love and encouragement.

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List of Abbreviations

American College Test (ACT)

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

Computer Assisted Learning Center (CALC)

Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)

Social Emotional Behavioral (SEB)

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Strengths-based Blended Personalized Learning (SBPL)

Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

In the spring of 2020, almost 100% of American students were utilizing some form of distance education (Mcelrath, 2020). Due to the global pandemic, brick-and-mortar institutions had to involuntarily close their physical doors and open digital classrooms to continue the educational process. Many schools were left to develop virtual learning structures and adopt learning management systems rapidly. This forced traditional face-to-face teachers to make an unexpected conversion to the virtual teaching realm, which proved to be a major professional challenge (Dolighan & Owen, 2021). In this study, I explored teachers' experiences with the transition between in-person and online learning. In Chapter One, I will present a background of online education that will include relevant and current literature. I will also examine the historical, social, and theoretical contexts concerning online education. I will then discuss the problem, purpose, and significance of the study. Subsequently, I will present the research questions that guided my study and define essential terms that appear throughout my study. I will conclude Chapter One with a summary of my research study.

Background

The topic of online learning has affected most of the American population in some capacity (Mclerath, 2020). According to Palvia et al. (2018), today, more than ever, online education is a common component in the academic process when it was once considered merely an educational option. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, educators at all grade levels were forced to transition to remote teaching, prepared or not (Quezada et al., 2020). Being forced into such a drastic professional change can greatly impact the educational process (Dolighan & Owen, 2021). This problem continues to have ramifications affecting the world of education. In

the following section, I will discuss the background of this relevant and current problem from historical, social, and theoretical perspectives.

Historical Context

Technology has advanced substantially over the last 30 years and has become a prominent feature in education. The phrases 21st-century skills and 21st-century students are frequently used in educational conversations. Simply stated, 21st-century skills are the abilities considered necessary for modern-day students to be successful in academia, social settings, and future professions (Great Schools Partnership, 2016). Technology is one of the most widely discussed 21st-century skills. Technology in education has evolved from the development of innovations like the ditto machine to now being able to conduct an entire high school diploma program without needing to step foot into a school facility physically.

The introduction and progress of distance education have been through much development, from the use of the post office, radio, television, and finally, through the advent of the internet (Kentnor, 2015). The invention of the internet made online education a viable option in the 1990s (Barbour et al., 2013). This facet of education has enabled the options for academics to widen and reach more types of students. Online instruction can be viewed as a way to make learning more accessible to students through various characteristics, like being more student-centered and adaptable (Dhawan, 2020).

Despite innovations like technology positively impacting educational experiences, difficulties often arise. As online learning has evolved into a standard teaching method, educators appear to have shared concerns. Historically, one of the obstacles to online learning is insufficient teacher preparation programs (Kennedy & Archambault, 2012). Training pre-service teachers properly to teach effectively in online settings continues to be a focal point of current

research (Dinçer, 2018; Farmer & West, 2019). Other common issues with converting to online learning are teachers' lack of adequate professional development, support with technological issues, and collegial support from administrators and colleagues (Kaden, 2020). Many historical issues about successful online education still exist today and warrant continued research to improve the educational experience for both teachers and students.

The unplanned transition to remote learning impacted approximately 1.6 billion pupils in over 200 countries (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Some historical difficulties in technology have continued to be present during the recent transition between in-person and online learning. Lack of preparation to implement technology effectively to continue the learning process has been a common barrier throughout teaching during the pandemic (An et al., 2021; Webb et al., 2021). Also, students were ill-prepared to participate effectively in online learning during the emergency and immediate transition (An et al., 2021). The digital divide regarding accessibility to technological resources like mobile devices and high-speed internet has been a challenge experienced historically and during this educational disruption (An et al., 2021; Francom et al., 2021).

Despite the unplanned transition presenting challenges, more than half of New York parents surveyed wanted remote learning as a continued education option in the 2021–2022 school year (Mroziak, 2021). In the fall of 2021, approximately 6% of students maintained completely remote instruction. At the onset of the 2021–2022 school year, the option for remote learning was still available for medical reasons, school geographical location, or in the event of another COVID-19 outbreak (Taddeo & Cordero, 2021). When certain school districts did not continue to offer remote options, some parents opted to keep their children home at the start of the 2021–2022 school year (Jorgensen, 2021).

Social Context

Despite online education only being in existence for the last few decades, it contains numerous social contexts. For one, virtual learning allows students to choose when to work on completing schoolwork (Kaden, 2020). Online education can greatly expand course options in traditional schools or provide options to retake courses during the summer if needed, providing more autonomy throughout the school year (Hart et al., 2019). Online education courses can also provide more academic options in terms of course offerings and opportunities to take credit recovery-type classes to get students back on track to graduation (Rickles et al., 2018). Online learning can also support social elements like student engagement during the educational process (Chiu, 2021).

Student well-being is another social context that has persistently come up as a direct result of the transition to online learning (Schwartz et al., 2021). Teachers and administrators highly value in-person contact with students and parents (Barnett, 2021). Educators understand that in-person communication is necessary to develop a good rapport that supports the emotional well-being of students and consequently improves students' motivation in academic pursuits (Barnett, 2021). It is sometimes challenging to implement online learning to perfectly replicate the in-person learning experience, primarily the mental and physical attributes (Murphy et al., 2021).

Another valuable social context for teachers and students in online education is social presence. Social presence is considered the component of the educational process where students feel connected to their education, teachers, peers, and their individuality is recognized (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007). It is also defined as the perception of the citizenry that exists in online learning environments (Tu & McIsaac, 2002). Social presence is a reliable factor correlated to

students' sense of satisfaction and achievement in online learning programs (Alsadoon, 2018; Harrell & Wendt, 2019). D'Alessio et al. (2019) found a strong correlation between student success and perceived social presence in an online course. Making a shift from traditional style teaching to online learning has been shown to form obstacles to the social presence element that typically exists between teacher and student (Whittle et al., 2020). Other essential communication components lacking in online learning are connections and relationships (Farmer & West, 2019).

The concept of social presence was also evident as a vital feature to prioritize in online teaching preparation courses for educators. Hathaway and Mehdi (2020) found that communication and connections with students were important when developing courses designed to prepare educators for a blended learning environment. Synchronous online modalities have been favored for providing a more personal interaction between educators and students (Herman, 2020; Wang & Wang, 2021). A synchronous online learning format can foster a sense of community among participants, consequently supporting the learning process positively (Wang & Wang, 2021). Utilizing a synchronous teaching style to train pre-service teachers produced more effective educators than an asynchronous format.

The social and community pieces that are important variables in educational settings vary in blended learning, synchronous, and asynchronous online learning (Chiu, 2021; Harrell & Wendt, 2019). Additionally, online learning students have expressed perceived benefits to the educational process when they experience social interactions with their peers (Borup et al., 2020; Chiu, 2021). Despite asynchronous online learning offering many positive opportunities for the learning process and student achievement, some elements are considered obstructive, namely a lack of social presence (Jiang, 2017; Zou et al., 2021).

The more online learning programs develop in course offerings, the more enrollment in this education modality has been shown to significantly increase (Barbour & Mulcahy, 2008). Therefore, the more society and communities prioritize online learning, the more appealing it tends to be for students. Through the evolution of online learning through technology, it appears that students do not necessarily prioritize social elements like social presence. Van Wart et al. (2020) found that among the factors that students regard as beneficial to the online learning process, the basic technological functionality of a course was the most important, with social components deemed the least important.

Theoretical Context

Besides historical and social elements present in the background of the topic of online education, there are theoretical concepts that are also found throughout the existing research. Self-efficacy, part of social cognitive theory, is prevalent in online learning studies (Cardullo et al., 2021; Hampton et al., 2020; Kundu, 2020; Lauermaun & Hagen, 2021). Perceived self-efficacy is an integral component of education and can majorly impact teaching (Bandura, 1993). When teachers have higher levels of perceived self-efficacy or self-confidence, they are more likely to foster effective learning environments and are more able to persist through challenging situations. Bandura further stated that even a teacher's perceived self-efficacy can have these same valuable effects on the overall educational process. Studies have used self-efficacy to understand instructor satisfaction with online teaching (Hampton et al., 2020) and the online learning experience in general (Kundu, 2020). Zheng et al. (2018) investigated how self-efficacy in learning management systems played a role in instructor satisfaction. Additionally, a good predictor of teachers' successful implementation of technology tools is their level of self-efficacy (Sadaf et al., 2016). Lauermaun and Hagen used self-efficacy to explore how teachers' perceived

self-efficacy impacted student outcomes. Self-efficacy has been used in studies to understand teachers' experiences with remote instruction during the pandemic (Cardullo et al., 2021; Dolighan & Owen, 2021; Hong et al., 2022; Ma et al., 2021) and how it plays a role when educators transition from in-person to virtual teaching (Pierce-Friedman, 2018).

Another popular theoretical framework used to examine online learning is one developed by Koehler and Mishra (2009) called technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge (TPACK). The TPACK framework successfully and efficiently integrates technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge into the educational process. A valuable aspect of this framework is that it strives to provide a theoretical perspective for the successful implementation of technology in the classroom and focuses on practical applications (Koehler & Mishra, 2009). The TPACK framework is unique in that the components do not need to be in constant harmony to prove effective. Studies have used TPACK to understand how technology is infused into the educational process (Soler-Costa et al., 2021) and how TPACK supports collegial communication among educators (Yeh et al., 2021). TPACK has also been used to understand how teachers infuse technology into lessons and for what purpose, for teacher use or student use (Schmid et al., 2021). Cherner and Smith (2017) investigated how to improve TPACK to better prepare 21st-century students for successful post-secondary educational and professional experiences. TPACK has also been studied with how pre-service teachers use technology during their student teaching experiences (Santos & Castro, 2020).

Problem Statement

The problem is that secondary teachers were unprepared to unexpectedly transition to online learning (Barbour, 2022). Two years before the pandemic, it is estimated that a mere 4.8% of K-12 schools offered all courses online, whereas, in 2021 75% of schools in the United States

prepared to be completely online (Roberts, 2021). While researchers have identified a need for professional development (Flores et al., 2018; Hall & Trespalacios, 2019) and training (Gomez et al., 2021; Keefe, 2020), they advocate for additional study of online instruction during the pandemic (Mac Domhnaill et al., 2021; Svrcek et al., 2021). While recent pandemic related studies have found that teachers struggled with student engagement, motivation (An et al., 2021; Cardullo et al., 2021; Francom et al., 2021), and feeling unprepared (Barbour, 2022; Francom et al., 2021; Leech et al., 2020; Trust & Whelan, 2021a), the experiences of secondary teachers were not yet known.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand secondary teachers' experiences with an unexpected transition between in-person teaching and virtual modalities for secondary educators in New York public schools. An unexpected transition to online learning was generally defined as the conversion from in-person teaching to some form of synchronous online instruction out of need rather than desire. The theory that guided this study was Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) transition theory which provided a lens through which to understand the shared experience of making an unplanned transition from face-to-face teaching to online platforms. Discovering the essence of this phenomenon through Schlossberg's transition theory, primarily through the 4 Ss, illuminated ways to better support educators in possible future transitions to online learning, which will also benefit all stakeholders.

Significance of the Study

In 2020, over 80% of school aged students nationwide were receiving their education through some form of remote learning due to mandated school closures (McElrath, 2020). Parents were expected to step into an immediate liaison role to support continued instruction

through virtual means and felt this task to be challenging (Misirli & Ergulec, 2021) and demanding (Pastori et al., 2021). Most parents nationwide have expressed concern that their children were falling behind academically due to face-to-face instruction being suspended and classrooms being converted to distance learning (Horowitz & Igielnik, 2020).

Theoretical

Transitions to online learning using technology have been at the core of numerous educational situations in the last several school years, whether it be for credit recovery options (Mann et al., 2021) or, most recently, emergency remote teaching caused by the pandemic (Dindar et al., 2021; Trust & Whelan, 2021b). Individuals' coping responses can affect how individuals deal with unexpected life transitions (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011). I mainly utilized Schlossberg's 4 Ss from transition theory (self, situation, support, and strategies) as the theoretical basis for this study. The theoretical significance of this study is that it corroborates Schlossberg's transition theory by examining teachers' experiences with the transitional period of in-person to online learning by exploring the self, situation, support, and strategies that enabled them to adapt or struggle with the educational transition.

Empirical

Despite there being ample research in the area of online instruction, this study added to the existing relevant bodies of literature by examining the experiences of secondary teachers transitioning to and from online instruction. This study contributed to the identified need for more understanding of the online instruction components teachers need more training in (Zweig & Stafford, 2016). Exploring secondary teachers' experiences with transitioning to online instruction also extends an understanding of how factors like self-efficacy and classroom goal setting relate to the implementation of technology (Sangkawetai et al., 2018). By utilizing

secondary teachers in this study, I added to the existing understanding of the barriers experienced by pre-service teachers (Dinc, 2019) and in-service teachers (Carver, 2016) who use technology to deliver instruction. Dinc suggested that future research implement face-to-face interviews and focus groups to provide more thorough and generalizable results, which was accomplished through this study. Exploring secondary teachers' experiences with the online transition also contributed to what is known about the existing concerns of online educators (Farmer & West, 2019).

Practical

The practical significance of this study taking place in New York is mainly because this was considered the epicenter of the pandemic in the United States (Thompson et al., 2020). In March 2020, all school districts in New York State were mandated to close and transition to some form of remote learning as a direct result of COVID-19 (New York State Education Department, 2020a). All participants in this study had firsthand experience with the unexpected transition to and from remote learning. Some of them also experienced continuous transitions between in-person and some form of remote instruction in the following school year after mandated school closures. The results of this study provide insight for school districts to be better prepared for possible future unexpected conversions to emergency remote teaching. A weakness expressed in previous research is that focusing only on single institutions to investigate how to better prepare educators for online teaching limits the ability of the findings to be generalizable (Farmer & West, 2019). In this study, I incorporated the perspectives of individuals from varying institutions to gain a more holistic understanding of teachers' experiences during the unexpected transition to online learning and how teachers in the future can more effectively cope with this type of transition. These viewpoints provide a lens into how to better support the

current educational situation. Participants' experiences may provide insight that can be generalized to the greater education population at large by shedding light on ways to affect positive change on a broader scope that can be applied to schools nationwide at all levels. This study may have practical significance for teachers, administrators, districts, and even pre-service teacher training programs.

Research Questions

The goal of the phenomenology approach is to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences shared by a group of individuals, with the ultimate goal of recounting the essence of these shared experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The following research questions align with examining the experiences of secondary teachers during the unexpected transition to and from online learning during a pandemic. Educators have expressed feelings of unpreparedness to cope with this transition. In this research study, I focused on the following research questions:

Central Research Question

What are the shared experiences of secondary teachers who unexpectedly transitioned to and from online learning?

Sub-Question One

What are the experiences of secondary teachers who entered into an unexpected transition to online learning?

Sub-Question Two

What are the experiences of secondary teachers during an unexpected transition to online learning?

Sub-Question Three

What are the experiences of secondary teachers who transitioned back to in-person teaching?

Definitions

1. *Asynchronous Online Learning* – Online learning is not bounded by time or location, and assignments can be completed at any time of the day at the student's pace (Malik et al., 2017).
2. *Bichronous Online Learning* – A mixture of asynchronous and synchronous online learning formats (Martin et al., 2020).
3. *Blended/Hybrid Learning* – Any combination of online learning and in-person teaching (Hrastinski, 2019; Watson, 2008).
4. *Coding* – An essential qualitative analysis technique utilized to understand the data collected (Creswell & Poth, 2018).
5. *Compassion Fatigue* – the negative effect that occurs to individuals who deal with especially negative professional situations or work with distressing professional situations (Stamm, 2010).
6. *Memoing* – A form of data analysis where the researcher makes consistent short notes while reviewing interviews or other data gathered (Creswell & Poth, 2018).
7. *One-to-one* – A policy where students are provided with a mobile device by the school, district, or state (Great Schools Partnership, 2013).
8. *Phenomenology* – A qualitative research approach that examines a phenomenon through the shared lived experiences of multiple individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

9. *Self-efficacy* – An individual’s belief in personal abilities to achieve desired situational outcomes (Bandura, 1977).
10. *Self-regulation* – An intrinsic skill that incorporates students’ ability to maintain motivation and take ownership over their learning (Li et al., 2018; Zimmerman, 1989).
11. *Social Presence* – The component in the educational process where students feel connected to their education, teachers, peers, and their individuality is recognized (Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007); the perception of the citizenry that exists in online learning environments (Tu & McIsaac, 2002).
12. *Synchronous Online Learning* – Online classroom experiences where students have scheduled times to be virtually present through designated technological communication tools (Malik et al., 2017).
13. *Teacher Burnout* – Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization of students, and a reduced sense of accomplishment (Fives et al., 2007; Pietarinen et al., 2013; Schaufeli, 2021).

Summary

There is no denying the monumental educational changes occurring and evolving since the 2019–2020 school year. Within months, a global pandemic affected nearly every aspect of daily life. Education and how it functions was directly impacted in countless ways. In what seemed like overnight, physical schools closed their doors, and teachers were forced to adopt some form of online learning to continue the academic process. The problem I sought to examine in this study was the unpreparedness of secondary teachers who were mandated to transition unexpectedly to online learning during a pandemic. The purpose of this study was to understand secondary teachers’ experiences with an unexpected transition between in-person teaching and virtual modalities for secondary educators in New York public schools. In this study, I sought to

gain insight into teachers' shared lived experiences of this educational conversion with the intent of providing ways to improve the educational process for all stakeholders involved and ultimately improve the learning process.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

In Chapter Two, I discuss the theoretical basis that guides the proposed study. Following the introduction of Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory, a review of current related literature is provided. The following themes have been identified in the literature and will be discussed in Chapter Two: an overview of online learning, issues related to online learning, mental health, teacher training and support, effects on student achievement, and the unexpected transition to online learning. Factors that support or need improvement in the area of online learning are also reviewed.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that formed the foundation of this research study was Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory. I will describe this theoretical framework and how it connects to the phenomenon of secondary teachers' unexpected transition between virtual and in-person teaching in this section. I used the 4 Ss from transition theory as the major lens of this study.

Transition Theory

Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory centers on how adults adapt to transitional circumstances in their lives. Schlossberg recognized that all adults inevitably encounter transitions throughout their lifetime that can occur unexpectedly, predictably, and can be dealt with in very different ways depending on the individual. Transition theory developed out of Schlossberg's realization that individuals are generally anxious about changes that may occur in their lives, whether positive or negative. While many natural transitions occur in childhood (e.g., learning to speak, learning to walk, starting school), transitional life events continue throughout

adulthood. Depending on the individual and their circumstances, the same transition or life change could be experienced in polar opposite ways (e.g., relocation, career change, health changes). Typically, an individual can take anywhere from six months, one year, or even two years to completely move through a transition (Anderson et al., 2012).

Types of Transitions

A transition is defined as any change that impacts an individual's role, relationships, routines, or assumptions (Schlossberg, 2011). It is classified as either an event that is anticipated or unanticipated or a nonevent. Nonevent transitions are those that an individual expected to occur but did not come to fruition. An example of a nonevent would be an individual expecting to receive a job promotion, but it does not materialize. Another example of a nonevent would be an expectation to get married, but the nuptials do not take place. Expected events are typical life occurrences like having children, making a career change, graduating from high school or college, and retiring from a career. Unanticipated events are those that occur but were not planned for. For example, a divorce, a car accident, a family member falling ill, a catastrophic natural disaster, or even a global pandemic may all be considered unanticipated events.

Stages of a Transition and the 4 Ss

Schlossberg (1981) recognized that experiencing life changes may pose challenges and therefore developed transition theory to incorporate a clear way to analyze a transition by distinguishing the type of transition, the extent to which an individual's life has been impacted by the transition, and identifying what stage of the transition the individual is in. There are three distinct stages of transition theory: moving in, moving through, and moving out (Anderson et al., 2012). During the moving in stage of transition theory, individuals experience role changes, new routines, and relationships can change, and it is more of a social learning situation. In this stage,

people are in an orientation-type of phase where they learn new role expectations and begin to acquire knowledge about new norms or procedures. The moving through stage begins when an adult has completed the moving in stage by gaining a solid foundation of whatever new set of norms comprises this new role or situation. This second stage is when individuals may be experiencing difficulties adjusting to a new role or set of expectations. This phase is also thought to be a time of uncertainty, renewal, or even neutrality. In the moving through period, adults navigate how to maintain stability between their new experiences with the other parts of their lives. The final stage of moving out in transition theory is where individuals begin to think about the next steps or goals in the transition. In the moving out phase, adults have absorbed or acclimated to the transition.

Transition theory has been advanced to incorporate the 4 Ss, situation, self, support, and strategies (Schlossberg, 2011). The individual's situation is multifaceted and is related to factors like the trigger of the transition, timing control, and duration of the transition, to name a few. The construct of self pertains to an individual's age or stage of life during a transition. The support construct involves institutions or communities engaged with the transition. The fourth element, strategies, deals with coping mechanisms that assist or change the situation within the transition and those that consider how to manage any stress that may result from the transition.

Despite institutions striving to return to typical schooling in 2021, some districts adopted temporary remote learning in the weeks back to school from holiday breaks (Bethany, 2021; Costello, 2022). The 2021–2022 academic year demonstrated this transition as continuous, with random returns to remote teaching. This educational phenomenon was also explored through educators' beliefs in their selves and the institutional supports that were and continue to be in place during the uncertain educational transition. Individual characteristics, like age and value

orientation, were considered when examining the meaning of the shared experiences of secondary teachers in this unanticipated transition.

Related Literature

The literature review begins with a history of remote education followed by a brief overview of online learning with a discussion of subsequent themes. Features of online learning will be discussed next, followed by mental health. Teacher training and support and the effects of the pandemic will be investigated. I will also identify gaps in the literature my study aims to address.

History of Remote Education

Remote education is a learning situation where the student and the teacher are not physically in the same place (Greener, 2021). It can also be called distance education. This learning style is not new to the world of education and can take many forms. One of the earliest types of remote education was correspondence between students and instructors through the postal service (Gershon, 2020). Remote education has evolved through the last several decades to be almost synonymous with some form of virtual learning.

Distance Learning

Distance learning existed before the invention of the internet and dates back to the 18th century in the New England region of the United States (Gershon, 2020). The first recorded example of remote learning utilized the postal service (Gershon, 2020; Pregowska et al., 2021). In 1728, students were offered weekly lessons that would be sent to them through the mail with the assurance that the quality of the lessons would be as good as if they were participating in person (Gershon, 2020). Additionally, in the 19th century, the postal service was used to implement distance learning at the University of Chicago (Greenway & Vanourek, 2006). In the

early 19th century, the use of mail as the medium of communication in distance learning gave way to radio stations (Gershon, 2020). Some radio stations were even owned by educational institutions and used as a way for professors to speak to students. In the early 20th century, the concept of distance learning continued to evolve, utilizing television to broadcast educational courses. Telecommunication tools like television and the radio gained popularity worldwide during the 20th century in the United States, Spain, and Canada. The implementation of distance learning became more mainstream in the late 20th century (Kentnor, 2015).

Virtual Learning

The advancement of remote learning began with various forms of distance learning to what we now consider virtual learning, which uses the internet as a major method of implementing education. During the 20th century, the state of California established the first virtual high school in the nation (Kennedy & Archambault, 2012). Legislation throughout the United States has also included online learning in policies. Several states in the early 21st century developed legislation policies that declared students must experience at least one form of online learning before graduation (Hart et al., 2019; Kennedy & Archambault, 2012). Since 2016, the United States has invested billions of dollars in e-learning, projected to exceed 240 billion dollars by 2022 (Duffin, 2020).

Overview of Online Learning

Online learning has been an evolving and growing trend in the United States, gaining popularity in the 21st century (Duffin, 2022; Gershon, 2020). Most school-aged students utilize digital resources daily (Duffin, 2022). Besides the widespread use of digital tools, many 21st-century students are learning online. In 2020 there were approximately 15.2 million students enrolled in public high schools nationwide (Think Impact, n.d.), with more than half of these

students learning online (Barnum, 2020). Over half of the student population affected by a transition to online learning proves this area of education warrants investigation into how to better support and improve the aspects of online learning environments.

The 2021–2022 school year began with a plan for public schools to return to some form of normalcy with a focus on prioritizing the safety, health, and well-being of stakeholders (U.S. Department of Education, 2021a). While many school districts have been given back the power to return to in-person instruction (Education Week, 2021), some still offered virtual instruction (District Administration, n.d.) or were transitioning between in-person and virtual instruction as COVID-19 infection rates increase or decline (Amy, 2021; Burbio, 2022; Zalaznick, 2022). Many parents were hesitant to send their students back to the physical classroom and preferred an online option to be continuously available (Nagel, 2021).

Asynchronous Online Learning

Asynchronous online learning is education that happens entirely virtually. The asynchronous online learning style allows the student to log on to complete coursework at any time of the day from anywhere in the world (Malik et al., 2017). Asynchronous online learning is a teaching modality where the teacher does not have to be logged in to the learning management system at the same time as the student. One of the earliest 21st-century examples of asynchronous learning is a massive open online course (MOOC; Zou et al., 2021). MOOCs are free online courses that anyone with an internet connection can access asynchronously and can be used for personal academic advancement, college credit, or to develop professionally (Ed X, n.d.). A popular platform choice for asynchronous virtual learning is Google Classroom (Francom et al., 2021; Moorhouse & Wong, 2022). This unique learning style promotes autonomy, and knowledge may be acquired through a self-regulatory process (Chiu, 2021; Malik

et al., 2017). Asynchronous online learning can be delivered in many different ways and is often viewed as a beneficial style of virtual learning for more intrinsically motivated students who have a high level of self-discipline (Libasin et al., 2021). This online learning style offers a large degree of flexibility which may be viewed as an extremely effective variable in the educational process (Buxton, 2014; Jiang, 2017). Khlaif et al. (2017), through a study of 17 graduate students, confirmed that an asynchronous online learning environment could positively impact student achievement. Accessibility is often a key component of online learning (Francom et al., 2021). Asynchronous online learning is generally viewed as advantageous considering its accessibility and utility. In general, asynchronous formats for virtual learning require less powerful internet access when compared to blended or synchronous formats (Libasin et al., 2021).

Synchronous Online Learning

Synchronous online learning is another style of virtual education. Unlike asynchronous online learning, the synchronous online learning approach maintains a social presence component by requiring learners to be virtually present at specific times and through predetermined communication platforms (Malik et al., 2017). Historically, the first synchronous online learning programs were offered in 1994 (Thompson, 2021). The Computer Assisted Learning Center (CALC), which uses the name, CALCampus in New Hampshire, is credited with providing the first synchronous form of online learning. CALCampus (n.d.) was founded in 1982 and is a private, international institution offering coursework for secondary and post-secondary students in online formats. Despite this institution focusing solely on virtual learning, they provide many learning support resources that are all offered online. These resources include learning centers, conference rooms, online classrooms, office hours with instructors in real-time,

and libraries (CALCampus, n.d.). Unlike asynchronous online learning, a synchronous format provides the social presence element in a virtual classroom (Jiang, 2017). The synchronous format provides a similar educational experience to the typical face-to-face classroom but in an online domain. One of the most common technological applications for synchronous virtual learning is Zoom, where educators teach in real-time (Francom et al., 2021; Moorhouse & Wong, 2022). Zoom is a video-conferencing tool that enables educators to have virtual face-to-face lessons with students by supporting the implementation of synchronous online courses. Francescucci and Rohani (2019) found a synchronous online delivery method to be just as effective as a face-to-face learning environment for 698 students enrolled in an introductory marketing course. Future research is needed to include other demographic groups and also other pupil circumstances. While online education for higher education (Alhazbi & Hasan, 2021; Francescucci & Rohani, 2019; Iyer & Chapman, 2021) and K–12 education (Mac Domhnaill et al., 2021; Moorhouse & Wong, 2022; Svrcek et al., 2021) have been substantially investigated, the experiences of secondary teachers in New York State who continuously transitioned between online learning and face-to-face teaching have not yet been explored. For this study, I investigated the experiences of secondary teachers who transitioned from in-person teaching to blended and synchronous instruction.

Blended/Hybrid Learning

There are a variety of formats that fall under the category of online learning. Any education that incorporates in-person teaching in conglomeration with some online element is considered blended, or also called hybrid, learning (Hrastinski, 2019; Watson, 2008). In higher education, before the pandemic, this was a common style of online learning implemented (Libasin et al., 2021). It has been found that students' abilities to self-regulate in blended

learning may predict successful academic achievement (Kintu et al., 2017). Blended learning could offer students a preferential combination of flexibility and personal interaction, which can be viewed as important educational components (Jiang, 2017).

The research on blended learning is mixed. Interestingly, Reed et al. (2019) found that implementing a blended format of face-to-face teaching with synchronous online techniques did not necessarily increase the academic achievement of fourth-grade students ($N = 92$). On the other hand, a longitudinal study consisting of 1,911 students from kindergarten through fifth grade in the treatment group found that implementing what is known as a strengths-based blended personalized learning (SBPL) model was an effective approach that improved student achievement in mathematics, reading, and language (McCarthy et al., 2020). The SBPL model utilizes a blend of traditional in-person teaching and incorporates numerous technological resources that promote flexibility and personalized learning. Considering that blended instruction can have mixed results, a gap exists to discover if it has been an educational success in the phenomenon of this study of teaching experiences during the recent educational transition in New York.

Bichronous Online Learning

A common form of online learning is a mixed format comprising both asynchronous and synchronous features. This type of online learning is called bichronous online learning (Martin et al., 2020). Students at the high school level tend to experience an increase in knowledge when learning through a combination of synchronous and asynchronous online approaches in contrast to a traditional face-to-face setting (Williams et al., 2020). Dually, Williams et al. found that a mixture of synchronous and asynchronous online learning greatly benefits the educational process and supports student achievement. Students enrolled in an online course incorporating

both synchronous feedback sessions on assignments with teachers and an asynchronous aspect where students had the flexibility to complete course requirements anywhere and at any time proved to increase student knowledge. A study of 73 elementary and secondary English language teachers found that using a combination of asynchronous and synchronous formats resulted in the most favorable learning outcomes for students (Moorhouse & Wong, 2022). Bichronous online learning is not without limitations. Martin et al. pointed out that implementing a combination of asynchronous and synchronous formats can still pose technological challenges or time issues with the synchronous aspect.

Features of Online Learning

There are characteristics of online instruction that pertain to students and educators. Consistent concepts in the literature related to online learning are self-regulation (Luo et al., 2017; Williams et al., 2020) and flexibility (Lou et al., 2017; Ricker et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2020). A final feature prevalent in online learning is teacher self-efficacy (Azukas, 2019; Howard et al., 2021; Yang, 2021). Online learning was once considered an academic tool to support the educational process. Considering the state of education and the drastic changes that have occurred over the last few years, online learning can now be discussed as a vital resource imperative to the educational process at every grade level.

Self-Regulation

One of the common themes found in literature relating to students participating in online learning is self-regulation. Self-regulation is an intrinsic skill that incorporates students' ability to maintain motivation and take ownership of their learning (Li et al., 2018; Zimmerman, 1989), especially in online learning (Mou, 2021). The ability of students to self-regulate when it comes to learning online may also affect student success (Kintu et al., 2017; Luo et al., 2017).

Alhazbi and Hasan (2021) found that self-regulation skills are indeed necessary for students who learn in an online learning format, either asynchronously or synchronously. Student chronotype may play a role in the self-regulation process for students participating in virtual learning (Luo et al., 2017). Chronotype is an individual's biological clock. An advantageous component of asynchronous online learning is the ability for students to listen to their physiology in terms of choosing what time of day to log in to work on schoolwork to be most efficient (Luo et al., 2017). The options for self-regulation and choice in asynchronous online learning allow students to adhere to their inner physiological system to enter the learning process when they are the most productive.

Self-regulation skills are not innate and therefore can pose a challenge for some students in achieving positive learning outcomes. Self-regulation strategies are sometimes minimally used by students and are skills that may need to be intentionally taught (Pedrotti & Nistor, 2019). Students develop self-regulation skills through educators' support, which can also pose a professional challenge to some educators (Lock et al., 2017). Additionally, when students have lower self-regulation abilities, a transition to online learning can further diminish these skills (Berger et al., 2021).

Flexibility

Asynchronous online learning allows students to choose when to log in to work on academic assignments, which could positively impact student performance (Lou et al., 2017; Ricker et al., 2020). The flexibility of asynchronous online learning programs may provide a smoother adjustment to continue the learning process based on an individual's current personal living situation. The concept of flexibility is often cited as a perceived benefit and factor that improves online learning experiences (Williams et al., 2020).

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is a common talking point in the realm of education. Teacher self-efficacy is described as the level of confidence an individual has in personal teaching abilities (Bandura, 1977). Even a person's perceived self-efficacy can greatly influence the level of success that can be accomplished, especially in challenging circumstances. Self-efficacy has been shown to positively correlate with teaching. In other words, the more self-efficacy, or even perceived self-efficacy, an educator possesses, the more success the teacher can potentially see within the classroom.

When teachers' self-efficacy is low, student achievement can be negatively impacted (Prewett & Whitney, 2021). Teacher self-efficacy is also a valued attribute that can impact the online learning environment (Azukas, 2019; Howard et al., 2021; Yang, 2021). There is a strong positive correlation between teachers' levels of self-efficacy in online capabilities when utilizing virtual technology support (Dolighan & Owen, 2021). In other words, when teachers feel more confident in utilizing digital resources like virtual technology, they tend to be more successful in implementation. Additionally, Sadaf et al. (2016) found that self-efficacy is a good predictor of teachers' successful implementation of technology tools. The converse would also be true in implementing virtual technology. Teacher self-efficacy may play a role in teachers' lack of confidence in implementing technological resources efficiently while teaching online, as when an individual's level of self-efficacy is low, this can cause avoidance behaviors, especially when a negative outcome is expected (Bandura, 1977).

Educators experience various obstacles to self-efficacy and teaching with technology. When teachers do not regularly incorporate technology in lessons, their self-efficacy in this area tends to diminish (Ottenbreit-Leftwich et al., 2018). Reciprocally, when educators had low self-

confidence in their technological abilities, they were less likely to implement technology before it became an undeniably necessary teaching tool (Huck & Zhang, 2021). Even for teachers who were trained in technology use in the classroom and had field experiences relating to implementing technology, external challenges may sometimes prove too difficult when it comes to incorporating technology in the classroom (Ottenbreit-Leftwich et al., 2018).

Some extrinsic obstacles that may diminish teachers' self-efficacy in technology use may be the school culture, access to resources, or the stresses of beginning a career in education (Ottenbreit-Leftwich et al., 2018). When teachers have an online community as a source of support, their self-efficacy can increase (Azukas, 2019). When educators perceive that their technology needs are being met and they are positively engaged with their institution's learning management system, they have an increased level of self-efficacy when it comes to producing positive learning opportunities for their students (Cardullo et al., 2021). Furthermore, when teachers' self-efficacy increases, student achievement is also positively affected (Bandura, 1993).

Mental Health

Historically, stakeholders did not believe students' mental health was the responsibility of schools, nor did they think mental health was directly connected to education (Adelman & Taylor, 2006). In terms of diagnosable mental disorders (e.g., attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, bipolar disorder, eating disorders, anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder), in the early 21st-century, between 12% and 22% of school-aged children fell into this category. Nearly 20 years later, these percentages have risen. For example, when examining children between the ages of three and 17, 78.1% of children have been treated for depression, 59.3% of children have been treated for anxiety, and 53.5% of children have been treated for behavior disorders (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021).

Students With Disabilities in New York

In the public school system, students diagnosed with mental disorders are classified as students with disabilities. Over the last two academic years, both Nassau and Suffolk counties in Long Island, New York, have maintained a consistent percentage of students with disabilities enrolled in public schools. In the K–12 public schools in Nassau County, students with disabilities enrollment increased from 13% in the 2019–2020 school year (New York State Education Department, 2020b) to 14% in the 2020–2021 school year (New York State Education Department, 2021a). And in Suffolk County, students with disabilities enrollment remained the same at 16% for the 2019–2020 (New York State Education Department, 2020c) and 2020–2021 academic years (New York State Education Department, 2021b).

Student Well-Being

The cause for concern over students' mental health began to increase before COVID-19 forced school closures worldwide (Becker, 2021; Hertz & Barrios, 2020). With the swiftness of the transition to remote teaching, teachers and students had little time to prepare, let alone mentally process what this learning situation was going to be like. The majority of Generation Z teens, specifically between the ages of 13 and 17, feel they have been negatively impacted by the pandemic (American Psychological Association, 2020), which makes it no surprise that Generation Z has shown an increase in feelings of stress and are also more likely to express their mental health as below standard (Bethune, 2019). Suicide in school-aged children has become the second leading cause of death for this demographic (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2017).

In the current state of education, students' mental health has never been more crucial to address. School-aged children's lives were turned upside down, from elementary levels up to

higher education. Children's social activity with one another abruptly ended unexpectedly and rapidly. Students' social lives were put on hold, causing a major interference with their emotional development. There have been damaging effects on students' overall well-being and mental health caused by unexpected school closures (Huck & Zang, 2021; Rao & Rao, 2021). These major disruptions have adversely affected students' mental health by causing increased feelings of depression and unhappiness (Barnett, 2021). Students also self-reported that they experienced higher levels of anxiety and depression during the pandemic, specifically citing mandated social isolation as the root cause (Barnett, 2021; Jones, 2020). The American Psychological Association (2021) found that teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17, compared to other generational groups, were the most likely to express a sense of diminished mental health caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The high school population post-pandemic is returning to school with feelings of uncertainty and revealing feelings of depression in the 2020–2021 school year. To ensure the academic needs of students are met, the emotional component must be included, so the whole child is served in the educational process. Almost two years after the COVID-19 pandemic began, a major concern of the majority of K–12 teachers is the mental health of students (SMART Technologies, 2021).

Educators have traditionally focused on having one primary job, and that was to teach students. But, when students are underachieving academically, mental health should be included in the discussion, as when students are affected by psychosocial difficulties, they usually manifest into emotional issues and behavior problems, which ultimately lead to diminished academic achievement (Adelman & Taylor, 2006). This factor of student mental health has now been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and has exacerbated stress, anxiety, and feelings of depression in school-aged students (Barnett, 2021; Bethune, 2019). Returning students from

school closures need more support in schools dealing with their mental health (Schwartz et al., 2021).

Social Connection

Social connection is an educational element that can impact students' mental well-being and is an important feature of the online classroom that needs to be prioritized by educators (Hehir et al., 2021). In general, when education shifts from the traditional style of in-person teaching to the digital world, the amount of social connection also changes (Nguyen et al., 2022). Social connection is often expressed online as how people maintain contact or relationships digitally. Some common digital ways individuals maintain a social connection in the 21st century are through platforms like Facebook, email, or even text messages. Communication through digital means like email and social media tends to diminish social connectedness between people more than when communication is done through video or audio phone calls (Nguyen et al., 2021). Synchronous features in online learning may support the strengthening of the social connectedness component (Hehir et al., 2021).

Social Emotional Learning

One of the most prominent and widespread initiatives developed to support students' mental health was initiated by an organization known as the collaborative for academic, social, and emotional learning (CASEL) group. CASEL (n.d.-a) created guidelines to educate the entire child by not just focusing on academics but also addressing the social and emotional learning (SEL) needs of students. CASEL was created over 25 years ago to incorporate the emotional needs of students with the mission of making SEL a valued element in every child's education. SEL approaches to schooling are all-encompassing, meaning they focus on instilling content knowledge and addressing students' social and emotional needs. SEL supports individuals'

overall mental well-being, supporting academic achievement (Varghese & Natsuaki, 2021). In other words, academic achievement improves when a student is in a healthy mental state.

The SEL framework consists of five specific domains that interact between classrooms, schools, families/caregivers, and communities (CASEL, n.d.-b). The five domains are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These five areas of the SEL framework apply to individuals as young as preschool and adulthood. Self-awareness is defined as how an individual thinks about who they are as a person, including cultural ideas and belief in capabilities to accomplish goals. This can all influence how individuals behave. The next SEL domain is self-management. This area directly applies to how an individual deals with and regulates all the feelings and beliefs related to their self-awareness. This domain especially applies to how individuals deal with stressful situations to achieve an individual or shared objective. Social awareness deals with how individuals view others rather than themselves. This area focuses on things like empathy and understanding varying viewpoints from your own but also includes how people succeed at feeling accepted by others. Relationship skills consider how individuals interact with one another effectively to form close friendships, communicate constructively, and cope with conflict when it arises. The final domain is responsible decision-making that considers the aforementioned SEL elements. Responsible decision-making includes rational thinking, considering the consequences of certain decisions, and how individuals' decisions can potentially affect themselves and others.

The mandated reduction of social contact between all people, including schools, ignited a renewed prioritization of SEL skills in schools and policy (Murphy et al., 2021; Varghese & Natsuaki, 2021). Teachers now need to be well-versed in content areas and how to prioritize student well-being when teaching online (Danchikov et al., 2021). The inclusion of SEL skills

into online learning is essential to promote student well-being, mainly because in-person interaction is difficult to replicate in the online domain (Murphy et al., 2021). It is feared that SEL skills have not been as effective in supporting students' mental well-being as a direct result of the pandemic (Varghese & Natsuaki, 2021). Varghese and Natsuaki go as far as to say that policy should be implemented incorporating SEL programs in synchronous and asynchronous online learning formats. Given the continual transition between in-person and virtual learning, ensuring SEL needs are also considered will undoubtedly benefit the educational process.

Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Skills

Contemporary educational institutions are responsible for so much more than instilling academic knowledge in students. Another major component that is now included in the 21st-century academic process is teaching social, emotional, and behavioral (SEB) skills. SEB skills are defined as students' abilities to be involved in healthy social relationships, to set reasonable life goals, and maintain an appropriate level of emotional stability (Soto et al., 2021). More than half of K–12 educators stated concern over a substantial loss in students' social and emotional progress due to the unexpected transition to remote learning (Dickler, 2021). Certain SEB skills are thought to be more important than others at different stages in a person's life (Soto et al., 2021). Adolescents will most likely focus on social aspects of life, like making friends or finding a boyfriend or girlfriend. Over the last several years, adolescents were forced to cut off all social contact with peers and anyone outside their immediate family. Additionally, any after-school activities were put on hold due to the global pandemic. SEB skills (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.), along with SEL (Li et al., 2021), have been notably affected during the transitions to and from remote learning due to the pandemic.

Compassion Fatigue

Another dimension to the mental health discussion is something called compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue is described as the negative effect that occurs to individuals who deal with especially negative professional situations or work with distressing professional situations (Stamm, 2010). Stamm described two domains of compassion fatigue: the feeling of professional burnout and experiencing incidental hardship through others professionally. It has been found that educators with more experience, tend to have increased feelings of compassion fatigue in the form of burnout (Yang, 2021). In other words, the more veteran a teacher is in the profession, the more sense of burnout they have than their more novice colleagues. Compassion fatigue has also been linked to teacher self-efficacy. When teachers have a higher level of online teaching self-efficacy, those educators have less compassion fatigue. Additionally, Yang found that the more adept a teacher is at SEL competencies, the more self-efficacy in online teaching exists, which ultimately helps to prevent compassion fatigue. Over the last few years, teachers have been experiencing unexpected professional situations that have produced stress on both them and the students they teach, necessitating higher levels of empathy and sympathy. Considering the continual transitions from in-person to online learning, compassion fatigue would be an undeniable part of the delivery of education.

Teacher Burnout

Another dimension of mental health in education that is directly linked to instructors is something called teacher burnout. The concept of burnout was first introduced by Freudenberger (1974) and was defined as when an individual is physically and emotionally exhausted due to their work environment. Freudenberger developed this term after observing a group of people volunteer their time until they were mentally exhausted. The term burnout in the educational

world is referred to as teacher burnout. Teacher burnout is defined as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization of students, and a reduced sense of accomplishment (Fives et al., 2007; Pietarinen et al., 2013; Schaufeli, 2021). The occurrence of teacher burnout is a notable issue that affects schools (Herman et al., 2018; Madigan & Kim, 2021). Interestingly, Madigan and Kim found that teacher burnout diminishes student motivation and achievement but does not necessarily negatively affect student mental health.

Significant factors that can curb or lead to teacher burnout are the administrative and parental support levels that exist for teachers at their institutions (Farber, 1984; Pressley, 2021). Social support within schools can also manage teacher burnout (Farber, 2000). In a study conducted on 4,567 primary teachers, lack of support was highlighted as an issue contributing to teacher burnout (Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021). Teacher burnout can begin as early as pre-service days during student teaching experiences (Fives et al., 2007). Student teachers have expressed that even a perceived level of school support can lead to teacher burnout (Fives et al., 2007; Lindqvist et al., 2021).

Teacher burnout is a gradual process that does not occur overnight (Fives et al., 2007), and it also continues in the 21st century (Farber, 2000). Another dimension often explored related to teacher burnout includes strategies to cope with the onset of things like emotional exhaustion, depersonalization in students, and a reduced sense of accomplishment. One way to combat the onset of teacher burnout is to focus on ways to reduce stress, like physical exercise (Farber, 2000). Another coping strategy that may reduce stress and lead to less teacher burnout is practicing meditation (Valosek et al., 2021). The mental well-being of teachers is now viewed as a top priority and responsibility of the institutions they serve. Providing teachers with coping strategies through offering well-being programs to benefit their mental health is believed to

reduce feelings of burnout (Pressley, 2021; Valosek et al., 2021). Utilizing both self and co-regulatory strategies in a professional capacity supports the prevention of teacher burnout (Lindqvist et al., 2021; Pietarinen et al., 2013; Pyhältö et al., 2021). Some self-regulatory strategies that can manage teacher burnout are not bringing work home and setting boundaries to ensure a teaching career does not dictate life (Lindqvist et al., 2021; Pietarinen et al., 2013), taking breaks, and prioritizing tasks (Lindqvist et al., 2021). Some co-regulatory strategies that can curtail teacher burnout are striving for collegial support (Lindqvist et al., 2021), intentionally sharing responsibilities with colleagues, and problem-solving with colleagues (Pietarinen et al., 2013).

The COVID-19 pandemic is now being examined in terms of teacher burnout. Current factors that teachers are experiencing from teaching during the pandemic that contribute to burnout are general anxiety, present teaching anxiety, anxiety with communicating with parents, and administrative support (Pressley, 2021). Interestingly, in a study of 359 K–12 teachers who have experienced teaching during the pandemic, factors like years of service or instruction type did not positively or negatively affect teacher burnout. Weißenfels et al. (2022) also conducted a study of 92 primary and secondary teachers who experienced teaching during the pandemic and found that burnout components of depersonalization and lack of accomplishment increased from where they were before COVID-19. Emotional exhaustion is the factor that usually occurs first in the process of burnout, and interestingly, it did not appear to be affected by COVID-19.

Teacher Training and Support

Teacher training and support are integral elements of the teaching profession that significantly affect both educators and students on the receiving end of those practices. These crucial pieces to the educational process must be explored concerning in-service and pre-service

teachers. Most recently, teachers felt an immense sense of unpreparedness to teach online, especially given such a short time to develop effective virtual learning environments (Boltz et al., 2021; Huck & Zang, 2021; Tysinger et al., 2020). Technology has often been considered more of an extra resource than an imperative teaching tool. Commonly, some teachers traditionally view information, communication, and technology (ICT) as mere tools to be used for presentation purposes (Bate, 2010).

Technology Training and Implementation

Other prominent elements of online teaching are the notions of training and support. Despite many classrooms nationwide being sufficiently equipped with modern technology, an overwhelming number of teachers are not versed enough to utilize these resources effectively (Mundy et al., 2012). Many educators have been known to be sufficient in operating a computer for personal use or minimal professional tasks within the classroom, but these resources are not implemented fully in the delivery of instruction regularly (Huck & Zang, 2021). This has consequently contributed to teachers experiencing difficulties implementing online learning over the last few years. A common feeling among teachers, regarding technological resources, is that of being overwhelmed (Trust & Whalen, 2020). Feeling overwhelmed could be why many expensive technological resources are being misused or not used at all. Another possible obstacle to efficient technology use in the classroom is insufficient time to prepare lessons incorporating ICT tools (Burçin Hamutoğlu & Basarmak, 2020). Unfortunately, more often than not, when creating K–12 online courses, accessibility is not prioritized (McAlvage & Rice, 2018). Additionally, many professional development sessions and training have traditionally focused on improving the in-person learning experience instead of an online learning format (Francom et al., 2021). Lack of preparation in pre-service and in-service teacher programs has consistently been

discussed in the literature and has been shown to be a real barrier in the online educational process (Dhillon & Murray, 2021).

With the unexpected transition to and from virtual learning, there has been the stark realization that for teachers to provide meaningful learning opportunities for students and keep them engaged in virtual lessons, they must be trained in using technology effectively (Camacho & Legare, 2021). The sudden occurrence of COVID-19 allowed for little to no preparation for schools to initiate the conversion of traditional face-to-face teaching to online learning (Huck & Zang, 2021). The swiftness of the pandemic left insufficient preparation time for teachers to deliver instruction online or even allow schools to adequately develop online learning platforms. There is a strong consensus that teachers' lack of preparation to teach online has contributed to learning shortfalls in students (Bailey et al., 2021; Francom et al., 2021; Middleton, 2020). When institutions are not prepared to teach online, attempting an online transition, especially rapidly during an emergency, will naturally lead to challenges. When teachers have insufficient training in the area of technology, student learning, motivation, and achievement are inevitably impacted (Zweig & Stafford, 2016).

Preparing Educators

Over the last academic year and continuing today, technology is now a necessity in simply delivering education to millions of secondary students. The current educational situation caused by the global pandemic has revealed a sense of urgency when preparing teachers for the online teaching world. It is now proven crucial to incorporate technology and online elements into all teaching aspects (Howard et al., 2021; Shamir-Inbal & Blau, 2021). Many educators have stated that they were ill-prepared in their pre-service years to effectively incorporate technology into delivering meaningful instruction (Huck & Zang, 2021). It is pivotal to provide more

substantial pre-service education programs that better support future educators to be more equipped to implement technology in the contemporary classroom, especially in synchronous and asynchronous education (Bonk, 2020; Foulger et al., 2017). The more experience educators have with online teaching correlates to a higher perception of readiness to teach online (Howard et al., 2021). Interestingly, a common theme found throughout the literature regarding student issues was flexibility. This was also perceived as a benefit to pre-service teachers who prepared for the classroom through synchronous methods (Woodcock et al., 2015). Additionally, Woodcock et al. found that this type of teacher preparation program also increased self-efficacy.

Teaching Environment

There are many misconceived notions or falsehoods believed by teachers regarding virtual learning (Barbour & Harrison, 2016). These misconceptions can negatively impact student achievement. Providing an online collegial circle of support amongst online teachers could help to alleviate these misunderstandings and falsehoods (Azukas, 2019). Much like the environment plays a factor in student success, so does the environment affect the success of teachers. When teachers believe they are supported and working in a safe environment, their self-efficacy is higher (Reaves & Cozzens, 2018). Perceptions of a safe work environment also led to higher self-efficacy, supporting increased student achievement.

Effects of the Pandemic

One of education's penultimate goals is to support students' overall growth and development. It is the responsibility of educational institutions to not only instill academic knowledge in students, but also teach children how to problem solve, develop research skills, nurture healthy social relationships, be creative, and now more than ever, utilize technology in an academic capacity regularly. Unfortunately, it has been reported by over 97% of educators that

there has been a substantial amount of learning lost by students who experienced the unexpected transition to remote learning due to the pandemic (Business Wire, 2021). The majority of teachers have been most worried about the enlarged gap between struggling and high-achieving students for the return to the 2021–2022 academic school year.

Student Achievement

It would be impossible to discuss related literature on online education and ignore the reality of substantial student achievement gaps directly influenced by the tumultuous era of teaching and learning during a pandemic. With the unexpected urgency created by the pandemic situation that forced school closures nationwide, addressing student achievement gaps is essential. Huck and Zang (2021) stated that the forced closure of schools during the pandemic perpetuated already existing achievement gaps among students. More than 50% of public school teachers noticed a substantial amount of learning loss and also a diminished growth of social-emotional learning, all due to the pandemic (Dickler, 2021). Unfortunately, teachers across the country gauge that students spent substantially less time on their schooling, possibly even by half, directly resulting from pandemic school closures (Gewertz, 2020). It was projected that students returning for the 2020–2021 school year began with approximately 35% fewer gains than usual in the area of reading and, on average, 43% fewer gains in the area of mathematics (Kuhfeld et al., 2020). Engzell et al. (2020) found that students made scarce, if any, progress in academic achievement during the time spent learning from home in the early months of 2020. It is worth noting that a negative impact on student achievement gaps was not always the norm. A study conducted by Spitzer and Musslick (2021) that analyzed data from more than 2,500 K–12 students tracked their progress in calculating mathematics problems through a software program before and during school closures. Interestingly, it was found that not only did student

performance improve during mandatory school closures, but also lower-performing students showed more of an improvement in ability level than their counterparts. In other words, the study showed the 2020 school closures to be more beneficial to below-average students in mathematics than for typically higher-achieving students.

A gap in the literature remains to explore further what learning methods were implemented during the unexpected school closures that either widened the achievement gap for students or benefited some students' achievement (Goudeau et al., 2021). Also, more research is needed to discover how much learning has been lost by students due to school closures. Additionally, the results are mixed in identifying whether in-person teaching or virtual learning is more beneficial to student achievement (Huck & Zang, 2021). Therefore, a gap remains in the literature to further examine teachers' experiences with the transition between in-person and virtual learning in secondary educational institutions and how they are dealing with these impacts. More specifically, my study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' shared experiences with the phenomenon of the continuous unexpected educational transition and how they have been dealing with the various impacts of these experiences.

Most experts in the field of education nationwide agreed that the potential for schools to return to pre-pandemic functioning was not probable until the 2021–2022 academic year (Olneck-Brown, 2021). Unfortunately, this still did not occur. Schools remained in a continual transitional state during the 2021–2022 academic year. Oregon schools transitioned back to remote learning in January 2022 (Ehrlich, 2022; Sadiq, 2022). In Chicago, classes were altogether canceled in early 2022 due to negotiations between teachers and the district over COVID-19 concerns (Foody & Tareen, 2022). Detroit school districts returned to online learning after the winter holiday (Williams, 2022). With the occurrence of new COVID-19 strains, public

schools in New York continued to believe that remote teaching was not entirely over. In early January 2022, some New York schools switched to remote learning due to staff shortages related to a new strain (Hanna & Stuart, 2022). Some schools on Long Island, New York, opted to return to remote teaching during the first week after the winter break amidst the new COVID-19 strain (Failla, 2022). Additionally, many school districts maintained strict guidelines for students to follow if they tested positive for the virus and had to adhere to these parameters to return to in-person learning. Students had to stay home if they show any COVID-19 symptoms and were not permitted to return to school until they were symptom-free for at least three days (Massapequa Public Schools, 2022). Additionally, if a student tested positive for the virus, they had stay home and quarantine for five days. These recent strict guidelines prove this to be a current educational phenomenon that was still occurring two years after the onset of the pandemic and warrants further research into teachers' experiences transitioning between teaching in-person and online.

Assessments

Educational institutions have traditionally implemented some way of assessing students on knowledge or skills gained. Assessments can take various forms, namely, informal, formal, summative, or formative. As of 2001, with the introduction of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, there was more of an emphasis on high stakes testing in education by making assessments mandatory in schools (Duffy et al., 2008). The purpose of this emphasis on mandating assessments was to provide a way for schools to gather data on student progress and to have some course of action to hold schools accountable for student learning. In fact, with the implementation of mandated state exams two decades ago, they have been shown to support student success in numerous ways. High-stakes exams encourage students and educators to remain focused, goal orientated, and enable institutions to maintain structured and clear

educational programs that promote student success (Gulek, 2003). When looking at student test scores and future success, Chetty et al. (2014) found a positive correlation between students with highly effective teachers and the likelihood of attending higher education and eventually receiving higher salaries. High-stakes exams also give students hard data on educational results and progress (Gulek, 2003). Having tangible evidence of academic success, enable students to be stronger candidates when applying for future jobs or higher education institutions. Despite this being the early rationale for high-stakes assessments, these data-driven tests have become unpopular in the teaching realm. In a study of 379 pre-service teachers, when given a choice, there was a majority preference to teach in a school environment with low test pressure and high student motivation (Nichols & Brewington, 2020). Teachers affect the future of students in more ways than just test scores. Teachers can influence student absenteeism and suspensions, which can impact students' future life outcomes (Jackson, 2018).

Astonishingly, after over 20 years of high-stakes testing being a major focal point of K-12 public education in the United States, all exams were canceled in 2020 due to the educational disruptions of the global pandemic (Strauss, 2020). This was not a local occurrence unique to the United States. Globally, external exams traditionally taken through the British curriculum were also canceled in 2020 (Wenham & Lee, 2022). Over the last couple of academic years, while students were forced to learn from home, this also impacted the implementation of standardized tests to be held as they usually do throughout an academic school year. Many state leaders across the country were proponents of granting exemptions to current students for any high-stakes exams that are federally mandated, citing the forced and unexpected interference in education as the justification (Olneck-Brown, 2021). Thus, the nation canceled all state assessments that would have normally been held in 2020. Despite the belief that students returned to the 2020–

2021 school year with less than two-thirds of what they usually progress with in terms of knowledge attained annually, the U.S. Department of Education declined to grant more testing waivers. The U.S. Department of Education stated that they would not include any data from the 2019–2020 school year when evaluating schools' accountability ratings (Singer, 2020). Dually, many higher education institutions waived the scholastic aptitude test (SAT), and the American college test (ACT) requirements for incoming 2020 students (Jaschik, 2020). Interestingly, since this educational disruption continued into the 2021–2022 school year, it is no surprise that high-stakes exams continued to be waived or exempted in 2021. In the spring of 2021, Florida issued an emergency order issuing a state exam waiver to all potential high school graduates (Florida Department of Education, 2021). Based on this educational transition occurring over several years, the state of New York also continued to submit requests for waivers for standardized exams at the high school level (New York State Education Department, 2021c).

Accessibility and the Digital Divide

Many consider the 21st century a time when everyone has access to internet capabilities. Unfortunately, this is not the case. It is estimated that only 4.1 billion people out of approximately 7.5 billion people worldwide are connected to the internet (Magomedov et al., 2020). As of 2019, about 86.6% of households in the United States had an internet connection (Johnson, 2021), and just over 85% of United States households had high-speed internet (Statista, n.d.). The mandated home instructions began in early 2020. Based on these figures, nearly 15% of households did not have access to the internet or high-speed internet. In New York State, 250 million households did not have broadband access, and 13.8% of the New York State population did not have an internet subscription in their home (Taddeo, 2021). Therefore, this educational modality posed real challenges for a portion of the United States population and

a considerable portion of the people in New York State. Because nearly every level of schooling was forced to transition to online learning unexpectedly, these statistics reveal the harsh reality that many students could not access virtual classes while being mandated to learn online at home.

In-service teachers, pre-service teachers, and students all cite the inability to access technology as a serious challenge to the educational process (Bai, 2019; Trust & Whalen, 2021a). Additionally, access to technology and the internet have historically been typical challenges in the online learning experience (Carrillo & Flores, 2020). Discussing educational issues in the 21st century will often include the phrase 21st-century skills. This phrase can be defined as the skillset students need to be successful in the 21st century (Great Schools Partnership, 2016). This educational phrase, without question, includes technology. Unfortunately, in the discussion of 21st-century skills, a very real digital divide affects the online educational process. Lack of access, affordability, and unequal access to devices are all elements of the digital divide (Kelly & Sisneros, 2020). The multidimensional digital divide can also negatively contribute to student achievement gaps. This element of the online education discussion has the attention of policymakers nationwide.

The ability to have the option of online learning as a solution to mandatory school closures was advantageous. But the accessibility component of the digital divide was something that students experienced nationwide at all grade levels (Asher, 2021). For students to learn virtually, they must have access to digital resources like the internet and a mobile device that they can use to learn online. If students lack access to the technological resources necessary to participate in online instruction, this can impede remote learning (Goudeau et al., 2021). Additionally, depending on the style of virtual learning that institutions use can impact the accessibility a student has to participate in the learning experience constructively. Real-time live

teaching online requires a stronger internet connection than a more autonomous online learning design where students log on and complete coursework at their own pace (Libasin et al., 2021). When comparing asynchronous to synchronous virtual learning, synchronous online learning requires more internet bandwidth than an asynchronous format. To implement a beneficial online learning experience, individuals need specific software packages, some mobile devices, and, most importantly, a reliable internet connection that can support various learning management platforms (Magomedov et al., 2020).

Positive Impacts

Despite the educational disruption of unexpected school closures generally consisting of negative discussions and implications, educators and students have experienced some clear positive impacts. While much of the literature highlights the lack of support given to teachers during this emergency transition, Francom et al. (2021) found that some teachers felt they did receive adequate support from their schools and districts that improved their online teaching experiences. Francom et al. sent a survey to 15,341 Mississippi and South Dakota teachers. The 388 surveys received back indicated teachers took the initiative to become self-directed in learning the necessary technological tools needed to transition to online teaching. This unexpected transition would not have been possible without the use of technology. One of the most positive impacts of this unplanned conversion to online learning was simply that an option existed to continue the educational process (Magomedov et al., 2020). When comparing upper-grade-level teachers to lower-grade level teachers, the higher the grade level the teachers were, the more adaptable they tended to be to the unexpected transition to online teaching (Jelińska & Paradowski, 2021). Additionally, many teachers expressed that they planned to continue to use various technological tools that supported the overall learning of their students (Francom et al.,

2021). This forced transition could have been the technological push educators needed to fully immerse in and welcome practical technological tools into daily instruction.

Summary

Over 90% of the student population globally has been affected by the recent pandemic, with technology generally being the immediate solution to continue the educational process (Crompton et al., 2021). Much research has already been done on online learning and its importance on student factors like motivation and engagement (Cardullo et al., 2021). A new focus of online learning research has been emerging due to the unexpected transition to online learning over the last few years. This transition has illuminated preparedness, institutional support, mental well-being, and accessibility issues. Educators have overwhelmingly expressed feelings of unpreparedness and the need for more training under the extreme circumstances in which they were forced to transition to online learning (Camacho & Legare, 2021; Danchikov et al., 2021; Francom et al., 2021; Magomedov et al., 2020). Overall, student well-being has also risen as a major concern due to this unplanned transition (Barnett, 2021; Murphy et al., 2021; Soto et al., 2021; Varghese & Natsuaki, 2021). This educational phenomenon is still occurring and will continue to impact society indefinitely (Saboo-wala & Manghirmalani Mishra, 2021).

More research is needed to identify how teaching strategies have changed due to the educational transition caused by the pandemic (Huck & Zhang, 2021; Svrcek et al., 2021) and also to investigate the long-term effects of the unexpected transition to virtual learning (Mac Domhnaill et al., 2021). Much of the current research has been conducted in the preliminary stages of learning during a pandemic (Bond, 2020). It has also been cited that it generally takes two full years for students to recover instructional time missed due to a natural disaster (Harris & Larsen, 2018). The global pandemic could be considered a natural disaster because it occurred

unexpectedly and significantly affected the entire educational world, causing students a disruption in their typical daily learning. My study furthers research in this area by gaining insight into teachers' experiences with this transition two years after the onset of the pandemic. My study may narrow a gap in the literature by continuing to research teachers' recent experiences with this transition. The findings of my study may support improvements in professional practice in the field of education and may add practical value to the educational realm at large.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to understand secondary teachers' experiences with an unexpected transition to online teaching. Teachers made an unplanned change from in-person education to instructing virtually. Many educators felt ill-equipped to make this educational shift (Ferri et al., 2020; Jain et al., 2020). The nature of this study involved the exploration of how Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) transition theory, primarily the 4 Ss, played a role in an unexpected educational transition and how secondary teachers dealt with the transition. In Chapter Three, I will address the methods of this research study, specifically beginning with the research design, research questions, setting and participants, research positionality, and procedures for conducting the study. Further, in Chapter Three, I will explain the data collection plan, the trustworthiness of the research, and will conclude with a chapter summary.

Research Design

This study was qualitative and followed a phenomenological research design. Qualitative studies are centered around a problem or a phenomenon where the researcher attempts to understand the essence of this issue through the experiences of individuals who have encountered it (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Generally speaking, qualitative studies utilize words and experiences as the data instead of numbers in quantitative studies (Busetto et al., 2020). Additionally, qualitative studies are implemented when the researcher wants to understand individuals' actions or behaviors about a specific circumstance (Rosenthal, 2016). In contrast, quantitative studies are characterized by collecting numerical data through questionnaires or experiments and then analyzing the data through various statistical tests (Ahmed et al., 2019; Apuke, 2017). The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the lived

experiences of teachers who unexpectedly transitioned to online teaching out of necessity. These experiences cannot be quantified or analyzed using statistics. Therefore, a qualitative approach was the most appropriate choice for this study. Qualitative studies have clear defining components, some being (a) data is collected in the field where participants encounter the problem rather than being observed in a controlled setting like a laboratory, (b) the main instrument is the researcher, (c) several kinds of data will be gathered, and (d) inductive and deductive logic will be used to make sense of participants' viewpoints (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I, the researcher, was the human instrument of this study, and I implemented an iterative and logical analysis of the data to fully understand the participants' experiences. Multiple forms of data were collected in the form of interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts. Additionally, the general design of qualitative research was appropriate because the core of this research study was to gather data through interviews with a group of individuals who have all experienced the same circumstance to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon to ultimately contribute to the existing literature on the topic.

Examples of qualitative designs are grounded theory, ethnographic research, case studies, and phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The grounded theory approach is one where the researcher aims to develop a theory based on the findings of the study using participants' experiences. Ethnographic research focuses on using observations of a specific group of participants with a common culture, intending to understand the culture group. Case study research centers around a case or cases that have experienced the phenomenon in a study. Phenomenology involves research centered around human sciences that focus on a specific phenomenon (van Manen, 2016a). A phenomenological method of inquiry is appropriate when the researcher seeks to define the essence of a phenomenon through the shared lived experiences

of multiple individuals who have encountered the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). I chose the phenomenological research approach for this study. Husserl is widely credited for defining the phenomenological method of inquiry (Moustakas, 1994). According to van Manen (2016b), phenomenology is a form of exploration that centers around questioning rather than making conclusions. Because I aimed to understand the experiences of multiple individuals, namely secondary teachers, regarding a distinct phenomenon, particularly the unexpected transition to online learning, a phenomenological design was appropriate.

For this study, I specifically utilized a transcendental phenomenological design. The primary goal of the transcendental research method is to understand and explain the essence of a phenomenon through the lens of the lived experiences of individuals (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004; Moustakas, 1994). Some of the major components of transcendental phenomenology are intentionality and intuition. Intentionality is directly linked to the concept of consciousness, meaning specifically being aware of something or some phenomenon, also referred to as the noema (Moustakas, 1994). Intentionality comprises two directly related concepts that are always connected, known as the noesis and the noema. The noesis can be described as the thinking part of intentionality, whereas the noema can be considered the perceived object and the meaning of what is encountered. Husserl chose to incorporate intuition to illustrate anything that may come up in a transcendental phenomenological study, instead of implementing a strictly deductive technique.

Some of the central procedures involved with transcendental phenomenology are the epoché, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis. Husserl described the epoché as the process of setting aside any biases or preconceived notions, which allows the researcher to obtain new knowledge about a phenomenon under investigation (Moustakas, 1994).

This process is also known as bracketing out personal connections that may exist with the phenomenon being studied, consciously being aware of these potential biases, and setting these biases aside as much as possible. The next component is phenomenological reduction.

Moustakas described this part of the process where the nature of the experiences is the primal focus. It is examined repeatedly to uncover themes that will lead to meanings of phenomena.

Imaginative variation is a process that involves thinking about the phenomenon being studied from different perspectives to gain a deeper understanding of how an experience developed to ultimately synthesize a successful description of the true essence of the phenomenon.

The transcendental phenomenological approach was the most applicable to my research study. I sought to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon of the educational transition to and from online learning in an emergency, without an interpretation of experiences, letting the voice of the participants emanate in the results. Data was collected primarily through interviews and analyzed using strategies appropriate for phenomenological research. Participants all experienced the phenomenon, and it was through their lived experiences that I came to findings and conclusions.

Research Questions

One central question and three sub-questions guided the focus of this study. Research questions in a qualitative study aim to reiterate the purpose of a study in a more precise way (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The following questions illustrate the areas of the phenomenon that were addressed in the study.

Central Research Question

What are the shared experiences of secondary teachers who unexpectedly transitioned to and from online learning?

Sub-Question One

What are the experiences of secondary teachers who entered into an unexpected transition to online learning?

Sub-Question Two

What are the experiences of secondary teachers during an unexpected transition to online learning?

Sub-Question Three

What are the experiences of secondary teachers who transitioned back to in-person teaching?

Setting and Participants

Details about the setting and participants for the research study will be described. Following the setting and participants, a detailed description of purposeful sampling techniques will be provided. The criterion for the participant sample will also be explained. For this study, there were participants from varying schools, grade levels, content area backgrounds, and various lengths of in-service teaching experience. The rationale for sampling with maximum variation will also be explored.

Setting

The setting for this research study was multiple public school districts in the state of New York, specifically in the region of Long Island. I chose New York State for the setting of this research study out of convenience and because, during the 2019–2020 school year, every public school district closed all brick-and-mortar schools and transitioned to some form of online education. In March 2020, the entire New York State public school system was forced to close schools, convert to remote learning virtually overnight (New York State Education Department,

2020d), and continued to prepare for periodic returns to remote learning due to potential COVID-19 outbreaks (New York State Department of Health, 2021). This phenomenon was experienced throughout the entire state; therefore, it is a setting with an ample number of individuals who fit the study's criteria. The public education system continued to function through some form of online learning implemented in direct response to school closures due to the pandemic, even during the 2021–2022 academic year (New York State Education Department, 2021d). Another part of the rationale for this setting was to gain insight into this phenomenon from individuals who have experienced and continued to experience this circumstance for several school years. Despite all schools currently being re-opened to in-person teaching, the option for remote learning was still available on a case-by-case basis in the 2021–2022 school year.

I focused on several school districts on Long Island, New York. Long Island is geographically divided into Suffolk County and Nassau County. My goal was to focus on school districts of varying sizes from different regions in Nassau and Suffolk counties to gain a deeper understanding of the shared experiences of the unexpected transition to remote learning. I reached out to teachers from small, medium, and large-sized districts in both counties to obtain a wider perspective of shared experiences and to also ensure I secured the required number of participants. To preserve the anonymity of participants, I used pseudonyms for each district (i.e., School District One, School District Two, School District Three). School District One (2022) is in Suffolk County and is one of the two smaller districts consisting of five schools serving 2,080 K–12 students. School District Two (2022) is also small and located in Suffolk County, consisting of four schools serving 2,176 K–12 students. School District Three (2022) is in Suffolk County, medium in size, comprised of nine schools, and serves 4,459 K–12 students.

The last district in Suffolk County is School District Four. School District Four (2022) has nine schools and 5,674 K–12 students. School District Five, School District Six, and School District Seven are all in Nassau County. School District Five (2022) is medium size and comprises five schools servicing 4,542 7–12 students. There are six schools in School District Six (2022), which is large and has 5,521 K–12 students. School District Seven (2022) is also large, consisting of eight schools, and serves 6,765 K–12 students. Public school districts in Long Island all have the same organizational structure. They are comprised of superintendents, principals, assistant principals, teachers, and other professional staff members (New York Schools, n.d.). All these school districts are overseen by a board of education.

Participants

Participants for this study were secondary public school teachers from different content areas (i.e., science, foreign language, mathematics, social studies, English language arts) as the sample pool. The criteria for participants were that they teach in a secondary public school setting and experienced the phenomenon of transitioning to and from online teaching in a crisis during the current or last several school years. I sought out 10–15 participants for this study. This sample size was appropriate because qualitative studies gather substantial details about a small number of individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Purposeful sampling was used to obtain a criterion sample. Purposeful sampling is an intentional procedure used to identify a group of people who will be able to offer the most credible insight into the research problem (Campbell et al., 2020; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Sargeant, 2012). A criterion sample is one where all the participants have encountered the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Purposeful sampling was implemented using the following two procedures: maximum variation sampling and snowball sampling. Utilizing a maximum variation sampling technique increased the potential

for pooling together a sample of heterogeneous participants who have all experienced the central phenomenon. Maximum variation sampling was accomplished by recruiting a diverse mix of participants, who varied in terms of gender, age, years of service, and content areas taught. Snowball sampling was used to ensure the correct number of participants was achieved. This sampling method involves individuals connecting the researcher with others they know who have experienced the phenomenon. I contacted teachers who fit the participant criteria and requested to be connected to other teachers who also fit the participant criteria. Pseudonyms for individuals will be used to ensure anonymity. Each participant had a coded identifier using a name other than their own—for example, Steve for participant one, Sally for participant two, and so on.

Researcher Positionality

My motivation for this research study is rooted in my professional background. I have been a mathematics teacher for over 15 years, with experience in both elementary and secondary grade levels. Additionally, I have been interested in online learning since my bachelor's degree program. During my undergraduate years, using the internet for remote education was in its infancy. I was fortunate to be enrolled in a course that piloted this learning style for part of a semester. I was immediately attracted to this modality of learning. The option of remote learning has also enabled me to pursue doctoral studies. The notion of moving outside of the traditional classroom in terms of teaching piques my interest in future professional opportunities. In the following sections, I will discuss the interpretive framework and philosophical assumptions that guide my study.

Interpretive Framework

In this study, I used a social constructivism paradigm. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), social constructivism is a paradigm that seeks to fully understand the surrounding world

through the lens of people's experiences. I initiated the data collection with interviews that had both specific and open-ended questions. Open-ended questions are key components of the social constructivism framework because they will provide more of a listening situation for the researcher, which can ultimately lead to interpretations and meanings of the participants' experiences to gain a deep understanding of their lived experiences.

Philosophical Assumptions

Coming from a kindergarten through grade 12 teaching background, this area of study is of personal interest. I have been a traditional in-person mathematics teacher for most of my professional career and experienced firsthand the immediate conversion to online teaching out of need rather than desire. This personal experience motivated me to explore further the lived experiences of educators and how their abilities to cope with an unexpected transition may have played a role in teaching online during a pandemic. The three types of philosophical assumptions that I brought to this study were ontological, epistemological, and axiological.

Ontological Assumption

The ontological assumption addresses the researcher's position on the world and reality (Darwin Holmes, 2020). Under a constructivist paradigm, the ontological assumption adopts the thinking that there is no single truth; rather the reality of the world around individuals is developed by those individuals (Patel, 2015). In this research study, I adopted the ontological view that individuals' reality of the world around them can vary due to differing perspectives of their experiences with the same phenomenon.

Epistemological Assumption

The epistemological assumption refers to how knowledge about the world is constructed or defined by the participants in a study, and to successfully do this, the researcher must spend as

much time as possible in the field where the participants live and work (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, the epistemological assumption pertains to interpreting the world around us and gaining a deeper understanding of occurrences (Patel, 2015). To include the epistemological assumption in this research study, I constructed knowledge through the participants' subjective experiences with transitioning to and from online learning. Knowledge in this study was primarily constructed through participants' lived experiences.

Axiological Assumption

Perhaps the most prominent philosophical assumption I brought to this study was axiological. The axiological assumption reveals the personal biases or values that influence the motivation for a particular area of study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Experiencing the phenomenon of professionally transitioning to and from online teaching in an emergency firsthand has led to the desire to research this phenomenon. Personal experiences and opinions were bracketed out as much as possible to prevent biases from influencing the interpretation of the data collected.

Researcher's Role

The researcher is considered the instrument used in qualitative studies (Johnson et al., 2020); therefore, I was the human instrument for this study. Some participants were colleagues from previous jobs, people known in the profession, people known through connections who are in the teaching profession, or strangers. The snowballing sampling technique provided connections to participants suitable for this study but who were not known personally. I am not currently working in a school district, so no participants were direct work colleagues. I recruited participants based on acquaintances I knew who fit the criteria or acquaintances I knew who had known people who fit the criteria. Using the snowballing sampling technique, I recruited other participants through socially known individuals. Therefore, some of the study participants were

personally known, and some were individuals I had never met. Conflict of interest was mitigated in this study because I do not professionally work with any of the participants. I do not hold any authoritative position over any of the participants. All participation in this study was completely voluntary, and participants could discontinue the study if they chose to at any time. My role as the human instrument was to solely describe the participants' shared experiences with the phenomenon of this study.

My role as the human instrument was to gather data through interviews, journal prompts, and a focus group. I also made decisions about data analysis and theme development. Some biases I brought to this study were that I am interested in online education, and I experienced transitioning to and from online teaching during the pandemic. Over the last several years, I had the unexpected opportunity to become well-versed in teaching online and learn how to utilize various technological resources to implement the educational process remotely to students all over the globe. This study was transcendental in design, so personal experiences with the phenomenon were bracketed out to avoid biases or influences when data was collected and analyzed.

Procedures

In this section, I will outline the steps used to conduct the study to enable the study to be replicated. This section will provide detailed information about securing Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Site permissions were not needed because no physical site was used to conduct the study. I will detail how I recruited participants and explain the data collection and analysis plans by data type. Finally, I will explain how I achieved triangulation of the data.

Permissions

Once the research study proposal was approved, the next step was to apply for IRB approval (see Appendix A). Following IRB approval, I began the recruitment process for participants. Willing participants were given consent forms to sign and submit before the study began (see Appendix B).

Recruitment Plan

I began the recruitment process for participants when the IRB approved my research proposal. Upon receiving IRB approval, I started to seek participants for the study by speaking to and sending invitation letters (see Appendix C) and screening questionnaires (see Appendix D) to suitable educators. This occurred through electronic messages and contact information received from personal contacts. The nature of my relationship with any known participants was in a social capacity. I did not hold any authoritative position over any participants, including those known socially. After speaking with personal contacts, I gained more contacts to forward my invitation letter. Consistent with snowball sampling, I asked willing participants to forward an invitation to participate in my study to educators they knew would be a good fit for my research study.

Once the required number of participants was recruited, I initiated data collection by scheduling interviews on Microsoft Teams. Interviews were recorded through Microsoft Teams for transcription purposes with participants' knowledge and consent. I utilized the transcriptions generated by Microsoft Teams. I implemented member checking by sending transcriptions to participants to review for correctness. Member checking interview transcripts increases the accuracy of the data (Birt et al., 2016). I then began to cycle through the interview transcripts and code them manually using what Saldaña (2021) calls in vivo codes. Once the data were coded, I

identified common patterns and significant statements to formulate themes. Moustakas' (1994) guidelines for phenomenological data analysis were implemented throughout all data analysis. As soon as the interviews were completed, I emailed journal prompts to each participant. Participants were requested to return their journal entries in a word document attached to an email back to me. I sent follow-up reminder emails, when necessary, after one week. These were analyzed in the same way as the interview transcriptions. Once interviews and journal entries were completed and analyzed, I formed a focus group of four participants. Patterns and themes identified from initial interviews and journal entries helped to guide the focus group. I invited participants based on their availability. The focus group interview was transcribed and analyzed the same way as the individual interviews. Synthesizing the analysis of the interviews, journal entries, and focus group interview eventually led to developing the essence of participant experiences. I also maintained a reflective journal (see Appendix E) throughout the study to avoid bringing any preconceived notions to the study. Keeping a reflective journal throughout a phenomenological study will support the process of bracketing and will help highlight any biases brought to the study (Wall et al., 2004).

Triangulation is a way to ensure the credibility and validity of the data in qualitative studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015; Stahl & King, 2020). To achieve triangulation of the data, I collected three forms: interviews, journal prompts, and a focus group interview. Another element that can contribute to triangulating data is conducting interviews with participants from different professional backgrounds (Natow, 2020). During this study, I included participants from varying content areas, multiple secondary grade levels, and various years of service in the field of education.

Data Collection Plan

Data collection was done using three different forms. The first method was semi-structured interviews with participants. The second type of data collected was journal prompts immediately following interviews. Thirdly, a focus group interview was the final data collection method to achieve triangulation. Triangulation supports the credibility of this study by gathering several forms of data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Individual Interviews

In-depth interviews are one of the most widely used data collection approaches by qualitative researchers (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). One of the main data collection methods in phenomenological studies is to conduct interviews to describe a phenomenon encountered by several individuals (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015; Jamshed, 2014; Moustakas, 1994). Conducting interviews is the central data collection method in qualitative studies because a valuable understanding of the research phenomenon can be gained through this style of communication (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The interview process can also promote reflections on professional practices (Husband, 2020). Therefore, a semi-structured interview was the first and primary data collection method utilized in this study. Additionally, using an interview to gather data helps to keep the focus on understanding the participants' experiences with the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). See Appendix F for the interview questions.

Once participants were confirmed, interview times were arranged. I used Microsoft Teams to conduct interviews based on my geographic location away from New York. Microsoft Teams allowed me to see the participants visually and in real-time. Each interview was conducted one-on-one. Interviews were recorded with participants' knowledge for transcription (see Appendix G for a sample transcript) purposes and to recall body language cues.

Individual Interview Guide

1. Please describe your educational background and career through your current position.
Ice Breaker
2. How many years have you been teaching and in what content areas? Ice Breaker
3. What form of synchronous online instruction did your district initially implement during the mandated remote instruction in the 2019–2020 school year? SQ1
4. What professional development experiences or previous personal experiences with technology prepared you to teach online? CRQ
5. Please describe how your teacher training program prepared you to utilize technology to teach online. CRQ
6. When entering into the online transition, how would you describe your depth of knowledge when implementing or utilizing technology in your pedagogical practices?
SQ1
7. How would you describe your overall level of self-confidence or self-efficacy in your teaching abilities before the 2019–2020 school year? SQ1
8. During the transition to online teaching, in what ways did your school provide technology training and support for teachers who varied in level of technological experience, different content areas, and or varying grade levels? SQ2
9. Which online learning platform(s) did your institution use and what were your experiences/challenges with this platform? SQ2
10. How did your self-efficacy or self-confidence play a role during the transition to teaching online during the pandemic? SQ2

11. What challenges did you face with the unexpected transition from in-person teaching to online teaching? Inside school, outside school, personally? SQ2
12. What were some positive and or negative experiences you encountered with students while teaching online? SQ2
13. What obstacles did your students experience during the rapid conversion to online learning? SQ2
14. What were your experiences with student motivation, engagement, and achievement while learning online? SQ2
15. What personal and or professional challenges did you encounter with the transition back to in-person teaching? SQ3
16. How did you manage the transition back to in-person teaching? SQ3
17. What else would you like to add to our discussion about your experiences with the transition changing from in-person teaching to online teaching that you would like to share? CRQ

The first interview question was designed to allow participants to introduce themselves, give their professional background, and set the tone for the questions that will follow in the discussion. The second interview question was aimed at getting a fuller picture of each participant's professional experience and area of expertise. Question three was to determine if a participant's experiences are useable in the study. Questions four and five pertain to the central research question to provide more information about the participants' background leading up to the unexpected transition to online teaching. Questions six and seven relate to the first stage of the participant's transition to online learning. These questions aimed to gain insight into the level of expertise in technology before transitioning and their viewpoints of technological capabilities.

The rationale for questions eight through 14 was to learn about participants' experiences during the unexpected transition from in-person teaching to the online domain. Interview questions 15 and 16 related to participants' experiences transitioning out of teaching online and back to in-person learning. Question 17 was a concluding question where the participants were invited to discuss or share anything else about their experiences with online teaching during a pandemic.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

One of the main goals of conducting interviews in research studies is to ultimately understand the participants' experiences through actively listening (Vandermause & Fleming, 2011). It is beneficial to analyze interview transcripts promptly after completing them due to the large amount of data they produce (McGrath et al., 2019). For this reason, interview data were analyzed as soon as they were conducted and transcribed. Interview transcripts were analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology analysis procedures which include the following steps: (a) implement the epoché process, (b) horizontalization, (c) clustering into themes, (d) individual textural and individual structural descriptions, (d) composite textural and composite structural descriptions, and (e) synthesis of textural and structural meanings of essences. The first step is the epoché, which means to set aside any preconceived notions or prejudgments before data analysis. Moustakas also described the first step of data analysis as bracketing out, as much as possible, personal previous experiences and connections to better understand participants' views and experiences. The epoché was initiated by keeping a reflective journal throughout the study. Maintaining a reflective journal is a technique that supports the bracketing process in phenomenological studies (Birt et al., 2016). Horizontalization was implemented, meaning each interview transcription was considered to have equal value in the

research (Moustakas, 1994). Through the horizontalization process, I looked for what Moustakas called invariant horizons or meaning units. In other words, I identified common or significant statements that arose in the interview transcriptions. I then clustered the invariant horizons into themes. When analyzing the data for clusters of meaning and themes, I implemented what Saldaña (2021) describes as *in vivo* coding. I used the themes to create textural and structural descriptions of the phenomenon, which led to composite descriptions. I then synthesized the composite textural and composite structural meanings to ultimately describe the essence of the experiences. Throughout the data analysis, a constant comparison method was applied. A constant comparison method is when the researcher analyzes the data repeatedly to develop themes and conclusions to develop findings (Boeije, 2002).

Journal Prompts

The second form of data collection was journal prompts (see Appendix H). The rationale for this data collection method was that journaling is a common and legitimate form of data collection in qualitative studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Journal prompts allowed participants more time to respond to questions in a more relaxed environment. Each participant was asked to write reflections guided by prompts as soon as the interviews were completed. The data obtained from participant journal entries were used to develop or adjust focus group questions. Participants were asked to keep their journal reflections under one page and as a typed Word document. I delivered journal prompts through email and requested participants to email their typed-out journal responses. Journal prompts were emailed to participants directly after each interview was completed. Participants were asked to return journal entries within one week. If journal entries were not returned, I sent out follow-up reminder emails to request journal entries.

Journal Prompt Questions

1. What are things you enjoyed during the unexpected transition from in-person teaching to online learning? SQ2
2. Describe how your student-teacher relationships changed, if at all, throughout the transition, positive or negative. CRQ
3. Describe where you received the most support throughout the transition process, personally and professionally. CRQ
4. Describe any ways that you felt professional growth or stagnation throughout the unexpected transition to and from online learning. CRQ

Journal Prompts Data Analysis Plan

Journal prompts were also analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) analysis procedures for phenomenological data and incorporated a constant comparison method utilizing in vivo coding (Saldaña, 2021). Using a reflective journal, I bracketed out any previous beliefs or experiences with the phenomenon. Journal prompt responses were reviewed multiple times through an iterative process and were all considered equally to ensure they were horizontalized. Participants' journal prompt responses were analyzed for clusters of meaning that led to findings related to the research questions. The invariant meanings that arose were clustered together to discover emerging themes related to the study. Implementing an iterative analysis process to journal prompt analysis will uncover themes related to the research questions (Bowen, 2009). Individual textural and structural descriptions were developed to lead to composite descriptions. Analysis of journal entries ended with developing an essence of participant experiences.

Focus Groups

The third form of data collection was a focus group interview. After all individual interviews were completed and transcribed and journal prompt entries returned, a focus group interview occurred (see Appendix I). This third form of data collection is a reliable way to support the initial interview results and is believed to be more efficient than the follow-up interview process (Patton, 2015). A focus group is an interview of several individuals about a particular topic. Groups can range from four to 12 people (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). Focus groups are a beneficial way to gain more perspectives on a research topic and strengthen the reliability of the themes or patterns that are revealed. Focus groups can go beyond individual interviews by allowing participants to hear one another's responses, leading to further discussion that may not otherwise occur through solely one-on-one interviews. Implementing focus groups for data collection can create a more comfortable environment for participants who otherwise may be reserved during individual interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I formulated a focus group consisting of four participants based on availability. I conducted the focus group interview through Microsoft Teams.

Focus Group Guide

The following questions will serve as a guide for the focus group interview. These questions were finalized based on the data obtained from interviews and journal prompt entries. Finalizing the focus group protocol after individual interviews were conducted avoided question redundancy in the study. Implementing a focus group as the final data collection method also created effective further dialogue directly related to the research study.

1. Please introduce yourselves to one another. Ice Breaker

2. Describe your thoughts about the theme of one day at a time (uncertainty in the transition) that developed during the interview and journal prompts.
3. Based on your experiences with transitioning between in-person and remote teaching, how would you describe the effects on student well-being, student achievement, and teacher well-being? And how did you manage these?
4. What could have enhanced your experiences during the different stages (going into remote learning, during, and going back to in-person) of the transition between in-person and remote learning during the pandemic?
5. In terms of transitioning to emergency remote learning, what needs to be done to ensure that all stakeholders are adequately prepared to make this shift possibly again in the future (policy-wise, professionally, personally)?
6. What other experiences would you like to share about teaching during a pandemic that you did not mention in your initial interview or your journal entry?

Focus Groups Data Analysis Plan

The focus group interview analysis took the same approach as the individual interviews and incorporated a constant comparison method. In vivo coding (Saldaña, 2021) was applied to the data. I used Moustakas' (1994) analysis procedures for phenomenological research. I first practiced the concept of the epoché and bracketed out any preconceived ideas about the research utilizing a reflective journal (Wall et al., 2004). The focus group transcriptions were all considered equally to identify invariant horizons to form clusters of meanings into themes. I then used individual textural and structural descriptions to develop composite descriptions to eventually synthesize to reveal the essence of participant experiences.

Data Synthesis

In qualitative studies, data analysis is generally described as a repetitive and frequent process (Lester et al., 2020). The synthesis of the data began with repeatedly reviewing and analyzing the data to identify categorical themes or clusters of meanings that appeared across the three forms of data collected (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). During the data synthesis, common themes led to the development of textural and structural descriptions. Creswell and Poth described textural description as what the participants encountered with the phenomenon, and structural description focuses on how the participants experienced the phenomenon. A composite description of the phenomenon was developed, which resulted from fusing both the textural and structural descriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative studies is generally described by the terms credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility is defined as the level of certainty in the correctness of the findings. Dependability exhibits that the findings are constant and could be repeated. Confirmability deals with how much of the findings are centered solely around participant responses and avoided any possible biases from the researcher. Finally, transferability refers to the generalizability of the findings to be relevant in other situations.

Credibility

Credibility was achieved through triangulation of the data and member checking. Triangulation ensures credibility in qualitative research studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stahl & King, 2020). Triangulation was achieved by gathering multiple data sources in the form of interviews, journal prompts, and a focus group interview. Member checking is the process of

having participants review transcriptions to ensure they are free of error (Birt et al., 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018). All participants in the study were sent interview transcripts for review to ensure member checking was implemented to strengthen the study's credibility.

Transferability

Transferability was fulfilled by sampling with maximum variation and producing rich thick descriptions. The goal of sampling with maximum variation is to obtain a wide range of heterogeneous participants who have all experienced the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Another form of trustworthiness that supports the transferability of a research study is providing thick and rich descriptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thick and rich descriptions are present throughout this study, primarily when describing the themes that emerged from the data.

Dependability

Dependability was achieved through an audit trail (See Appendix J). An audit trail was developed through memoing while organizing the data. Keeping an audit trail is a way to ensure validity and to reach a deeper understanding of the data throughout the research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Dually, an inquiry audit was conducted by my dissertation committee and the Qualitative Research Director.

Confirmability

To achieve confirmability, I practiced bracketing and reflexivity. Bracketing is the process of setting aside any biases during a research study to prevent these beliefs from influencing the study (Moustakas, 1994). Reflexivity was implemented in this study by clearly stating any biases that were present or brought to the research study from previous experiences. This is fully described in the researcher positionality section of this chapter. Reflexivity is when

the researcher reveals any biases that may be present before the research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Soedirgo & Glas, 2020).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical implications in this study pertain to informed consent, data storage and usage, influence, and confidentiality. Informed consent was secured for all participants. This research study was completely voluntary, and all participants had the right to withdraw at any time during the study. All research and data collection only took place after obtaining IRB approval. Regarding data storage, a secondary backup method was consistently implemented when conducting virtual interviews. A backup recording was saved using another mobile device. All digital data records were saved on a secure computer that requires a password to access. All data files were also backed up on a password-protected external hard drive. To decrease the level of potential influence, personal experiences were bracketed out during data collection procedures. All participants were given pseudonyms to protect anonymity and to maintain confidentiality. Participants were also informed about the possibility of publishing the research findings and the possibility of using the collected data and findings in future presentations or other capacities.

Summary

This qualitative study was implemented using a transcendental phenomenological research design. Phenomenology was the most applicable design because the purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the recent educational phenomenon of teachers urgently transitioning to and from online teaching. This study specifically examined teachers' experiences during the different stages of this educational transition. Data collection was done primarily through interviews but also occurred through journal prompts and a focus group interview. I analyzed the collected data using Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology

analysis procedures and Saldaña's (2021) coding procedures. I bracketed out personal experiences, analyzed the data through an iterative process, and triangulated the data to develop thick and rich descriptions of the participants' experiences.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This transcendental phenomenological study aimed to understand secondary teachers' experiences with the unexpected transition to and from remote learning in New York public schools. In this chapter, I describe the participants in tabular form, followed by the results found in the data. I then illustrate several themes that emerged through the voices of the participants. I answer the research questions that drove this study and conclude Chapter Four with a summary of themes and significant results.

Participants

My research plan aimed to find 10–15 participants from several school districts on Long Island. I pursued participants from varying districts in both Nassau and Suffolk counties to gain a deeper understanding of the shared experiences of secondary teachers who unexpectedly transitioned to remote learning during the pandemic. For my study, a secondary teacher was defined as an individual who teaches any grade between seventh and 12th. The structure of secondary schools can vary slightly across New York regarding what grades are housed in secondary school buildings. Some secondary schools serve grades 6 through 8, 7 through 8, 7 through 12, or 9 through 12. It is left up to the individual district how they place grade levels in specific buildings. Despite this variation, all secondary teachers in New York are certified to teach at least grades 7 through 12. In certain certification areas, like special education and physical education, teachers are usually certified K–12. Overall, my participant recruitment was successful. I obtained 10 participants from small, medium, and large-sized districts on Long Island. Additionally, I obtained a diverse mix of participants who varied in terms of age, years of

service, content areas taught, and gender. All participants were secondary educators teaching in high schools, except one who taught in a middle school.

Table 1

Teacher Participants

Teacher Participant	Years Taught	Highest Degree Earned	Content Area	Grade Level
Mary	20	Masters	World Language	9th–12th
Elizabeth	15	Masters	English	7th–12th
Alice	18	Masters	Physical Education Health	9th–12th
John	10	Masters	Science	7th–8th
Luke	10	Doctorate	English	9th–12th
Claire	14	Masters	Mathematics	9th–12th
Emma	29	Masters	Social Studies	9th–12th
Bridget	18	Masters	Art	9th–12th
Lucy	29	Masters	Special Education	9th–12th
Samantha	13	Masters	English	7th–12th

Results

The participants of this study all experienced the phenomenon of making an unexpected transition to and from remote learning during the COVID-19 crisis. The central and subsequent research questions in this study sought to gain a deeper understanding of secondary teachers' experiences with the transition throughout the different stages of the transition. Through

individual interviews, journal prompt reflections, and a focus group interview, the themes that emerged through the voices of participants were: (a) support experienced by teachers, (b) technology throughout the transition, (c) feelings of uncertainty, and (d) support of the whole student.

Table 2

Themes and Subthemes

Major Themes	Subthemes	Key Words/Phrases/In Vivo Codes
Support Experienced by Teachers	Formal Informal	Collegiality, relationships, support from colleagues, support from technology department, technology coaches, teachers helping each other, support from district, professional development, teacher mentors, family, friends
Technology Throughout the Transition		Access to internet, access to devices, confidence in and access to learning platforms, one-to-one district, needing second devices, self-efficacy, self-confidence, technology reluctant
Feelings of Uncertainty		Overwhelmed, unprepared, no district guidance, make two weeks of lessons, uncertain how to run classrooms in person with social distancing, finding space to do school, still trying to be empathetic to students while wearing masks and social distancing, lost
Support of the Whole Student	Mental Health Students Relearning how to be Students	Anxiety, stress, depression, suicide, isolation, motivation down, engagement decreased, achievement decreased, lowered expectations, fear of getting sick, socially behind, students shutting off from school, communication tough, missed human connection, regression in social development, students not reading teacher cues, social interaction with peers

Support Experienced by Teachers

The first theme that emerged was support experienced by teachers. Participants emphasized the importance of support by referencing it as collegiality and district assistance. Support was sometimes nonexistent or severely lacking with participants, whereas some experienced an abundance of effective support throughout the transition. As participants discussed where they found support, they reflected on both formal and informal sources. Formal and informal supports are addressed as subthemes of the theme of support. For example, in his journal reflection, John named his district and wife as means of support, while Samantha emphasized colleagues during her individual interview. Informal supports were highlighted the most by participants as more beneficial throughout the transition than formal supports. Elizabeth stated in her journal reflection, “The most support I received was through my colleagues.” This study revealed how much informal support, namely collegiality, is valued when challenges arise in the teaching profession.

Formal

The first subtheme of support experienced by teachers was formal support. All 10 participants mentioned formal support during the COVID-19 crisis in terms of district assistance, professional development, help from administrators, and tutorials from designated technology coaches. Despite many of the participants mentioning ample professional development opportunities and various technology training sessions offered by their district throughout the transition, many expressed sentiments of these offerings being ineffective. Claire said in her individual interview, “I signed up for some of them ... and I’m like, well, I already kind of knew how to do that piece of it.” In his journal reflection, Luke mentioned that he had positive experiences with the support from his department chairperson. There was a feeling of

inconsistency in support from administrators throughout the transition. Mary stated in the focus group interview:

I felt like from my personal experience, administration did not do a good job at all ...

There was no not enough guidance and not enough just sticking to one general rule for everyone. It was just a free for all.

Informal

The second subtheme of support experienced by teachers was informal support. Informal means of support were mentioned throughout this study by all 10 participants. Informal supports that were focused on were colleagues, family, and friends. It was clear how much participants like Lucy, Alice, Claire, and John valued support from colleagues throughout the transition. In her individual interview, Emma stated, “So we were scrambling to help each other as colleagues ... I will say, we did come together as colleagues.” Bridget concurred in her journal reflection by mentioning finding informal supports in other friends who are teachers and also through Facebook teacher groups that she belonged to. Samantha also confirmed the importance of informal support in her journal reflection stating, “I received the most support from my immediate colleagues and supervisor - we were there to carry each other through a seemingly impossible year.” With the transition back to teaching in school, Emma also mentioned herself as being a major source of support for her colleagues. She emphasized how much she pushed to provide accommodations for colleagues to feel safe and comfortable when they transitioned back to in-person teaching. She stated, “It was a big struggle getting teachers accommodations. I don’t think it should ever be that much of a struggle to get employers to get employees something.”

Technology Throughout the Transition

The second theme that emerged from the data collected across all three sources was technology throughout the transition. Without the use of technology, the transition to and from remote learning would not have been possible. Seven participants mentioned accessibility when discussing the use of technology. They focused on elements like teachers' preparedness and comfort with using technology. Lucy pointed out, "There were other people, and it's not even that they're older teachers. They're just technology reluctant." Access and being one-to-one districts were also major focal points within this theme. Less than half of the participants had a one-to-one device policy in their district at the time of the transition. Mary, Luke, and Samantha all mentioned difficulties with access to mobile devices for their students. John, Alice, Emma, Lucy, and Claire all pointed out that they had one-to-one device policies in place prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless of whether districts had one-to-one device policies in place, accessibility to adequate internet was mentioned by seven participants. When participants discussed access, they referred to inadequate or lack of internet connection being a major challenge. Claire said, "So they didn't necessarily have to worry about getting them the devices. It was just like making sure everybody had access to Wi-Fi was now like the main issue." Not every school district had a one-to-one device policy in place where students and teachers all had mobile devices. Luke pointed out, "The biggest thing was for that first spring them having no devices." Even when districts were one-to-one districts, this did not necessarily correlate to teachers being well-versed in utilizing these devices as the sole means of delivering instruction. For example, Alice shared that despite her district already being one-to-one many veteran teachers were unprepared or needed a lot of help to implement online learning. Alice said:

Most of our phys ed teachers had never used Google Classroom ... we had to actually set up Google classrooms for all of our classes when this started. And I had to do it for a lot of the older teachers.

Once teachers got comfortable with the technology necessary to implement online learning daily, six participants expressed sentiments of confidence and strong self-efficacy with the online learning platforms. Claire stated, "So I kind of had it just automatically going and so eventually after about maybe three to four weeks, I would say I kind of got myself into like cruise control." Claire also shared that she had good working relationships within her math department. She and another teacher would take turns creating math videos and materials for weekly lessons. Lucy felt comfortable with the technology from the start of the transition and her confidence and skill level seemed to grow throughout the transition. She expressed enjoying researching creative and interactive ways to deliver her algebra curriculum to special education students. John expressed that his experiences with Google Classroom enabled him to get more efficient and organized as a teacher. Bridget also mentioned that her teaching experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic have led her to completely revamp her teaching style to now include technological aspects that she otherwise might not have ever tapped into if it were not for the circumstances over the last several school years. Alice also expressed feelings of growth in her technological abilities upon transitioning back to teaching in person. In reference to her advancement in the use of technology in teaching, she stated, "It was an interesting experience. It pushed me in ways I never thought I needed to be pushed. I know how to do things now. I have kept some of the things I've learned." Emma relayed similar feelings in her journal reflection, "I definitely became more literate in technology. I now use platforms that I never thought I would use."

Feelings of Uncertainty

The third theme that arose was feelings of uncertainty. Throughout the transition to and from remote learning, there was an overall feeling of unpredictability and uncertainty in many areas. Seven teachers expressed feelings of being overwhelmed, lost, having little to no direction from their district, and having unclear pedagogical expectations. Initially, teachers were told that the conversion to remote instruction would only be for two weeks. Samantha said, “So it was a little bit crazy because we were kind of just told originally, hey make two weeks of lesson plans.” Participants also expressed experiences of difficulty finding appropriate places at home to implement the online learning process, and this also extended to their students. Mary, Alice, and Emma all recounted their experiences during the transition with finding appropriate places in their homes to teach. They all had other family members at home either working or doing school remotely as well, so there are only so many spaces in a house for everyone to have suitable workspaces. Mary shared, “You’re literally inviting students into your home, which is extremely uncomfortable. You know you have to find a designated spot to be online.” Alice and Emma also found this to be a challenge with daily life occurring while teaching from home. Emma shared, “Well the dogs would start barking, the Instacart would come, you know those things were definitely a challenge.”

When participants transitioned back to in-person teaching, all 10 experienced a hybrid style where some students would be in-person one day and some students would be at home learning remotely synchronously with the class. Students would be on an alternating schedule while some students opted to stay completely remote once in-person teaching resumed. Claire and Elizabeth expressed frustrations and concerns with the uncertainty of this hybrid situation during the transition back to in-person teaching. Claire stated in the focus group interview, “I

thought the hardest part was that year after we came back ... I might have only seen five kids in the entire day and like, sometimes I walk in my room and just be me, even worse.” Elizabeth shared uncertainty concerns related to making curriculum less of a teaching priority. She said, “Stopping curriculum and really like figuring out what I was gonna do in that shortened amount of time, like it wasn’t even 42 minutes ... and what kind of social-emotional check-in was I doing with the kids?” Some teachers shared how uncertain the complete return back to face-to-face teaching would be. Emma expressed concerns about uncertainty with how their teaching will now be evaluated given her district’s new initiative to implement a data-driven policy immediately after this transition to and from remote learning. Mary shared her concerns with being fully back face-to-face now and worried that technology could eventually be used by her district to utilize online learning platforms to drastically increase class size. She fears that these transition experiences could lead to a less effective learning process for both teachers and students.

Support of the Whole Student

The fourth major theme that emerged throughout this study was support of the whole student. Support of the whole student refers to not only academics but many of the areas that are part of the bigger picture of educating the whole child. In the educational process teachers and students rely on human connections. Mary emphasized, “And when you’re in high school, you need that human connection that you’re just not getting at all over a Chromebook.” Alice concurred in her journal reflection on the importance of connections with her students, “I thrive on the relationships and connections I make with my students, and the opportunity to really connect was hindered by being circles on a computer screen who were almost always muted (not

by me).” The two subthemes that emerged within the theme support of the whole student were mental health and students relearning how to be students.

Mental Health

The first subtheme of support of the whole student was mental health. When sharing their experiences throughout the transition, mental health was a common topic discussed by participants. From the start of the transition, there was general anxiety about getting sick. Some communities on Long Island experienced more hardship than others concerning the pandemic.

Lucy shared:

Our town had so many people that passed away ... the kids were very scared every day and I felt really bad, so I tried to be just like, okay, come on, let's do math ... we'll forget about it for a minute.

Teachers all agreed that students keeping their cameras off during lessons added to the disconnection felt during online teaching. Samantha shared, “And I think I was just trying to figure out like how do I build a connection with kids when all they know is my face on a screen.” Emma stated, “You could tell the students were becoming more and more isolated.” Upon the transition back, Bridget experienced extreme circumstances with the mental health of her students including tragic instances of students committing suicide. She also shared that students are struggling to function in typical social situations in school environments. Bridget shared, “There's a lot of anxiety. They're just very uncomfortable with being in social situations like they were used to.” Samantha also experienced students on suicide watch during the transition and expressed that mental health was more of a priority than even academics in the return to in-person teaching. She said, “And I think it was probably a year where the work took a back seat to

the connection, and I still feel like it fell short no matter what I did because everyone was out of socialization mode.”

Students Relearning How to be Students

The second subtheme of the theme support of the whole student was students relearning how to be students. Initially, teachers did not know if end-of-year standardized state exams were going to be canceled or not. Participants who taught courses that culminated in an external exam had to figure out how to continue to prepare students for these exams. Students had to in a sense relearn how to be students in all content areas. For example, students had to relearn how to conduct lab experiments while learning from home. John pointed out that when he initially transitioned to remote teaching, “I was still trying to like figure out how to do labs with them.”

During the transition, students had to relearn how to be students with now having access to the things like the internet consistently during class time. Claire shared her concerns with students constantly cheating by looking up answers online or using a popular application called Photomath to complete homework assignments. Claire recalled her experiences with students using Photomath to answer questions on exams in ways that were never taught in her class, “And very obviously like nobody would ever do those steps. And then you pull up the app, you know, every single one of us downloaded the Photomath app, and it’s like verbatim.” Mary also agreed that students were continuously looking up answers to assignments and tests on the internet given the teaching circumstances during the transition. She shared, “they just looked everything up and put in an answer and cheated.”

Concerns were shared by all participants regarding regression in terms of how to be students both academically and socially. All 10 participants agreed that students have lost growth and progression in one or both of these areas. Speaking about the transition back to school, Alice

said, “Trying to reengage students and you almost had to teach them how to learn again.” Emma concurred, “You were teaching them more almost how to sit for 40 minutes rather than your curriculum.” John shared a similar experience with the transition back to in-person teaching, “But there were definitely some challenges with, you know, getting kids back into the mindset of school and being motivated and being in the building.” Claire experienced an overall decreased level of attention span with her students and extreme addiction to their cellular phones. Mary and Alice felt that students were behind by more than one year in either social growth or academic progress. Mary expressed concern for foreign language courses because learning a language is a cumulative process that occurs over subsequent years, as opposed to other courses that are taught completely in one academic year. Mary also added her concerns with students’ regression socially, “They’re all getting into fights because they’re three years behind socially. There were 10th graders that had the social abilities of a sixth-grade or seventh-grader. They don’t know how to control themselves.”

Research Question Responses

This study was guided by a central research question and three sub-questions. The following section will summarize the answers found to these questions. The questions will be answered through the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data.

Central Research Question

The central research question of this study was: What are the shared experiences of secondary teachers who unexpectedly transitioned to and from online learning? Transitioning unexpectedly to and from online learning was both positive and negative. Many shared experiences involving challenges encountered throughout the transition. Some of these challenges were a lack of support and guidance from their districts, difficulties with technology

access, a continuous state of uncertainty, and both major and minor concerns about educating the whole student. Despite many common shared challenging circumstances, positives were experienced by some participants. Some expressed that they have revamped their pedagogical practices. Some participants also shared that they now incorporate more elements of technology in daily teaching practices that maybe otherwise would not be utilized if not for their experiences with teaching during the pandemic. Luke stated in his journal reflection, “I have definitely reprioritized, adjusted, and rethought my expectations and goals as a result of switching to online.” Elizabeth expressed in her journal reflection a positive experience professionally in terms of mastering new pieces of technology, “For me, it provided tremendous growth.”

Sub-Question One

The first sub-question of this research study was: What are the experiences of secondary teachers who entered into an unexpected transition to online learning? All participants expressed feelings of lack of direction and accessibility in their experiences when entering into the transition to online learning. Some felt technologically equipped, while others did not. Regardless of participants’ technology skills depth, participants agreed they were not prepared for what the transition required. For instance, John, who felt very comfortable with technology, shared, “I just don’t think anyone was really prepared to do that on a daily basis at the extent that we had to.” Accessibility was also a primary concern highlighted in terms of student connectivity to the internet and the possession of mobile devices. Claire stated in the focus group interview, “But it took a while for them to just get the district Wi-Fi set up for all the kids that don’t have access.” Claire also explained in her interview that this delay in setting up all students with access to the internet in their homes hindered her district from being able to implement hybrid remote learning right away. This was also the case with Samantha and Luke’s school districts.

Sub-Question Two

The second sub-question of this research study was: What are the experiences of secondary teachers during an unexpected transition to online learning? The consensus among participants was that academic progress and social development suffered during the transition to online learning. Academics quickly took a back seat to social-emotional concerns. All teachers felt that the human connection piece to teaching that is so highly valued was deteriorating during the transition. John said, “You know everyone knew kids were losing instruction no matter how well you taught virtually.” In her interview, Lucy also mentioned something similar, “It’s just like I don’t know if they really took it in when they just watched a lesson. So, I think you had to lower almost your expectation of quality.”

During the transition, teachers also experienced struggles with anxiety and fears of getting sick or bringing the virus home to loved ones. For example, Luke shared, “And I mean, I would ditch my work clothes outside where I have an outdoor shower. I would shower before coming into the house. I mean, it was. It was crazy.” Aside from teacher and student anxiety, participants expressed a strong sense of collegiality within and sometimes across departments. Nine out of the 10 participants stated in their journal reflections that colleagues were their primary source of support during the transition to remote instruction. Mary shared that there was minimal support from her district during the remote teaching, which trickled down to a lack of consistency among teachers while teaching, and also created less structure for students. Emma also stated in her journal reflection that upper and building administrators were not supportive during the transition. Emma shared, “When we asked for help or relief it was met with criticism and punishment.”

Sub-Question Three

The third sub-question of this research study was: What are the experiences of secondary teachers who transitioned back to in-person teaching? During the transition back to in-person instruction, participants unanimously agreed that the mental health of their students was and continues to be a top concern. Students appeared to have genuine anxiety about social situations in the physical school setting. Teachers noticed students have fears of fitting in and making friends. They saw students avoiding what were once typical social interactions with one another and also seemed to have forgotten how to interact appropriately with teachers. When asked about students' mental health, Bridget stated, "We had a lot of anxiety, in particular in my district. We had two suicides last year." Emma felt that her district did not effectively support teachers upon their return to in-person teaching. Being a union representative for her building, she shared serious concerns she had to deal with from teachers. She shared, "some of them legitimately were concerned that if they got covid ... that they were going to die ... it became a struggle of what are we getting this person, how do we make that person comfortable?" In the transition back, Alice also mentioned that some teachers needed to relearn how to be teachers again. She shared that some teachers got complacent with lowering their pedagogical practices during the transition and carried that back to in-person teaching. In the focus group, Alice shared a message from her principal, "she had to make a statement to teachers in general, just saying, like, remember like we're back. ... Please stop just sitting at your desk and like not engaging with the student."

Most of the participants stated that they were back to pre-pandemic teaching parameters this current school year, 2022–2023. Hybrid teaching was no longer an option for students. Participants expressed a general sentiment of relief when looking toward the 2022–2023 school

year. Although John experienced much professional growth through his experiences with the transition, he expressed a renewed appreciation for teaching physically in his school building. Lucy also shared, “I certainly do prefer being in person.” Bridget expressed personal and professional growth in her journal reflection after being back to in-person teaching. She stated, “I learned about what I would like my own personal teaching model to be. I want to be relatable but also want to be respected by my students.” Some new district policies on snow days have been adjusted with the transition from remote teaching. Alice, Mary, and Claire all shared in the focus group interview that their districts now will essentially do away with snow days if districts need to close their buildings due to weather conditions. They will convert to remote teaching rather than students missing instructional days caused by inclement weather during the winter.

Summary

In this chapter, I summarized the findings of this study. The main themes that emerged across all three forms of data collected were (a) support experienced by teachers, (b) technology throughout the transition, (c) feelings of uncertainty, and (d) support of the whole student. The research questions guiding this study were answered solely through the voices and experiences expressed by the participants. There was a consensus among participants that varying levels of uncertainty were experienced throughout the transition to and from remote learning. Support in this transition was mainly found among colleagues. Participants also agreed that there had been significant learning loss, academically and socially. Mental health appears to be more of a concern than ever for educators. Despite many challenges discussed by participants, many experienced substantial progress. The majority of participants highlighted professional growth in pedagogical practices as a result of their experiences with the phenomenon of unexpectedly transitioning to and from remote learning.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand secondary teachers' experiences with an unexpected transition between in-person teaching and virtual modalities for secondary educators in New York public schools. Participants varied in content areas taught and years in the teaching profession. All 10 participants experienced teaching through a pandemic. I begin Chapter Five with a summary of the themes and a discussion of the interpretation of the findings. Then, I provide implications for policy and practice and explore the theoretical and empirical implications of the study. Next, I offer the study's limitations and delimitations. Finally, I provide recommendations for future research and culminate Chapter Five with a conclusion of the entire study.

Discussion

This section discusses the study's themes that developed from individual interviews, journal prompt reflections, and a focus group interview. I will offer my interpretations of the findings with support from the literature. There will be conclusions drawn linked to the theory guiding this study. The findings of this study will be discussed in light of empirical literature. An aspect of the interpretations of a study is stating the limitations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). My study limitations, along with delimitations and future study recommendations, will conclude this section.

Interpretation of Findings

This section will begin with a concise summary of the thematic findings discussed in Chapter Four. The interpretations of a study are often the critical takeaways derived from the findings, along with connecting these ideas to theories or literature (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Two interpretations developed based on the themes evolved in Chapter Four that will be discussed below. The first interpretation is that relationships will always be valued in the educational process. The second interpretation is that online learning is multidimensional.

Summary of Thematic Findings

This study revealed four major themes through individual interviews, journal prompt reflections, and a focus group interview. The first theme that emerged was support experienced by teachers, which included two subthemes, formal and informal. This theme revealed that participants received the most support throughout the transition in informal ways, specifically from colleagues. Support was overall lacking in formal ways from teachers' districts and administrators. The second theme that developed was technology throughout the transition. Technology was found to have hindrances to the educational process mainly due to accessibility issues, lack of proper mobile devices, and confidence in using technology as the sole means of delivering instruction. The third theme was feelings of uncertainty. Study findings exposed an overall uncertainty throughout the transition to and from remote learning. Stakeholders initially assumed this would be a temporary transition and were unaware of how long remote learning would last, even during the transition. The fourth theme revealed was support of the whole student, which developed into two subthemes, mental health and students relearning how to be students. The results of this study brought to light a renewed prioritization of addressing student needs outside of academics. Participants are now hyper-focused on improving and supporting students' mental health development and how to function in a school setting again. Culminating all four themes, the following interpretations will be discussed below: relationships will always be valued in the educational process, and online learning is multidimensional.

Relationships Will Always be Valued in the Educational Process. The first interpretation of this study's findings is that relationships will always be valued in the educational process. Relationships are part of nearly every aspect of the education profession. Participants in this study focused on relationships between colleagues, support from administrators and their district in general, and connections with their students. They emphasized how important support from their colleagues was throughout this educational transition. Alice shared, "we were all in the same boat and trying to figure it out together. It was an all-hands-on-deck mentality that allowed each of us to shine our strengths and lean on others for our weaknesses." Support during a transition can significantly impact how an individual manages transition (Schlossberg, 2011). The phenomenon of the unexpected transition to remote learning radically changed relationships and social connections in the teaching profession (Svrcek et al., 2021), and these relationships need restoration (Miller, 2021). Nguyen et al. (2022) pointed out that the amount of social connection changes anytime in-person teaching converts to online learning. Students also feel virtual learning lacks human connection (Vagos & Carvalhais, 2022). Human connection is still needed in the online learning environment to produce positive results (Tackie, 2022). The connections made in the learning process are critical to teachers, as was pointed out repeatedly by all participants throughout this study. They also agreed with Hehir et al. (2021) that connections could affect students' mental health. Students identified increased anxiety and depression while learning online during the pandemic (Jones, 2020). It is evident through the participants' shared experiences that relationships and connections will always be valued in the educational process. This phenomenon of teaching during the pandemic highlighted these crucial pieces to the educational process and shed light on how important they are, mainly

in unusual teaching situations, like the conversion to remote learning during a crisis. Samantha summed up her feelings on student-teacher relationships when she stated:

I've always been a believer that without the connection it doesn't matter what you do ... I was just trying to figure out how do I build a connection with kids when all they know is my face on a screen.

Online Learning is Multidimensional. The second interpretation of this study's findings is that online learning is multidimensional. Online learning can be simply defined as knowledge gained through technological means (Siemens et al., 2015; Tamm, 2020). The reality of the experience of online learning is not as concise. Online learning is multidimensional, meaning it includes many elements. Some of these elements pertain to technological aspects, how to deliver instruction, accessibility to technology, accessibility to knowledge on how to utilize learning platforms, accessibility to adequate mobile devices (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020), and a feeling of increased professional responsibilities when converting traditional curriculum to be delivered online (Winthrop, 2020). Another component of online learning, especially during COVID-19, is mental health (Alam, 2022; MacIntyre et al., 2020).

Utilizing technology in the educational process is nothing novel. Without technology, the educational process would not have been able to continue as it did during the pandemic, but if individuals are not comfortable with using technology for delivering instruction or are not sufficiently trained on how to use this tool, it can be a challenging task (Heng & Sol, 2021). With the unexpected nature of this phenomenon of transitioning to and from remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, all participants shared to some degree that this was an entirely new way of teaching. Participants demonstrated the notion that the online delivery of instruction during the pandemic was hardly up to the standards of typically well-developed online courses

that are created over time (Stewart & Lowenthal, 2022). The immediate need for accessibility to technology proved to be a roadblock for all participants in this study in various ways. As noted in recent pandemic-related literature (Jelińska & Paradowski, 2021), many participants experienced coping with the transition rather than engaging with the circumstances while also confirming the sentiment that there were not enough guidelines or directives from districts or schools when learning went remote (Francom et al., 2021). Not knowing how long the pandemic would last created uncertainty among individuals (Jung et al., 2021), which all participants demonstrated. There was more uncertainty than consistency felt throughout the transition. An individual's situation at the time of a transition can also impact how transitional situations are dealt with (Schlossberg, 2011), directly correlating to participants' experiences with veteran colleagues or, as Lucy coined, "technology reluctant teachers." The transition to online learning proved to be a struggle for some veteran teachers and teachers disinterested in technology.

Another essential component of teaching in the digital world is an educator's sense of self. The self construct of the 4 Ss includes the idea that self-confidence can impact how well or poorly a person deals with a life transition (Schlossberg, 2011). All participants shared that having strong self-confidence or self-efficacy helped them through the transition to and from remote learning. This exhibits the notion that teachers' levels of self-efficacy in utilizing technology can influence their desire to implement these tools in the educational process (Dolighan & Owen, 2021; Huck & Zhang, 2021). Additionally, the impediment of access to resources when utilizing technology for teaching has reduced teachers' self-efficacy (Ottenbreit-Leftwich et al., 2018). The participants of this study corroborated this. Some participants expressed feelings of concern for the quality of teaching while online during the pandemic, which correlated to feelings of inadequate instruction.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of this study have implications for the education realm on many levels. Qualitative studies allow the researcher to interpret the findings of the study and offer ways to enact improvements and adjustments (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Based on the findings of this study, there are recommendations for stakeholders involved in the educational process, from parents to federal policymakers. The following section will discuss implications for policy and practice.

Implications for Policy

The first set of implications for this study relates to policy and policymakers. Most institutions were unprepared to transition to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic adequately, given the limited time constraints to make the educational shift (Hodges et al., 2020), including many of the districts in this study despite being equipped with technology or being one-to-one districts. From the findings of this study, working in a technology rich district did not translate to a seamless conversion from daily in-person instruction to synchronous remote learning. Federal, district, and state policies require amending or updating to ensure that responses to possible future emergency remote instruction situations are met with the utmost preparedness.

An Ed Week Research Center survey (Klein, 2021) revealed that pre-pandemic, about two-thirds of secondary students were supplied with a mobile device, that number increased to 90% by March 2021. Similarly, the findings of this study also confirmed a comparable statistic exposing that not all school districts on Long Island had one-to-one policies in place pre-pandemic, leaving districts scrambling to purchase and distribute devices, making the transition to remote learning all the more challenging. In the United States, the federal government is

bounded by the tenth amendment in terms of too much overreach in the daily workings of public schools across the nation, leaving most policy decisions up to the state and individual school districts (U.S. Department of Education, 2021b). Given the fact that less than 10% of education funds come from the federal government (National Education Association, n.d.; U.S. Department of Education, 2021b), there is a renewed call to action post-pandemic to fight for more funding from the federal government to provide internet access to communities and educating the whole child (National Education Association, n.d.). It would be highly advantageous for a federal policy in the area of technology, specifically to include fully equipping all public schools with up-to-date mobile devices for all staff and students. Additionally, a national technology policy should fund the provision for adequate infrastructure in students' homes to ensure ease of access to the internet with the goal of lessening the digital divide, which is what the Success Act aims to accomplish (Egan, 2021). Access and the digital divide remain obstacles to online learning (Zhao & Watterston, 2021). One of the challenges mentioned by most participants was the lack of access to quality internet connections or appropriate mobile devices. Even the districts with a one-to-one device policy in place experienced these difficulties

Implications for school districts are to create clear emergency remote instruction policies. This study showed that districts did not have specific guidelines for parents, students, or teachers when converting to remote learning during a crisis. If students cannot access learning platforms or digital tools, the educational process cannot occur (Kim & Fienup, 2022). Emergency remote instruction policies should include proper training for teachers and students on effectively using the learning management system chosen by their district. Parents also experienced challenges supporting their children learning from home (Klosky et al., 2022). They should be included in training sessions geared towards how they can best help their children during any potential future

remote learning situations. Parents or guardians should be required by district policy to participate in technology training sessions upon receiving mobile devices for their children. It would be beneficial for parents to understand how educational learning platforms operate and function to support student success and promote online safety for their children. Given that nearly 40% of Long Island school districts have now adjusted their snow day and inclement weather policies to convert to remote learning (Kovak, 2022), it is imperative that teachers, students, and parents feel confident in the functionality of this learning modality. This can be accomplished by school districts crafting and delivering comprehensible emergency remote teaching policies to include all relevant stakeholders.

Based on the findings of this study, implications for higher education policy are also evident. Pre-service teacher programs should revise and revamp existing technology courses to ensure they amply cover emergency remote instruction-type situations. In the early stages of teaching during the pandemic, many educators were learning how to teach online for the first time (Trust & Whalen, 2020), thus exposing an area lacking in teacher training programs. Educator training programs should be required by accreditation organizations like the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) to include up-to-date courses that cover all the various learning platforms that exist and focus on the ones primarily utilized during the COVID-19 pandemic. Educators must continue honing their technology skills and not return to pre-pandemic uses of technology (Boivin & Welby, 2021). To ensure this continued technological growth, future classroom teachers should be required to take specific courses centered on the skills needed to teach successfully in a hybrid synchronous learning environment. Preparing future teachers with the skills and knowledge required to effectively use telecommunication tools would allow the

main focus in online learning to be on teaching curriculum (Maher, 2020). A remote teaching practicum should be a nationwide graduation requirement for all teacher education programs.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study also reveal implications for practice relating to public school teachers and students. Human connection was an important finding for this setting that was pertinent to the teachers in this study. In New York State, a certification requirement for first-year teachers is participating in a mentorship program with a senior teacher. The purpose of this program is for veteran teachers to provide support and guidance to new teachers in their first year of teaching (New York State Education Department, 2022a). This mentorship should be revised to include guidance with transitioning to emergency remote instruction. Future first-year teachers did not experience teaching during the pandemic. Therefore, these future teachers who will participate in this mentorship program would benefit greatly by having their mentor guide them through their first year of teaching and teach them how to navigate an unexpected switch to remote instruction.

Another implication for practice is centered around public high school diplomas. Every public school district has graduation requirements for students stipulated by New York State. All high school students in New York must acquire three and a half credits in elective courses (New York State Education Department, 2022b). Requiring students to include at least one elective credit in an area that will help them be more successful in a remote learning environment would be valuable. The students from all the districts included in this study would have benefited from more knowledge on how to learn online effectively; it may also be effective for all students nationwide.

Another clear finding in this study was that students regressed academically and in social-emotional growth. Although legislators promote social-emotional learning, it is not mandated by all states to be included as a part of the curriculum (Gabriel et al., 2019). An implication for students as a result of the findings of this study would be to offer courses that would help them catch up on any learning loss that occurred while being remote during the pandemic. This implication for practice may also be applied to students who experience other personal crises, such as the loss of a loved one, health concerns, or trauma. It is also clear from the findings of this study that students struggled with how to be students again in a brick-and-mortar building upon their return to school. The average student learning during the pandemic returned to school nearly half a year behind in mathematics, around a third of a year behind in reading, and had most parents worried for their mental health (Dorn et al., 2021). Students from this setting also returned to school with noticeable learning loss and mental health concerns. These students may benefit from having required courses for graduation offered to support their skill development to be successful secondary students and classes focusing on social-emotional growth. Initiating skills courses and social-emotional learning courses in secondary schools across the country may also be in the best interest of all students.

Theoretical Implications

This study was guided by Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) transition theory, primarily the 4 Ss. The 4 Ss of transition theory, self, situation, support, and strategies, are different aspects of an individual's life that can help an individual cope with a life transition. The findings of this study confirm the importance of Schlossberg's 4 Ss throughout a life transition, especially during an unexpected transition to emergency remote instruction during a crisis. One of the pieces of the 4 Ss is support. The implication for support in the transition of this study was that participants

highly valued the informal support they received from colleagues experiencing the same transition. An individual's support during a transition can significantly impact how the transition is dealt with (Schlossberg, 2011). Recent post-pandemic literature found that teachers received more guidance with online learning from their individual schools than their districts (Nadeem et al., 2022) and lacked support from school leaders (Wong & Fitzgerald, 2022). The participants of this study also demonstrated this. Many participants expressed inadequate district guidance while teaching during the pandemic but found support at the school level, mainly from colleagues. Participants' experiences with support were a clear indicator of how well they coped with the phenomenon of transitioning to and from remote learning during the pandemic, thereby confirming Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) transition theory.

Another theoretical implication for this study is validating the importance of the component self of the 4 Ss. The construct self refers to an individual's self-confidence in dealing with a life transition (Schlossberg, 2011). Self-confidence or self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993) also played a significant part in participants' experiences throughout the transition to and from remote instruction. Corroborating self-efficacy theory, when participants had higher levels of self-confidence, this translated into more positive experiences with the unexpected transition to remote learning during the pandemic. Self-efficacy has been found to affect online learning domains (Azukas, 2019; Howard et al., 2021; Yang, 2021). Applying this to a new population of teachers transitioning to remote learning during a crisis was also revealed to be an essential factor in participants' experiences. Similarly, in the 4 Ss, a strong sense of self in a transitional situation correlated to an individual coping more effectively.

Empirical Implications

This study revealed several empirical implications. The first area of literature furthered by this study was an understanding of blended or hybrid learning in public secondary school settings. A blended online learning format is one with some combination of in-person teaching and online learning component (Hrastinski, 2019). This study revealed that the most common form of instruction implemented during the transition to and from remote learning involved what participants called a hybrid format. The hybrid format was a combination of in-person teaching with synchronous online learning occurring simultaneously. The findings of this study advance the findings of Reed et al. (2019), where a blended format did not always translate to increased academic achievement for students. This could be attributed to students' self-regulation skills, which is an essential strength for students to possess in the online realm (Alhazbi & Hasan, 2021; Kintu et al., 2017; Mou, 2021). Additionally, this study confirms the findings of Berger et al. (2021) that transitioning to online learning can further reduce students' self-regulatory abilities.

A final empirical implication involves the importance of prioritizing the mental health of both teachers and students. Student loneliness has drastically increased with the unexpected conversion to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Mizani et al., 2022). This study confirms this sentiment in that participants shared experiences of students feeling isolated and disconnected throughout the transition to and from remote learning. Teachers' mental health also took a toll during the transition. Teachers experienced anxiety about their tasks and duties as classroom teachers while developing increasing concerns for their students' mental well-being (Robinson et al., 2022). This study corroborates these findings as well. The results of this study revealed consistent teacher anxiety throughout the transition for personal and professional

reasons. This anxiety was also directly related to concerns for their students' mental health and academic progress.

Limitations and Delimitations

There are three limitations of this study. The first limitation is the use of journal prompts as a data collection method. This could be a limitation because participants could not ask clarifying questions based on the journal prompts, potentially allowing participants to misinterpret a question. While this did not appear to be a factor in this study, Creswell and Poth (2018) noted the limitation of this data collection method, explaining that not all participants may be confident with journaling or effectively communicating their thoughts in this manner. A second limitation of this study is that not every secondary content area was represented by the participants. There were no participants who taught music or theater. A final limitation is that there was only one participant from a middle school. Two other participants worked in a high school that serves grades seven through twelve, but there was only one participant who worked in a building only housing middle school grades. I recruited dozens of potential middle and high school participants, but only one agreed to be in the study.

There are two delimitations to this research study. The first was the decision only to include public school teachers from Long Island. The rationale for this delimitation was to have all participants from one geographical location who had shared experiences with the phenomenon of the study. I chose not to include teachers from private or charter schools because their experiences may have been drastically different from those of Long Island public school teachers. Another delimitation of this study was choosing the phenomenological approach rather than a case study. Using phenomenology allowed me to go beyond the constraints of a case study to examine the phenomenon on a much larger scale by including participants from multiple

schools and school districts. Additionally, the goal of my research was to understand the shared experiences of teachers to describe the essence of the phenomenon rather than attempt to answer how and why questions.

Recommendations for Future Research

Considering the study findings, limitations, and delimitations placed on the study, there are several recommendations for future research. The first recommendation for future research is to investigate this phenomenon by implementing a quantitative study design. It has been found that when students were out of school due to Hurricane Katrina, an uncontrollable natural disaster that forced school closures, there was a decrease in student achievement the first year back to school and then was seen to improve in the second year after the natural disaster (Harris & Larsen, 2022). A prospective quantitative study could include one high school or multiple high schools to examine the current level of student achievement in relation to their age or grade level to determine if instructional time lost during the pandemic, which can also be considered a natural disaster, has been made up or if an achievement gap remains. Schools are currently in that two-year time frame of returning to in-person teaching. Student achievement could be studied to examine if instructional time lost during the pandemic has been accounted for or reversed. A second recommendation for future research is to conduct a case study on the experiences of different populations, namely, teachers from private schools, charter schools, or New York City public schools who also experienced the unexpected transition to and from online learning. A third recommendation is to conduct a qualitative study on teacher mental health or self-efficacy with remote teaching. A final recommendation is to collect quantitative data on teacher satisfaction, pre- and post-pandemic.

Conclusion

Secondary teachers were caught off guard in the spring of 2020 and were ill-equipped to make an unexpected transition to remote learning (Barbour, 2022). This study aimed to understand New York secondary teachers' experiences with the transition to and from remote education. The participants included a diverse mix of secondary teachers from different content areas, with varying years of service, and from multiple school districts spanning all of the geographical regions of Long Island. This study was driven by Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) transition theory, namely the 4 Ss, and confirmed that an individual's situation, self, support, and strategies impacted how secondary teachers coped with an unexpected transition to remote learning.

The participants' voices clearly show that human connection is highly regarded in teaching. Participants found personal and human relationships greatly lacking in the shift to online instruction but found it in support of their colleagues. Participants also restructured priorities while teaching online to incorporate more social-emotional elements during instruction. There was a genuine concern for students' mental health deterioration while learning online. Technology in education is here to stay and is now being used innovatively, by potentially bringing back remote learning due to inclement weather on Long Island (Wilson, 2022). Given that many districts in New York will now use remote instruction to prevent instructional time lost due to school closings caused by hazardous weather conditions, there needs to be a shift in focus on adequately preparing educators to teach online. Access to sufficient internet connection needs to be addressed throughout communities as access to the internet, and online learning resources were challenges during the pandemic (Gross & Opalka, 2020). Students and teachers must be appropriately equipped with up-to-date devices to partake in online learning. Preparation

for the digital world must be all-encompassing and continuous. Teachers and students must be properly trained to address the technical, academic, and social-emotional needs experienced during the pandemic remote instruction.

The unexpected transition to remote instruction brought obstacles and opportunities to the education realm (Grady, 2022); some may call these blessings and curses. With the return to in-person teaching, educators were tasked with the obstacle, or curse, of re-engaging students in the classroom who had increased mental health needs caused by trauma while learning online during the pandemic (Watson et al., 2022). On the other hand, technology was an opportunity, or blessing, that made it possible to continue the learning process during the pandemic and has opened the door to new learning opportunities for the future that are more personalized for students (Zhao & Watterston, 2021). When closing out the focus group with final thoughts on the overall effect technology has had on students during the pandemic, Claire summed it up best, “I feel like it's kind of like a blessing and a curse.”

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Appendix A
IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 4, 2022

Susan Lyman
Kristy Motte

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY21-22-1214 A Phenomenological Study of Secondary Teachers' Experiences with a Mandated Transition to and From Synchronous Online Instruction

Dear Susan Lyman, Kristy Motte,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Title of the Project: A Phenomenological Study of Secondary Teachers' Experiences with a Mandated Transition to and from Synchronous Online Instruction

Principal Investigator: Susan P. Lyman, Liberty University, School of Education

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a current secondary teacher in a Long Island public school who experienced the transition to and from synchronous online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic (the 2019-2020 and/or 2020-2021 school years). Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to understand secondary teachers' experiences with an unexpected transition between in-person teaching and synchronous virtual modalities for secondary educators in New York public schools. The results of this study will illuminate ways to better support educators in times where a transition to online learning could occur again in the future, which will also, in turn, benefit all stakeholders.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in an individual interview virtually of approximately one hour. Interviews will be done using Microsoft Teams. All interviews will be audio- and video-recorded.
2. Complete a participant journal entry by answering four questions. The participant journal entry will be in the form of a word document that will be emailed to me after one week. Journal questions will be emailed directly after individual interviews and will last approximately 30 minutes.
3. If selected, participate in a virtual focus group, lasting approximately one hour. Focus group interviews will be conducted using Microsoft Teams and will be audio- and video-recorded.
4. Review interview transcripts to ensure accuracy for approximately 15 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from participating in this study. However, you may benefit from having a collaborative conversation with colleagues who also experienced the unexpected transition to and from remote learning.

Benefits to society include increased public knowledge on the topic of online instruction, improved learning outcomes, and improved future transitions to online instruction.

Liberty University IRB-FY21-22-1214 Approved on 8-4-2022
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What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews/focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Susan P. Lyman. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, [REDACTED] at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, [REDACTED].

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Liberty University
IRB-FY21-22-1214
Approved on 8-4-2022

Appendix C

Recruitment Letter

Dear Prospective Participant:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree. The purpose of my research is to understand secondary teachers' experiences with an unexpected transition between in-person teaching and synchronous virtual modalities for secondary educators in New York public schools. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be secondary teachers at a Long Island public school and experienced an unexpected transition to and from remote learning during the 2019–2020 and or 2020–2021 school years. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in a virtual interview (one hour), submit responses to four journal prompts (30 minutes), if selected, participate in a virtual focus group (one hour), and to review interview transcripts to ensure accuracy (15 minutes). Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please [click here](#) to complete the screening questionnaire.

A consent document will be emailed to you after I have reviewed the screening questionnaire and determined that you meet the study criteria. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me by email before the first interview.

Sincerely,

Susan P. Lyman
Candidate, Doctor of Philosophy, Liberty University



Appendix D

Participant Screening Questionnaire

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdD3ldXrijudJ11w8s2RP1TtRWJd0-4jseYUfZtW3R9MsfIKw/viewform?usp=sf_link

1. What secondary public school do you currently teach at in Long Island, New York?
2. Did you experience an initial shift to some form of synchronous online instruction as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2019–2020 and/or 2020–2021 school years?
Yes
No
3. Name:
4. Age:
5. Gender:
Male
Female
6. Please specify your race or ethnicity:
White
Black or African American
Latino or Hispanic
Asian
Alaskan Indian or American Indian
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
Two or More
Other/Unknown
7. What is the highest degree you have completed?
Bachelor's degree
Masters' degree
Doctorate degree
8. Please state the content area currently teaching:
9. How many years teaching experience do you have?
10. Please provide your preferred contact information for this study to be able to schedule a Microsoft Teams interview:

Appendix E
Reflective Journal

Date	Entry
August 25, 2022	Bracketed out all preconceived notions and biases about teaching during the pandemic before conducting one-on-one interviews (2)
August 26, 2022	Bracketed out all preconceived notions and biases about teaching during the pandemic before conducting one-on-one interview (1) Bracketed out all preconceived notions and biases about teaching during the pandemic prior to coding and analysis of data
August 29, 2022	Bracketed out all preconceived notions and biases about teaching during the pandemic before conducting one-on-one interviews (3)
August 30, 2022	Bracketed out all preconceived notions and biases about teaching during the pandemic before conducting one-on-one interview (1)
September 2, 2022	Bracketed out all preconceived notions and biases about teaching during the pandemic prior to coding and analysis of data
September 8, 2022	Bracketed out all preconceived notions and biases about teaching during the pandemic before conducting one-on-one interviews (2)
September 13, 2022	Bracketed out all preconceived notions and biases about teaching during the pandemic prior to coding and analysis of data
September 14, 2022	Bracketed out all preconceived notions and biases about teaching during the pandemic prior to coding and analysis of data
September 15, 2022	Bracketed out all preconceived notions and biases about teaching during the pandemic prior to coding and analysis of data
September 19, 2022	Bracketed out all preconceived notions and biases about teaching during the pandemic prior to coding and analysis of data
September 20, 2022	Bracketed out all preconceived notions and biases about teaching during the pandemic prior to coding and analysis of data
September 24, 2022	Bracketed out all preconceived notions and biases about teaching during the pandemic before conducting one-on-one interview (1)
September 25, 2022	Bracketed out all preconceived notions and biases about teaching during the pandemic prior to coding and analysis of data
September 26, 2022	Bracketed out all preconceived notions and biases about teaching during the pandemic prior to coding and analysis of data
September 28, 2022	Bracketed out all preconceived notions and biases about teaching during the pandemic before conducting focus group interview
September 28, 2022	Bracketed out all preconceived notions and biases about teaching during the pandemic prior to coding and analysis of data

Appendix F

Individual Interview Guide

1. Please describe your educational background and career through your current position.
Ice Breaker
2. How many years have you been teaching and in what content areas? Ice Breaker
3. What form of synchronous online instruction did your district initially implement during the mandated remote instruction in the 2019–2020 school year? SQ1
4. What professional development experiences or previous personal experiences with technology prepared you to teach online? CRQ
5. Please describe how your teacher training program prepared you to utilize technology to teach online. CRQ
6. When entering into the online transition, how would you describe your depth of knowledge when implementing or utilizing technology in your pedagogical practices?
SQ1
7. How would you describe your overall level of self-confidence or self-efficacy in your teaching abilities before the 2019–2020 school year? SQ1
8. During the transition to online teaching, in what ways did your school provide technology training and support for teachers who varied in level of technological experience, different content areas, and or varying grade levels? SQ2
9. Which online learning platform(s) did your institution use and what were your experiences/challenges with this platform? SQ2
10. How did your self-efficacy or self-confidence play a role during the transition to teaching online during the pandemic? SQ2

11. What challenges did you face with the unexpected transition from in-person teaching to online teaching? Inside school, outside school, personally? SQ2
12. What were some positive and or negative experiences you encountered with students while teaching online? SQ2
13. What obstacles did your students experience during the rapid conversion to online learning? SQ2
14. What were your experiences with student motivation, engagement, and achievement while learning online? SQ2
15. What personal and or professional challenges did you encounter with the transition back to in-person teaching? SQ3
16. How did you manage the transition back to in-person teaching? SQ3
17. What else would you like to add to our discussion about your experiences with the transition changing from in-person teaching to online teaching that you would like to share? CRQ

Appendix G

Sample Interview Transcript

Lyman, Susan

Please describe how your teacher training program prepared you to utilize technology to teach online.

Guest

There really wasn't that much because back in the day, you know, you're talking about 20 years ago. So you have like a projector and maybe like a few computer games.

Lyman, Susan

When entering into the online transition, how would you describe your depth of knowledge when implementing or utilizing technology in your pedagogical practices?

Guest

Technology, yes. What we had to do, like zero. We didn't use any of that. You know, virtual classroom stuff. I think I did like a FaceTime in with a student that was sick once as a joke, you know, like they wanted extra credit and they came in for, like, a game. It was actually funny. But other than that, we've never used any type of online learning platforms.

Lyman, Susan

How would you describe your overall level of self-confidence or self-efficacy in your teaching abilities before the 2019–2020 and or 2020–2021 school years?

Guest

Hmm, we're going way back.

Obviously over that amount of time period hopefully you'd be considered some type of a master in your field, and if not, you shouldn't be teaching. So I would say confident.

Lyman, Susan

During the transition to online teaching, in what ways did your school provide technology, training and support for teachers who varied in level of technological experience and who taught in different content areas, or varying grade levels?

varying levels.

Guest

When we first went out, nothing. There was really nothing. I think it took everyone forever to try to figure out what was going on, what to use, what's safe. What's not safe. So they kind of left it up to us. You know, we would check in with the kids.

I don't know. I did what I was supposed to do, so I did it every day. Some teachers were only doing once a week, you know, or whatever. Once school started, they did have different program levels, like, you know, Google for beginners, Google for advanced. So they did step it up and and try to implement programs. I didn't have to do it because I figured that stuff out. But I'm sure people did need it. And they did have it on different levels.

Lyman, Susan

So it was always optional?

Guest

You were supposed to go. I'm sure I went. I just don't remember.

It would be like superintendent's conference day type stuff.

Appendix H

Journal Prompt Questions

1. What are things you enjoyed during the unexpected transition from in-person teaching to online learning? SQ2
2. Describe how your student-teacher relationships changed, if at all, throughout the transition, positive or negative. CRQ
3. Describe where you received the most support throughout the transition process, personally and professionally. CRQ
4. Describe any ways that you felt professional growth or stagnation throughout the unexpected transition to and from online learning. CRQ

Appendix I

Focus Group Guide

1. Please introduce yourselves to one another.
2. Describe your thoughts about the theme of one day at a time (uncertainty in the transition) that developed during the individual interviews and journal prompts.
3. Based on your experiences with transitioning between in-person and remote teaching, how would you describe the effects on student well-being, student achievement, and teacher well-being? And how did you manage these?
4. What could have enhanced your experiences during the different stages, (going into remote learning, during, and going back to in-person) of the transition between in-person and remote learning during the pandemic?
5. In terms of transitioning to emergency remote learning, what needs to be done to ensure that all stakeholders are adequately prepared to make this shift possibly again in the future (policy-wise, professionally, personally)?
6. What other experiences would you like to share about teaching during a pandemic that you did not mention in your initial interview or your journal entry?

Appendix J

Audit Trail

Date	Task	Notes
August 4, 2022	IRB Approval	Received email notification of approval
August 8, 2022	Began Recruitment	Reached out to personal contacts and beyond Made social media post
August 15, 2022	Continue Recruiting	Reached out to personal contacts and beyond
August 22, 2022	Continue Recruiting	Reached out to personal contacts and beyond
August 25, 2022	2 Individual Interviews Continue Recruiting Journal Prompts Emailed	Interviews conducted using Microsoft Teams Reached out to personal contacts and beyond Emailed journal prompts directly after interviews concluded
August 26, 2022	1 Individual Interview Significant Statement and Coding Analyses Journal Prompts Emailed Edited Interview Questions	Interview conducted using Microsoft Teams Began analyzing interview transcripts for significant statements Question 5 needed to be clearer Emailed journal prompts directly after interviews concluded
August 29, 2022	3 Individual Interviews Journal Prompts Emailed Edited Interview Questions	Interviews conducted using Microsoft Teams Continued coding interview transcripts Made self-efficacy questions right after each other Emailed journal prompts directly after interviews concluded
August 30, 2022	1 Individual Interview Journal Prompts Emailed Edited Interview Questions	Interview conducted using Microsoft Teams Continued coding interview transcript Added the phrase mental health into question 14 Emailed journal prompts directly after interviews concluded
September 2, 2022	Significant Statement and Coding Analyses	Continued analyzing interview transcripts for significant statements
September 5, 2022	Significant Statement and Coding Analyses	Continued analyzing interview transcripts for significant statements

	Continue Recruiting	Followed up with potential participants
September 6, 2022	Significant Statement and Coding Analyses Continue Recruiting	Continued analyzing interview transcripts for significant statements Followed up with potential participants Posted in Facebook groups
September 8, 2022	2 Individual Interviews Journal Prompts Emailed Edited Focus Group Questions	Interviews conducted using Microsoft Teams Emailed journal prompts directly after interviews concluded Added the theme of mental health to focus group question 2 Edited focus group question 3 to make clearer
September 12, 2022	Continue Recruiting Reminders for Journals Entries	Sent out two more emails to possible participants Sent out reminders to participants about returning journal reflections
September 13, 2022	Significant Statement and Coding Analyses Reminders for Journal Entries Edited Focus Group Questions	Continued analyzing interview transcripts and journal reflections for significant statements Sent out reminders to participants about returning journal reflections Revised focus group questions based on data analysis
September 14, 2022	Significant Statement and Coding Analyses Continued Recruiting	Continued analyzing interview transcripts and journal reflections for significant statements Followed up with two people who fit the criteria to participate
September 15, 2022	Significant Statement and Coding Analyses Continued Recruiting	Continued analyzing interview transcripts and journal reflections for significant statements Sent follow up messages to possible participants
September 16, 2022	Continued Recruiting	Sent recruitment emails
September 19, 2022	Significant Statement and Coding Analyses	Continued analyzing interview transcripts and journal reflections for significant statements
September 20, 2022	Significant Statement and Coding Analyses	Continued analyzing interview transcripts and journal reflections for significant statements
September 24, 2022	1 Individual Interview	Final interview conducted using Microsoft Teams

September 25, 2022	Significant Statement and Coding Analyses	Continued analyzing journal reflections for significant statements
September 26, 2022	Significant Statement and Coding Analyses	Continued analyzing interview transcripts and journal reflections for significant statements
September 28, 2022	Focus Group Interview Significant Statement and Coding Analyses	Group interview conducted using Microsoft Teams Analyzed focus group interview transcript for significant statements