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A Mixed Methods Study Regarding the Impact Virtual Education had on Teachers During COVID-19

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by

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A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Dr. Jared Terry, Committee Member Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree.

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Abstract

Virtual learning and COVID-19 drastically changed the landscape of education. School districts were forced to think about education differently, and COVID-19 led schools and communities into unfamiliar territory with daunting trials and tasks (Pressley & Ha, 2021). The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to add to existing research and examine how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted teachers and school districts during their transition to virtual learning. The social cognitive theory and self-efficacy theory were utilized as the conceptional framework of the study. Phase one of the study included a quantitative survey from one Southwest Missouri school district. A focus group interview with six participants revealed qualitative data in phase two. After analyzing survey data and the focus group interview, three themes emerged, communication, administrative support, and self-efficacy. Implications of this study include the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on teachers' transition to virtual learning through communication, professional learning opportunities, teacher preparedness, and collaborative school culture.

Key Terms: Virtual Education, Transition to Virtual Education, Teaching During a Pandemic, Teaching Through COVID-19, How COVID-19 Affected Educators

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Chapter One: Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic caused school districts to think about education differently; the unfamiliar territory schools and communities were forced to endure led to many trials and tribulations (Pressley & Ha, 2021). Cinteza (2020) stated, COVID-19 "caused the most severe pandemic known since we have clear documents" (p. 3). The pandemic did not only disrupt the learning process for students, rather teachers had to learn and adjust to the life of virtual learning (Daniel, 2020; Mallillin et al., 2020).

In Chapter One, background information is given about the educational paradigm shift from seated, in-person instruction and education, to virtual learning and instruction because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Research demonstrates the difficulties teachers had to undergo, issues, and problems due to COVID-19 (Pressley & Ha, 2021). Because of the pandemic, teachers gained practical knowledge and skills in distance and virtual learning; however, the transition to virtual learning was not smooth for everyone (Harrison & Barber, 2021). The analysis begins with the conceptual framework of the study, then the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, and significance of the study. Chapter One also includes definitions of key terms and delimitations, limitations, and assumptions of the study.

Background of the Study

People become teachers for a plethora of reasons; Marston (2010) suggested,

> All three levels of teachers [elementary school, middle school, and high school], identified Professional Satisfaction factors (e.g., satisfaction in working with students and seeing them learn, joy in teaching one's subject, etc.) as the most powerful motivators in their decision to remain in the classroom. (p. 445)

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual instruction in classrooms was used in moderation; the traditional learning environment typically incorporated technology in combination with online and traditional learning styles (Sharma & Alvi, 2021). According to Meyer (2020),

> Virtual learning is not 'extra' or 'same thing, but online.' It is a 'different learning experience…' Virtual learning is that it is not a traditional classroom activity moved online; rather, it is a learning experience integrated within the curriculum that is specifically designed to be experienced online. It lives online regardless of whether a classroom is face-to-face or remote. Students engage in core learning processes and outcomes in a virtual learning instructional sequence, which will require different types of computer technologies. (para. 17)

The value of an instructor and teacher in the classroom cannot be replaced virtually; moreover, students need interactions with teachers and other students as well as the structure and discipline that seated instruction provides (Mages, 2020; Sharma & Alvi, 2021).

Another key component of seated instruction is social development, specifically in younger students it is essential for development and foundational skill-building elements; the virtual learning transition led to numerous unknowns and new experiences that students, teachers, and school leaders across all levels of education were not adequately prepared to address (Hiranrithikorn, 2019; Sharma & Alvi, 2021). Many challenges surfaced as school districts across the nation began transitioning to a virtual learning platform due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus (Cinteza, 2020; Harrison & Barber, 2021; Wilcha, 2020). Educators had to quickly change the dynamic of the classroom on a daily basis, which increased the time and amount of work spent preparing for lessons (Brunetto et al., 2021; Hassan et al., 2020; Phillips & Cain, 2020). Student and teacher interaction also changed; students and teachers had to overcome several technological issues and changes, as well as establish effective learning environments from home and communicate effectively (Daniel, 2020; Orhan & Beyhan, 2020).

Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the perspective of education considerably from students having to physically attend school, sit in a traditional classroom and take in a lecture, to students having to transition to virtual learning in an unrealistic time frame (Brunetto et al., 2021; Daniel, 2020; Mallillin et al., Orhan & Beyhan, 2020). Pohkhrel and Chhetri (2021) determined the difficulties in the shift from seated instruction to virtual instruction included issues managing online learning platforms, as well as the teacher's pedagogical shift in how

teaching occurred through a new medium. Students also faced stark changes coming back from the COVID-19 pandemic and struggled mentally and emotionally with the virtual learning transition (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021; Sharma & Alvi, 2021).

According to Caprara and Caprara (2021), “The unprecedented scope and unforeseen turmoil caused by the COVID-19 crisis resulted in a delayed and mixed response for how educators could meet the daily social-emotional needs of their students who were now being taught in ways that were not conducive to learning such as having no face-to-face communication” (p. 3685). Students’ grades were frozen, and school districts could not hold them responsible for completed work, which impacted student motivation and commitment to schoolwork and the learning process (Caprara & Caprara, 2021; Sharma & Alvi, 2021). Caprara and Caprara (2021) stated, “Our students went from daily, face-to-face interaction that built relationships and promoted positive social-emotional skills to the bare minimum interaction of a posting or an email a few times a week” (p. 3685). The virtual learning paradigm cannot replace the human interaction of the teacher (Singh, 2021).

In order to help close the learning gaps, social and emotional gaps, and behavior gaps caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers need adequate training and professional development on how to effectively and efficiently create and share educational content through the virtual learning platform (Hussan & Hussain, 2020). Not only is training important for educators, but students and

families as well; school districts need to adequately prepare educators to handle the social and emotional needs of students in order to create valuable instruction and support students and their families (Caprara & Caprara, 2021).Through professional learning opportunities, teachers can create exciting and engaging student learning environments; however, school districts need to make sure students and staff have equitable opportunities to participate in virtual learning (Brunetto et al., 2021; Hassan et al., 2020).

Seated instruction cannot be duplicated virtually; however, virtual learning does provide students and teachers with flexibility and alternative environments for learning that can be successful (Hassan et al., 2020). The realm of education is changing because of COVID-19 (Harrison & Barber, 2021; Webb et al., 2021). Because of the pandemic, virtual learning has revolutionized education, providing school districts with new opportunities and options to educate and engage with students (Harrison & Barber, 2021; Webb et al., 2021). However, teacher preparatory programs will have to adapt the way in which they educate future educators; colleges and established school districts will have to include skills and strategies in planning virtual lessons, as well as provide professional development opportunities to teachers, in order to adapt and change with the landscape of education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Webb et al., 2021).

Theoretical Framework

The social cognitive theory and self-efficacy theory were the frameworks which guided this study. The social cognitive theory was introduced by Albert

Bandura in 1986 after he had previously developed the social learning theory in the 1960's (LaMorte, 2019). The social cognitive theory suggests learning transpires through personal, behavioral, and environmental interactions (Pressley & Ha, 2021; Wang & Wu, 2008). LaMorte (2019) stated, "The goal of SCT [Social Cognitive Theory] is to explain how people regulate their behavior through control and reinforcement to achieve goal-directed behavior that can be maintained over time" (p. 1). Pressley and Ha (2021) considered, "Information regarding a person's efficacy comes from previous success in the specific domain…" (Pressley & Ha, 2021, p. 2). Pressley and Ha (2021), acknowledged that teacher's self-efficacy in terms of instructional strategies, student achievement, and success in the classroom derives from prior execution and success in the classroom setting.

In the traditional classroom, subjects such as "grammar, reading, rhetoric and logic, and mathematics… and a study of the greatest books of the Western world" were taught by teachers through lecture and repetition (Edwards, 2011, p. 3). Wang and Wu (2008), suggested that Bandura believed "The relative importance of personal, behavioral and environmental influences would vary for different activities and under different circumstances" (p. 1590). The social cognitive theory directly correlates with students' learning environments and the behaviors and dynamics of the classroom environment and learned experiences (LaMorte, 2019). LaMorte (2019) acknowledged that expectations were major contributors to the social cognitive theory,

> People anticipate the consequences of their actions before engaging in the behavior, and these anticipated consequences can influence successful completion of behavior. Expectations derive largely from previous experience… [and] focus on the value that is placed on the outcome. (LaMorte, 2019, p. 1)

The learning environment is essential to the success of individual students; however, teachers had to quickly change and adapt the environment to something entirely new amidst the COVID-19 pandemic (Daniel, 2020).

The transition to virtual learning, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, required a seismic shift in the way education operated (Daniel, 2020; Mallillin et al., 2020). Due to technology updates and the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers were forced to look at education through a different lens (Pressley & Ha, 2021; Ramezani et al., 2019). According to Ramezani et al. (2019), "Self-efficacy theory is based on the person's judgment about themselves in managing self-care activities to achieve the desirable result" (p. 2). Teaching and education require a significant amount of self-reflection and measuring progress in the classroom in order to gauge student achievement, Seneviratne et al. (2020), suggested "The feeling of confidence about one's ability to add this teaching method to one's repertory of teaching skills is an important predictor of its happening in the classroom. This confidence is known as self-efficacy" (p. 1595). Educators use the self-efficacy theory to measure individual success in the classroom in order to gauge abilities and proficiency levels (Hajovsky et al., 2020 & Ramezani et al.,

2019). Self-efficacy is also used for teachers to reflect on various practices such as instructional strategies, formative and summative assessments, critical thinking, student engagement, and classroom management (Hajovsky et al., 2020).

For teachers, measuring achievement using the self-efficacy theory is something most do without realizing it, such as setting goals (Hajovsky et al., 2020; Wu & Wang, 2008). Goal setting is critical in the self-efficacy process (Hajovsky et al., 2020; Wu & Wang, 2008). By setting goals and achieving them, individuals create a higher sense of self-efficacy; "Observing similar peers complete a task successfully generates a sense of self-efficacy that helps to improve performance" (Wu & Wang, 2008, p. 1596). When teachers and students had to transition to virtual instruction and virtual learning, student relationships were key in measuring teacher self-efficacy. Hajovsky et al (202) explained,

> Teachers who are confident in their abilities to deliver competent instruction and effective classroom management, ostensibly through more affective responses to student needs, spend considerably more effort on the task of teaching… higher teacher self-efficacy beliefs are theorized to affect cognitive appraisals of situations and free emotional resources that allows attention to be focused on building supportive and caring relationships with their students… teachers with lower self-efficacy beliefs may engage in controlling or defensive behaviors that not only hinder the learning environment, but also establish a communication pattern that is

> marked by hostility and insecurity. Thus, higher self-efficacy beliefs are likely to strengthen the quality of the relationship teachers have with students. (p. 144)

Therefore, when transitioning to virtual instruction, teachers need to have a higher self-efficacy belief in their inherent ability to build relationships, as well as teach, and provide valuable instruction to students, so learning transpires (Hajovsky et al., 2020; Wu & Wang, 2008).

Pressley and Ha (2021) discovered it was imperative schools make self-efficacy a priority with teachers and staff to avoid teacher burnout. Teachers with increased importance and value in self-efficacy are more likely to adapt and change when education requires evolution (Hajovsky et al., 2020; Pressley & Ha, 2021). According to Pressley & Ha (2021), "At the school level, a school's physical location does not impact a teacher's self-efficacy; however, the school environment does play a role" (p. 2). Therefore, effective school environments, with effective school teachers, achieve high self-efficacy beliefs (Pressley & Ha, 2021). Consequently, relationships derived from the school environment and culture can impact self-efficacy among teachers because of the positive work and classroom environment (Pressley & Ha, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

The problems in this study were teacher preparedness, professional development and support from schools, as well as self-efficacy while teaching virtually throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Trust and Whalen (2020)

determined, “additional research is needed to provide better support, preparation, and professional development for educators” (p. 194). Trust and Whalen (2020) suggested “additional studies are needed regarding the difference in ERT [Emergency Remote Teaching] and blended or online teaching” (p. 194).

School districts were faced with huge challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Daniel, 2020; Gonzales & Jackson, 2020; Pressley & Ha, 2021). Because of COVID-19, educators had to re-evaluate why they became teachers (Daniel, 2020). Gonzales and Jackson (2020) and Mallillin et al. (2020) reported the learning process transitioned during the COVID 19 pandemic to a more student-centered learning pedagogy; this change to virtual learning was starkly different from the traditional classroom setting, which caused teachers to undergo new challenges in the virtual learning environment.

Virtual learning encompasses several facets, synchronous, asynchronous, and hybrid (Bojović et al., 2020; Demazière, 2021; Dung, 2020). Through virtual learning, the environment in which students are interacting with the teacher and receiving instruction is different than the traditional classroom (Pressley & Ha, 2021). Pressley and Ha (2021) also discovered that teachers who practice self-efficacy to gauge the success of instructional strategies and student achievement are specifically impacted by COVID-19 because the environment in which students learn and teachers provide instruction, drastically changed.

Pressley and Ha (2021) suggested the environment in which students and teachers learn, matters (Pressley & Ha, 2021). In addition to the learning

environment, teacher preparedness was equally significant demonstrating that teachers who were adequately prepared to teach virtually, and received professional development on teaching remotely, obtained an increased self-efficacy which led to better relationships with students and confidence in the virtual classroom (Orhan & Beyhan, 2020; Pressley & Ha, 2021). Professional development when implementing virtual learning is essential to higher self-efficacy, which leads to increased student achievement and a better learning environment (Pressley & Ha, 20201; Webb et al., 2020).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to add to existing research and examine how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted teachers' transition to distance and virtual learning through the social cognitive and self-efficacy theory. Specifically, the study analyzed the preparedness of teachers to provide virtual instruction. The study also examined teachers' experiences providing virtual learning during the pandemic. Singh (2021) stated, "Digital technology is largely reshaping the nature of learning in classroom. Digital classroom is one clear manifestation of this emerging trend" (p. 20). Minkos and Gelbar (2021) suggested teachers had to rapidly adjust the curriculum from in-class discussions and assignments to a format workable for online learning, which led to new educational experiences. For the purpose of this study seated instruction is defined as students being physically present, in the classroom, for face-to-face learning instruction from their teacher.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following research questions and hypotheses guided the study:

1. What practical knowledge/experiences have Southwest Missouri teachers gained during the transition to virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How did the transition to virtual learning affect the views of Southwest Missouri teachers regarding administrative support?
3. What professional learning experiences were provided to Southwest Missouri teachers during the transition to virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Significance of the Study

The results of this study extend current research regarding how districts can ensure the preparedness of teachers and also support teachers when the necessity to transition to a virtual learning platform occurs. Virtual learning, since COVID-19, has impacted students and teachers in ways that caused educators to change the process in which instruction was delivered (Daniel, 2020; Gonzales & Jackson, 2020; Mallinin et al., 2020). According to Gonzales and Jackson (2020), "To help prepare schools for distance learning, some school districts are now purchasing laptops for distribution to students, transforming schools into… *one-to-one laptop schools"* (p. 56). Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual learning platforms and strategies have provided school districts with flexibility and options on how to communicate and engage with students, as well as their

families (Harrison & Barber, 2021). How then, did school districts, school leaders, teachers, students, and communities quickly adapt and implement a plan to achieve and receive a fair and equitable education amidst a global pandemic?

This study analyzed the impact and usefulness of technology, and the school district support of that transition, in the classroom due to the progression of virtual learning in the educational learning environment. This study was significant because it may alter how school districts, as well as teacher preparatory programs, guide professional development in the future. Based on the information gathered in the study, school districts may analyze feedback and data to guide virtual instruction and support teachers. The findings of this study may also be used to support the implementation of virtual education, technology integration, and technology support for educators in various school districts. In addition, teacher feedback will be analyzed and used to assess the effectiveness of the transition to virtual learning, as well as the adjustment and success in implementing virtual learning.

Definition of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

COVID-19

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC, 2021):

> COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by SARS-CoV-2; a coronavirus discovered in 2019. The virus spreads mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs,

> sneezes, or talks. Some people who are infected may not have symptoms. For people who have symptoms, illness can range from mild to severe. (para. 1)

Implementation

The Cambridge English Dictionary (2022), defined implementation as "the act of starting to use a plan or system" (para. 1). For the purpose of this study implementation will be defined as the process of acquiring laptops to integrate one-to-one technology.

One-to-One Laptop Schools

According to Gonzales & Jackson (2020), one-to-one laptop schools are "schools in which every student uses a laptop for curriculum and teachers provide technology-enhanced instruction" (p. 56).

Professional Development

The Cambridge English Dictionary (2022) defined professional development as the "training that is given to managers and people working in professions to increase their knowledge and skills" (para. 1). For the purpose of this study professional development will be defined as additional training given to teachers to improve classroom instruction and student achievement.

Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions

The scope of the study was bounded by the following delimitations:

Time Frame

The research took place during the summer and fall semesters of the 2022-2023 school year. Research was conducted through a voluntary survey with teachers of the School District A in Southwest Missouri. Upon completion of the survey, volunteers from each building: elementary school, middle school, and high school, participated in a focus group discussion. The focus group discussion was conducted with teachers from each independent building in the district who had at least two years of teaching experience.

Location of the Study

The study was conducted at a rural school district in the southwest Missouri region (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2022).

Sample

The sample included certified teachers, male and female, who taught students in grades K-12 in a rural southwest Missouri district. Individuals could have taught any subject or content area in the school district to participate.

Criteria

The sample only included certified teachers who taught students in grades K-12 and that were professionally certified by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. In order to participate in the study, teachers in grades K-12 had to have taught for at least two years and taught during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The following limitations were identified in this study:

Location of the study

The location of the study is a limitation because the study focuses on southwest Missouri teachers from one rural school district. Therefore, the data is not representative of the entire state of Missouri.

Sample Demographics

The sample size of six participants is a limitation of the study. The study included one focus group with two members from each educational level: elementary school, middle school, and high school. The selection and purpose of this group was to provide insight and analysis to the transition from seated instruction to virtual learning and education through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Size of School

The size of the school is another limitation of the study. The district had a student population of approximately 1,100 students, which breaks down into approximately 400 students per building.

Experience in Education

Experience in education is a limitation to the study as well. In order to participate in the study, a minimum requirement of two years in education was necessary. Teachers must have experienced teaching virtually, through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data

The data collected is a limitation because teachers are using personal experiences and analysis to reflect and provide information for the study.

Time Frame

The time frame is a limitation of the study because it specifically ranges from 2019-2022 covering the time frame of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Instrument

The instrument used to collect data in the study was created by the researcher, which makes it a limitation.

The following assumptions were accepted:

1. The responses of the participants were offered honestly and willingly.
2. The sample was representative of the general population of educators who held teaching certificates from the MODESE.

Summary

Explained in Chapter One is the impact COVID-19 had on education. Not only did the pandemic affect businesses, jobs, and families, but it had lasting effects on the educational landscape (Daniel, 2020; Mallillin et al., 2020). The background of the study included the outline of the evolution of technology in education. There was a shift in education from a seated, in-person, traditional learning environment to a virtual, one-to-one, distanced learning environment (Gonzales & Jackson, 2020; Mallillin et al., 2020).

Specified in the background of the study was how important and valuable a teacher is to the learning process and student achievement. Specifically, the learning environment and the significance that relationships and the learning environment had on students, as well as teachers, were discussed. The implementation of a virtual learning plan had to happen quickly, which forced educational institutions, school leaders, teachers, students, and community members to adjust and adapt quickly (Brunetto et al., 2021; Hassan et al., 2020; Phillips & Cain, 2020).

Teachers had to measure their success as a virtual instructor using the social cognitive theory and self-efficacy theory that was analyzed in the theoretical framework. The social cognitive theory theorizes that personal, behavioral, and environmental factors affect an individual's capacity to learn (Pressley & Ha, 2021; Wang & Wu, 2008). Teachers were affected during the pandemic because the environment that they were used to teaching in changed from a physical classroom to a virtual setting.

The transition to virtual learning required several new aspects from teachers and students. Teacher preparedness and self-efficacy during the COVID-19 pandemic was examined in the statement of the problem. The learning environment changed emphatically, and teachers had to measure their success amidst new and unknown circumstances (Daniel, 2020). The purpose of this study was to identify the preparedness of teachers, and their experiences when asked to transition to virtual learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter One also included the research questions which were developed to guide the study. The importance of this study regarding teacher preparation and professional development opportunities for virtual learning and how that impacts school districts, teachers, and students moving forward in the virtual learning paradigm was provided in the significance of the study. The definition of key terms included important language and terms in the field of education relevant to this study. Finally, the delimitations, limitations, and assumptions section included the areas of the study that might affect the outcome.

Outlined in Chapter Two is a review of literature. There is also an increased discussion on the theoretical framework presented in Chapter One. Also included in Chapter two are discussions on the effects of COVID-19 on education, virtual learning, educational learning pre-COVID-19, educational learning post-COVID-19, the transition schools made to virtual learning, administrative support for virtual learning, and professional learning opportunities for virtual learning.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Chapter Two includes the theoretical framework and review of the literature. Both social cognitive theory and self-efficacy theory will provide a lens through which to view this study. The transition from a traditional learning environment to a new, virtual learning environment will be presented. Teachers use self-efficacy to gauge their effectiveness and success in implementing virtual learning strategies and techniques (Pressley & Ha, 2021). However, transitioning to virtual learning was not easy for school districts, employees, and communities (Harrison & Barber, 2021). This chapter also analyzes the challenges in providing an equitable virtual education for all students amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Chapter Two, the theoretical frameworks, as well as the many effects the COVID-19 pandemic, had on teachers, students, and education as a whole is explored. Literature is reviewed from the aspect of virtual learning and education prior to COVID-19 and post-COVID-19, as well as schools' transition to virtual learning, administrative support for virtual learning, and professional learning opportunities for teachers in virtual learning.

Theoretical Framework

The social cognitive theory and the self-efficacy theory have integral roles in teachers' evaluations and on how they integrate and implement technology in the classroom (Pressley & Ha; 2021). Pressley and Ha (2021) suggested that environment learning transpires directly correlates with the teacher's ability to apply self-efficacy; the social cognitive theory relies heavily on the environment

and behaviors to shape an individual's learning, which affects self-efficacy. Albert Bandura developed the social cognitive theory in 1986 (LaMorte, 2019).

According to Bandura (2017), "Social cognitive theory explains human accomplishments and well-being in terms of the interplay between individuals' attributes, their behavior, and the influences operating in their environment" (p. 1452). Bandura (2017) suggested individuals are not simply products of life's circumstances, rather people contribute to their own circumstances. Bandura (2017) theorized that social cognitive theory categorized these circumstances and contributors to a number of factors including "cognitive, vicarious, self-regulatory, and self-reflective capabilities that play a central role in the human self-development, adaptation, and change" (p. 1452).

Another aspect of Bandura's social cognitive theory is vicarious capability; through vicarious capability, individual's practice modeling (Bandura, 2017). As stated by Bandura (2017),

> Unlike learning by doing, which requires shaping the actions of each individual laboriously through repeated consequences, in observational learning, a single model can simultaneously convey new ways of thinking and behaving to countless people in widely dispersed locales. Observers can now transcend bounds of their immediate environment. (p. 1452)

Through the aspect of virtual learning, modeling and observing become the primary cognitive aspect in instructing and receiving an education (Bandura, 2017; Pressley & Ha, 2021).

Bandura (2017) suggested people have such great cognitive capacities and understandings of the environments surrounding them that every part of their lives is impacted; in addition, this cognitive ability motives and impacts people emotionally and allows them to sort and organize information to use in the future. Traditional, seated instruction, and the relationships and experiences formed in the classroom, is a direct correlation to Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2017; Hajovsky et al., 2020; Pressley & Ha, 2021). Bandura (2017), stated "By symbolizing their experiences, people give coherence, direction, meaning, and continuity to their lives" (p. 1452).

Bandura (2017) suggested, "Much human learning relies on the models in one's immediate environment" (p. 1452). Teachers, when measuring academic success in the classroom, must rely on prior environmental experiences (Pressley & Ha, 2021). Bandura (2017) stated, "As a general rule, people do things they have seen succeed and avoid those they have seen fail… People also influence their own motivation and behavior by the positive and negative consequences they produce for themselves" (p. 3).

In addition, Bandura's self-efficacy theory relies on an individual's success in environments that are used as experience in order to measure self-efficacy (Pressley & Ha, 2021). Bandura and Adams (1977) stated "self-efficacy is the mechanism through which treatments reduce avoidance behavior… efficacy expectations instated by partial mastery experiences would accurately predict the level of subsequent behavioral change" (p. 300). The higher and stronger the self-

efficacy of the individual, based on previous experiences, the stronger their coping and behavioral mechanisms (Bandura & Adams, 1977; Pressley & Ha, 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers had to utilize self-efficacy to weigh the success of virtual instruction; teachers who had an increased self-efficacy in the classroom environment likely had better success transitioning to virtual learning because of the experience and comfortability scaffolding lessons for students and coaching them through errors because of the relationships teachers had built while in the classroom (Hajovsky et al., 2020; Pressley & Ha, 2021).

Self-efficacy forces individuals to judge themselves and their performance to gauge if the expectations have been met (Ramezani et al., 2019). Seneviratne et al. (2020) determined self-reflection was imperative in measuring success and progress in the classroom, or virtual classroom, for teachers when ascertaining that student achievement happens; adequate self-efficacy comes from confidence in applying what has been learned to current teaching methods and teaching skills in the classroom. According to Pressley and Ha (2020), “With all the changes teachers faced during COVID-19… the teaching environment played a critical role in maintaining teachers’ sense of success” (p. 2). Teachers whose school district administration and school leaders clearly outlined a plan and communicated expectations clearly, as well as provided school teachers with professional development and collaboration opportunities, also exhibited a higher self-efficacy rate (Pressley & Ha, 2020).

Effects of COVID-19 on Education and Student Learning

According to Brunetto et al. (2021), “As schooling moved online, teachers were forced to change how they taught” (p. 1). The educational system required to teach students had to change because of the COVID-19 pandemic (Brunetto et al., 2021; Hassan et al., 2020). With schools closing, teachers had to transition and implement a new system of learning (Brunetto et al., 2021).

Brunetto et al. (2021) reported teacher practice oftentimes directly correlates with their beliefs; but, a change in practice can result in a change in beliefs and impact student learning through virtual education because of COVID-19. As stated by Hassan et al. (2020), “Quality education is the only long-term rescue for all the challenges… the need to find out the alternative solution to the traditional classroom teaching-learning is the concern of all stakeholders and the only option found is online…” (p. 17). While virtual learning cannot replace seated instruction, the flexibility of online learning can benefit students; by offering students an alternative form of education, some students may succeed when they previously would not have been successful (Hassan et al., 2020).

COVID-19 caused school districts and teachers many challenges and forced them to drastically change the landscape of education from traditional, seated instruction to virtual learning (Brunetto et al., 2021; Daniel, 2020; Mallillin et al., 2020; Orhan & Beyhan, 2020). According to Orhan and Beyhan (2020), “Distance education was less successful than formal education because of lack of communication and interaction quality” (p. 8). The transition to virtual learning

and virtual education created an extra workload on teachers (Phillips & Cain, 2020).

In a COVID-19 world, teachers were forced to do more work than ever; teachers had to overcome technical issues, extended time planning lessons, transitioning from seated to virtual instruction, working from home, and other issues that arose seemingly overnight (Phillips & Cain, 2020; Orhan & Beyhan, 2020). Every teacher is different; transitioning to virtual learning, and all of the unknowns, new learning styles, and dealing with COVID-19, teachers were sometimes resistant to this change (Brunetto et al., 2021). Understanding COVID-19 as an individual and family, an increased workload, and a change in educational pedagogy all drastically increased the things teachers had to handle on a daily basis (Brunetto et al., 2021, Phillips & Cain, 2020; Orhan & Beyhan, 2020).

Orhan and Beyhan (2020) discovered that the interaction between students and teachers changed during COVID-19. Because of the difference in interaction, student achievement and student learning were hampered; “There were problems in distance education due to teacher qualities such as preparing quality materials in distance education, creating appropriate learning environments, communication, and presentation” (Orhan & Beyhan, 2020, p. 13). The teachers play a critical role in the virtual learning landscape and education (Brunetto et al., 2021; Orhan & Beyhan, 2020). Orhan and Beyhan (2020), determined that the student success in a virtual learning environment is largely due to the teacher

conducting those lessons as well as the amount of student participation in the virtual lessons:

> It was observed that teachers attributed the ineffectiveness of distance education to the problems caused by lack of face- to- face interaction between teacher and student. It was expressed video conferencing conducted by teachers provided for synchronous listening but not watching; the students could see their teachers but the teachers could not… that's why some student[s] remained passive; the teachers were not able to make eye contact with the students. (p. 38)

The technical problems between teachers and students resulted in poor communication when integrating and using virtual learning platforms which results in lower student learning probabilities (Daniel, 2020; Hassan et al., 2020; Orhan & Beyhan, 2020).

To further improve the transition to virtual learning, Hussan and Hussain (2020) suggested "There is a need for professional development of teachers with emphasis on use of ICT tools in creating, sharing, and disseminating content and use of online modes of teaching learning process" (p. 25). Not only is professional development and professional learning opportunities imperative to the successful implementation of virtual learning, but also is creating an online environment conducive to student learning, having adequate infrastructure and internet capabilities, and ascertaining equity among students and staff is achievable to

ensure learning transpires (Brunetto et al., 2021; Hassan et al., 2020). Therefore, according to Orhan and Beyhan (2020),

> Teachers' inexperience had an impact on teachers' perception of distance education… engagement of students was crucial to promote teachers' satisfaction with distance education. The teachers kept traditional teaching techniques in designing lessons and developing materials. Lack of social interaction and eye-contact with students; absence of feedback lowered the effectiveness of distance education. (p. 39)

Students thrive on seated instruction and in-person interactions where higher learning and student achievement can manifest, especially without adequate teacher knowledge and direction regarding virtual learning (Hussan & Hussain, 2020; Orhan & Beyhan, 2020).

Virtual Learning

Mallillin et al. (2020) suggested:

> Online learning education pedagogy is the trend at present in the educational system due to [the] Covid 19 pandemic crisis. It explores the pedagogical design in the academic competency of student development in various digital learning literacy on technology collaborative enhance[d] learning. (p. 71)

Virtual learning has emphatically changed the landscape of education; virtual learning, because of COVID-19, has given students and teachers different avenues to experiment educationally (Daniel, 2020; Mallillin et al., 2020).

Dung (2020), explained, "*Virtual education* generally refers to instruction in a learning environment where teacher and student are separated by time or space, or both. The course contents are conveyed through IT applications, multimedia resources, the Internet, videoconferencing, etc." (p. 45). The types of virtual instruction can typically be narrowed down to three common types, asynchronous, synchronous, and hybrid online courses (Bojović et al., 2020; Demazière, 2021; Dung, 2020).

Asynchronous learning provides students with an opportunity to work on assignments and complete coursework within a specific time frame (Bojović et al., 2020; Demazière, 2021; Dung, 2020). Because there is not a specific, assigned class time, students have the opportunity to choose when to do work and work at their own pace (Bojović et al., 2020; Demazière, 2021; Dung, 2020). Student-teacher interaction does not happen face-to-face, rather the interaction happens through mediums such as discussion boards, emails, or other electronic avenues (Bojović et al., 2020; Demazière, 2021; Dung, 2020). One of the integral parts of asynchronous learning is the convenience of the learning process; students can access the lessons and materials independently in a flexible environment (Bojović et al., 2020; Demazière, 2021; Dung, 2020). Because of the digital advancement in technology, more people have access to education (Singh, 2021).

In contrast to asynchronous learning, synchronous learning environments happen when the teacher and students are interacting simultaneously through an online platform (Bojović et al., 2020; Dung, 2020). A common practice in

synchronous instruction is the method of the flipped classroom; as Demazière, (2021), stated “The key aspect of flipped classrooms is freeing time in the classroom in order to organize engaging activities with the students under the teacher’s supervision, thus favoring more active forms of learning” (p. 5). Through flipped classrooms, the teacher provides instruction for students via video conferences, chats, audio recordings, and other online modems, which frees students and classmates to participate in the class wherever they are, in real time (Demazière, 2021; Dung, 2020). Bojović et al. (2020) added, “Synchronous courses are often preferable, owing to the immediate feedback, increased level of motivation, and an obligation to be present and participate” (p. 2). Bojović et al. (2020), Demazière (2021), and Dung (2020) determined synchronous instruction gives students opportunities to respond through collective online interactions with teachers and peers.

Another type of virtual learning is a hybrid learning environment where “courses require meeting in-person during a semester and provide for computer-based communication in between those face-to-face sessions. A hybrid type of virtual learning therefore can be both asynchronous and synchronous, and face-to-face interaction” (Dung, 2020, p. 46). Hybrid learning provides educators with unique flexibility with instruction, providing opportunities to facilitate online and in-person lectures and the ability to reach students with different learning styles and differentiate lessons accordingly (Demazière, 2021; Dung,2020). Hybrid instruction combines both asynchronous and synchronous learning environments

while also incorporating aspects of traditional instruction as well as online instruction (Bojović et al., 2020).

Dung (2020) found that virtual learning had a plethora of options in which students could be taught; one of the main components of virtual learning was that the educational institution had the capability to increase the amount of information students could consume. The flexibility of online instruction coupled with the students' flexibility to access the information was what made virtual learning unique, convenient, and accessible (Demazière, 2021; Dung, 2020). Virtual learning, whether asynchronous, synchronous, or hybrid, provides students with "24/7 availability of the recorded lectures and electronic resources… [that makes] this teaching format particularly well suited for continuous education of staff members and life-long learning" (Demazière, 2021, p. 10).

Educational Learning Pre-COVID-19

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual learning was used sporadically, "a combination of online and offline learning methods," in the traditional classroom environment (Sharma & Alvi, 2021, p. 2). The art of teaching in traditional education also included the skill of storytelling; according to Mages (2020), "Good storytelling captivates audiences… This ability to enchant listeners also makes it an engaging, and instructive mode for delivering education content" (p. 1). As stated by Singh (2021),

> In the traditional classroom, teaching and learning are mostly based on the simple use of notebooks, textbooks, photos and so on. The approach is essentially confined to the model of chalk and talk. The classroom lecture and the amount of knowledge flowing to the students are usually linear. (p. 22)

Traditionally, students have looked at the teacher as the primary knowledge source in the classroom, and traditional learning environments also looked confined between four walls (Singh, 2021). Virtual learning cannot replace the instructor in the classroom, the presence of the teacher, peer interaction for students, or compensate for a lack of extrinsic motivation and time management skills, all of which are imperative to face-to-face instruction and are lacking in virtual learning (Mages, 2020; Sharma & Alvi, 2021). All of these components lead to better listening skills and a higher level of comprehension from the student (Mages, 2020; Sharma & Alvi, 2021).

Another key component of seated instruction includes social interaction and communication in the classroom (Hiranrithikorn, 2019; Sharma & Alvi, 2021). Specifically, the social interaction among younger students is imperative for development and skill-building in the classroom; face-to-face instruction provided students with structure whereas the transition to virtual learning enabled a multitude of unknown factors and new experiences (Hiranrithikorn, 2019; Sharma & Alvi 2021). Furthermore, teachers have always been known for adaptability and flexibility; before COVID-19, teachers did not have to worry

about how to communicate with students differently, assess students differently, or engage in virtual learning environments (Webb et al., 2021).

Educational Learning Post-COVID-19

COVID -19 “has caused the most severe pandemic known” in most lifetimes (Cinteza, 2020, p. 3; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Educational institutions across the country were forced to shut down as stated by Preeti Tarkar (2020), “For controlling the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, educational institutions have been temporarily closed by most of the countries around the world. Over 90 percent of the student population of the world are affected by this closure nationwide” (p. 3812).

Sharma and Alvi (2021) and Tarkar (2020) suggested the educational model had to shift to online digital platforms. Students were faced with a drastically different experience post-COVID-19 in regards to education; students struggled psychologically and emotionally after transitioning from in person, face-to-face learning, so the perception of post-pandemic learning affected the learning process (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021; Sharma & Alvi, 2021). Students did not receive adequate time to prepare for the shift in educational pedagogy which used a variety of online learning platforms such as “Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, Canvas and Blackboard, which allow the teachers to create educational courses, training and skill development programs” (Pohkhrel & Chhetri, 2021, p. 135).

While online programs were implemented during the pandemic, educators faced many challenges when transitioning to virtual learning (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021; Sharma & Alvi, 2021; Tarkar, 2020). Educational institutions were forced to make a decision with the information given at the time of the lockdown in March of 2020 regarding virtual learning; however, as stated by Hafeez et al. (2021), "These difficulties and problems connected with new technology comprise of downloading, installation issues, login issues and audio and video problems. Sometimes the learners find online learning to be tedious and unstable" (p. 331). Technology is a vital part of learning, but students need teachers in front of them; students need the human aspect of teaching and learning (Singh, 2021). Another factor in virtual learning is the socioeconomic status of the students; students who are academically advanced and financially stable are more likely to be successful in a virtual learning environment than students who are not offered the same opportunities outside of the school walls (Hafeez et al., 2021; Tarkar, 2020).

Schools Transition to Virtual Learning

School districts transitioned to virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, causing students to miss multiple weeks of face-to-face, seated instruction, which was unprecedented (Cinteza, 2020; Thorn & Vincent-Lancrin, 2022). However, each district implemented virtual learning differently; as stated by Bojović et al., (2020), "The speed of the transition depends on the efficiency of the educational institution… the availability of resources, and the complete

infrastructure of the educational institution." (p. 1-2). COVID-19 led schools to make quick decisions that impacted entire communities; in order to effectively transition to virtual learning, school districts had to make equitable decisions:

> Ultimately, [virtual learning] begins with the institution; if there is no commitment to ensuring the use of a high-quality [curriculum] and no focus on securing and maintaining human resource social supports that students and families have come to rely on the school to provide, then the mental health and academic achievement of its students can deteriorate. (Caprara & Caprara, 2021, p. 3712)

School districts faced numerous challenges when transitioning to virtual learning as the COVID-19 global emergency impacted citizens across the United States (Cinteza, 2020; Harrison & Barber, 2021; Wilcha, 2020).

Virtual learning in education is not going to disappear; due to the pandemic, educational institutions had to adapt and implement a new system quickly that has now provided school districts with more options for educating, engaging, and communicating with students (Harrison & Barber, 2021; Webb et al., 2021). The digital classroom allowed students to access content outside of the traditional school walls (Singh, 2021). Harrison and Barber (2021) stated, "the rapid changes caused by the pandemic continue to be a catalyst for the evolution of online education." (p.1522). Educational institutions had to make decisions and implement an entirely new practice at a rate that was unprecedented and unfamiliar; the shortened timeline to implement such drastic changes resulted in

school districts asking teachers to teach virtually as an emergency option because of the pandemic, rather than actually educating students online in an appropriate and effective manner (Harrison & Barber, 2021). Not only were teachers asked to make this transition rapidly, without any appropriate training or instruction, but also students, parents, and community stakeholders were forced to adapt and change to virtual learning on the fly as well:

> When this was unsuccessful, it… caused an immediate attitudinal shift to the idea that online education was not as effective as face-to-face learning. However, the lack of preparation of instructors and policymakers was more of a factor in the poor learner experiences, rather than the actual positive and emerging potential of online learning. (Harrison & Barber, 2021)

Face-to-face instruction, formative assessments, physical diagrams, examples, labs, and other metrics in education are missing when implementing a virtual model, which is a result of the unpreparedness of educators when implementing virtual learning in the COVID-19 pandemic (Caprara & Caprara, 2021; Harrison & Barber, 2021; Wilcha, 2020).

The lack of interaction among peers, tutors, and the misunderstanding of individual student needs that directly correlates with seated instruction is a direct microcosm of virtual learning (Thorn & Vincent-Lancrin, 2022; Wilcha, 2020). Thorn and Vincent-Lancrin (2022) noted

> The mode of instruction shifted from face-to-face contact with teachers/instructors to some form of remote learning, often supervised by parents. The home and social environment of children was also affected in many ways that, in its turn, may have affected the educational experience of children. (p. 384)

The transition to virtual learning also impacted the parents and the lives of children at home; not only were some parents laid-off work during the COVID-19 pandemic, but education was not at the forefront of their minds with family dynamics, sickness, and finances (Thorn & Vincent-Lancrin, 2022).

Other components public education and educational institutions faced during the transition to virtual learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic included making the coursework rigorous enough while not compromising academic integrity and ensuring equity for all students (Harrison & Barber, 2021; Li et al., 2020). The effects of schools being closed for long periods of time can impact students negatively, specifically, students who are not afforded the same opportunities as other students because of socioeconomic status, family dynamics, or the environment in which they live (Li et al., 2020). Li et al., (2020), expressed:

> Students from low-income families may lack access to a household computer, resulting in significant learning loss relative to their peers during periods of remote instruction. Without reliable access to free and

> reduced-cost meals, these students might also not have enough to eat. (p. 38)

Molnar et al. (2019) found that minority student families with a low income do not have the same access to technology as families with higher socioeconomic status. Minority student families are more likely to choose to enroll in a charter school than white families who choose to enroll students in virtual learning opportunities (Molnar et al., 2019). Harrison and Barber (2021), suggested, "Educational institutions found themselves grappling with how to meet the holistic needs of their student body during the pandemic" (p. 1524).

School districts were faced with numerous challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic; shutting down and closing the school doors, transitioning to virtual learning without adequate training, and trying to provide and meet the needs of all students equitably proved to be a challenging time for school officials and leaders, students, parents, and community members alike (Harrison & Barber, 2021; Li et al., 2020; Thorn & Vincent-Lancrin, 2022). Thorn and Vincent-Lancrin (2022), ascertained:

> It was very or somewhat likely that their child would encounter at least one of three digital obstacles to doing their schoolwork at home ('needing to use a cell phone,' 'using a public Wi-Fi network because no reliable internet at home,' and 'being unable to complete schoolwork because they did not have access to a computer at home') directly correlates with the income of the family. (p. 388)

In addition, the transition to virtual learning and utilizing online learning platforms requires input from all parties involved in the educational institution (Bojović et al., 2020; Loose & Ryan, 2020). Stakeholders need to be consulted, teachers and instructional leaders, curriculum design updated, the delivery of online instruction, student interventions, and support services, as well as collaboration and the analysis of student learning, are key factors in the implementation of virtual learning, which places more responsibility on the student as an independent learner (Bojović et al., 2020; Loose & Ryan, 2020). Singh (2021) suggested that because of the technology, students might acquire bad habits of neglecting classwork and lectures because "they will be under the impression that lectures can be recorded in their computer apps, and they can listen whenever they wish to" (p. 26). Virtual classrooms provide students with more opportunities to integrate technology, which also leads to potential distractions through various social media outlets, which might slow the learning process; moreover, "Relying so much on the information available may deprive them of developing skills to critically filter them… [and] too much [time] on computer[s] may weaken the problem-solving abilities" (Singh, 2021, p. 26).

Administration Support for Virtual Learning

The transition to virtual learning cannot solely rest on the teachers and faculty, rather educational institutions need to provide employees with required training and workshops to ensure student success (Bojović et al., 2020; Torres-Martin et al., 2021). As stated by Sharin (2021), "An integral part of the practical

preparedness… is online training. Institutions should engage more than ever before in the professional progression of their faculty in order to update their teachers on successful strategies or approaches of using online technology" (p. 18). In addition to teacher preparation and training, Torres-Martin (2021), suggested, "The transition to online teaching in these circumstances has signified a hurried process…." (p. 3). In order for online teaching to be effective and efficient, school districts and administrators must adequately support its teachers and instructional leaders; alas, the involvement of teachers in the paradigm shift to a virtual learning curriculum needs to be utilized because teachers have questions about how to appropriately teach and support the students virtually (Li et al., 2020; Torres-Martin et al., 2021). Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, educators had to shift from integrating technology on the day-to-day instruction to solely relying on technology as the only means to provide instruction for students which drastically changed the teaching and learning environment for administrators, teachers, and students (Bojović et al., 2020; Loose & Ryan, 2020; Webb et al., 2021).

The transition to virtual learning was not only a surprise for students and teachers, rather the transition proved difficult to navigate for administrators as well (Metcalfe & Perez, 2020). Administrators across the country were faced with decisions such as feeding students, providing instruction for all students, helping teachers, and providing avenues for families to access online materials who do not

have internet access at home (Metcalfe & Perez, 2020). According to Bojović et al., (2020)

> [Schools] should instead provide faculty with instructional courses and workshops… There is a challenge for lecturers to shift from this passive to active learning strategies, and this challenge becomes even more significant in the context of a transition toward online teaching. (p. 2)

Administrators and school districts need to support teachers during this transition in order to reach and strive for student success (Bojović et al., 2020; Webb et al., 2021). School districts needed to produce continuity amongst educators (Bojović et al., 2020; Webb et al., 2021). Bojović et al. (2020) and Webb et al. (2021) also suggested that school districts needed to continue helping teachers manifest skills and qualities for working and providing online instruction because the majority of educators did not receive training in virtual instruction during their undergraduate coursework. For this reason, professional development and administrative support when transitioning to online learning is imperative (Bojović et al., 2020; Webb et al., 2021). According to Pressley and Ha (2021), "school environments that provide support to teachers through coaching or mentoring often see an increase in teacher self-efficacy" (p. 2).

Professional Learning Opportunities for Virtual Learning

According to Webb et al., (2021), professional learning opportunities are imperative to the success of future teachers:

> The learning curve will continue to exist. No longer is it enough to excel teaching in-person; future educators, as well as current ones, will need to also excel using other platforms… it is important that we approach teacher education/development by providing teachers with learning opportunities that support the extension of knowledge around virtual teaching and learning. (p. 114)

Additionally, teacher readiness, as well as student and family readiness, is a priority that school districts must prepare for; educators need appropriate training and clear expectations for how to socially and emotionally support students and families (Caprara & Caprara, 2021; Singh, 2021). Teachers and school districts need professional development to ensure student success, "Substantial professional development is needed to ensure that teachers know how to provide social opportunities… that encourages group work, formal and informal interactions, and peer-to-peer cooperative learning" (Caprara & Caprara, 2021, p. 3712).

When COVID-19 transpired across Southwest Missouri and the United States, teachers had to learn and adapt quickly; administrators quickly spread the word to teachers in various districts that themes of success in virtual learning and instruction include flexibility, opportunities, and consideration (Chamberlain et al., 2020). Specifically, teachers and faculty were encouraged to alter course expectations, provide adequate grading options, and instructional strategies (Chamberlain et al., 2020). Chamberlain et al. (2020) added, "To help do this, a

variety of online workshops were quickly developed and offered to faculty… such as ‘Remote Instruction: Student Engagement’ and ‘Remote Instruction: Course Delivery and Design Workshops” (p. 247). Professional development opportunities for teachers in the midst of a pandemic, and moving forward in education, are essential to sustaining success when implementing virtual learning and instruction (Webb et al., 2021).

Webb et al. (2021) acknowledged teachers were being asked to do things that were not necessarily taught to them in college; most teachers’ understanding of virtual instruction happened during professional development opportunities once part of a school district. Moving forward, it is essential for college teacher education programs, as well as school district administrators, to incorporate virtual learning skills and strategies into lessons and professional development opportunities (Webb et al., 2021). Teaching online is part of the changing landscape in education and “school districts and educator preparation programs should consider periodically administering self-efficacy surveys of teachers’ knowledge and skills in technology to ensure students are receiving high-quality instruction” (Webb et al., 2021, p. 126). Professional development also encourages teachers to obtain a higher level of self-efficacy (Pressley & Ha, 2021).

Summary

Chapter Two included a more thorough explanation of the two theories selected to guide this study. Other topics covered in the review of literature were

the effects of COVID-19 on education and student learning, virtual learning, educational learning pre-COVID-19, educational learning post-COVID-19, and schools' transition to virtual learning. Finally, administration support for virtual learning and professional learning opportunities for virtual learning were provided.

Chapter Three will include the problem and purpose overview, the research questions, and a rationale for the research design. Also included in Chapter Three will be a description of the population and sample and the instrumentation used in this mixed methods study. Finally, the collection of data, the data analysis, and ethical considerations for the study will be provided.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Chapter Three begins with a discussion of the problem and purpose of the study. Next, the research questions are provided. The research questions correlated with the sources used in the study, and the research questions helped guide the development of the survey as well as the focus group questions. The research design is described and the population and sample are defined. Chapter Three also includes the instrumentation, the collection of data, and the data analysis. Finally, the ethical considerations are detailed.

Problem and Purpose Overview

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the preparedness of teachers and an analysis of teacher performance using self-efficacy theory, while providing virtual instruction to students, was investigated in this study. Schools and teachers endured numerous challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Daniel, 2020; Gonzales & Jackson, 2020; Pressley & Ha, 2021). The transition from traditional, seated instruction, to a virtual, more student-centered instructional pedagogy, forced teachers to change and adapt to the many virtual learning challenges (Gonzales & Jackson, 2020; Mallillin et al., 2020).

The purpose of this study was to examine how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted teachers' transition to virtual learning. Specifically, teachers' preparedness and their experiences when challenged with providing virtual learning while applying the social cognitive theory and self-efficacy theory will be explored in this study. Singh (2021) stated, "The emergence of digital

classroom in the recent times is an absolute path-breaker… In fact, education and technology are destined to be intertwined" (p. 21).

Research Questions

The following research questions and hypotheses guided the study:

1. What practical knowledge/experiences have Southwest Missouri teachers gained during the transition to virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How did the transition to virtual learning affect the views of Southwest Missouri teachers regarding administrative support?
3. What professional learning experiences were provided to Southwest Missouri teachers during the transition to virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Research Design

This study is a mixed design study utilizing a quantitative survey after which an analysis of the results and teacher focus group discussion will be expounded upon in the qualitative phase (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A critical part of research is the interview process of the teachers; the opportunity to observe and evaluate behaviors is imperative and essential to qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The teachers participating in this research were certified through the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MODESE). The focus group discussion included certified teachers from three buildings, elementary school, middle school, and high school.

The mixed-methods research design also allowed data to be triangulated, which “involves recognizing multiplicity and simultaneity of cultural frames of reference providing a plurality of techniques to best ensure accurate description and presentation of a given situation” (Rose & Johnson, 2021, p. 10). By including a focus group of teachers from three different buildings, and multiple perspectives and directions, the identifiable cause of the research can be more accurately located (Rose & Johnson, 2021). Rose and Johnson (2021) suggested the ability to use information from the literature review would aid in more consistency when interpreting the data. Rose and Johnson (2021) explained, “Qualitative codes, themes, and overall analyses can be more coherently justified based on a converging coherence from multiple sources, increasing the validity of the study” (p. 10). Using a mixed-methods study, Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated that using validity strategies such as triangulation of “different data sources” allowed for a more “coherent justification for themes” (p. 200).

Population and Sample

School District A was selected purposefully. Johnson and Christensen (2020) suggested a purposive sample is selected based on specific criteria. The district was selected based on location (within a 20-mile radius of Springfield, Missouri) and district size (800-1200 students).

A census sample was used to determine survey participants. In a census sample, data is collected from the whole population (Fraenkel et al., 2019). All 1st-12th grade certified teachers in the district were invited to participate in the

survey. For the purpose of this study, a certified teacher refers to a teacher that has been professionally certified by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and has taught for two or more years. Survey participation was voluntary and participants completed the survey via an anonymous survey link. All participants were provided with research information sheets and notified that they may withdraw from the study at any time (Burkholder et al., 2020; Johnson & Christensen, 2020; Mertens, 2020). According to MODESE (2022), there are 128 eligible survey participants. Certified teachers who choose to participate in the study volunteered to do so by completing the survey. The last question of the survey asked for focus group volunteers. The first two volunteers to complete the survey from each building and indicate a willingness to participate in the focus group discussion were selected.

Focus group participants were assigned an alphanumeric code and names and email addresses were kept on a password protected computer to maintain participant anonymity (Burkholder et al., 2020; Johnson & Christensen, 2020; Mertens, 2020). The teachers who participated in the focus group consisted of educators from three different levels of education, elementary school, middle school, and high school. The elementary school had 559 students; the middle school had 409 students; and the high school had 343 students (MODESE, 2022). School District A functions as a one-to-one school district and contains 128 certified teachers (MODESE, 2022). The focus group discussion gathered perspectives on how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted teachers' transition to

virtual learning. The participating teachers were asked to discuss how their administration supported the transition to virtual learning, as well as how the administration prepared for the virtual learning transition when COVID-19 closed schools in March of 2020. The teachers were also asked to discuss personal experiences of teaching virtually and the struggles they and their students faced when implementing a virtual learning curriculum. Teachers also discussed professional development opportunities provided to them.

Instrumentation

This mixed methods study included two different instruments. The instruments were created using the research questions and the review of literature. Both the survey instrument and the focus group discussion instrument were researcher-created.

Quantitative

Research question one focuses on the knowledge and experience teachers gained transitioning to virtual learning through the COVID-19 pandemic; survey statements 1–5 aid in the understanding and comprehension teachers went through while transitioning, teaching, and self-assessing their performance through virtual learning (Brunetto et al., 2021; Hassan et al., 2020; Phillips & Cain, 2020). Research question two focuses on the administrative support of teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic and teachers' perception of administrative aid; survey statements 6-10 ask teachers to reflect on administrative support, practices, and adaptations of virtual learning throughout the COVID- 19 pandemic (Asio &

Bayucca, 2021; Cutri et al., 2020; Noor et al., 2020). Lastly, research question three asks how teachers utilized professional learning opportunities offered by school administration to ease the transition to virtual learning; survey statements 10–14 ask teachers to reflect on the professional learning opportunities and educational support given to them during the COVID-19 pandemic that aided in individual growth (Darla-Hammond & Hyler, 2020; Flores, 2020; Webb et al., 2021). Specifically, the survey was designed and administered through Qualtrics, which aided in the speed and efficiency of the research process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Reliability. Reliability, according to Creswell and Creswell (2018), "refers to the consistency or repeatability of an instrument" (p. 154). Since the survey instrument was researcher-created, test-retest reliability was used (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The survey was field-tested by a group of certified teachers not participating in the study at two different times, one week apart to ensure statements were clear and participant responses were consistent. Creswell & Creswell (2018) also suggested using continuous scales ranging from (strongly disagree to strongly agree) to administer a survey.

Validity. Creswell and Creswell (2018) discussed establishing validity to analyze and manifest useful and identifiable inferences from the instrument. Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated "Establishing the validity of the scores in a survey helps researchers to identify whether an instrument might be a good one to use in survey research" (p. 153). Content validity refers to explaining if the items

researched through the survey measure what the original goal of the survey was to measure; moreover, does the survey accomplish the purpose (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)? The survey was field-tested by certified teachers not participating in the study to ensure content validity.

Qualitative

Focus group discussion questions 1-5 were created to answer research question one which focused on the knowledge and experience teachers gained during the transition to virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Brunetto et al., 2021; Hassan et al., 2020; Phillips & Cain, 2020). Questions 6–10 were created to answer research question two focusing on teachers' perceptions of administrative support during the pandemic (Asio & Bayucca, 2021; Cutri et al., 2020; Noor et al., 2020). Finally, questions 11–14 were created to answer research question three and asked teachers to reflect on the professional learning opportunities that were provided to better prepare them for virtual learning during the pandemic (Darla-Hammond & Hyler, 2020; Flores, 2020; Webb et al., 2021).

The focus group participants were asked to discuss their experiences and self-efficacy in teaching and providing virtual instruction for students through the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, focus group participants were asked to elaborate on individual experiences teaching virtually, lessons learned through COVID-19, the school district's transition to provide virtual learning opportunities, administrative support for virtual learning, and professional learning opportunities provided by the administration and the district for teachers

to apply in their pedagogies.

Reliability. Rose and Johnson (2020) stated "Increasing reliability can be achieved through a variety of consistencies that demonstrate a study's rigorous and systematized nature" (p. 8). To ascertain reliability, transcripts and recordings were double-checked and then sent to the participants for member checking. Member checking is the process of taking the "preliminary data analysis back to some of the participants and ask whether your interpretations 'ring true'" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 246). The documentation of procedures and methods should be consistent and repeatable by other researchers, and themes and codes discovered and analyzed in the study should be defined clearly, with consistent definitions, in order to remain uniform throughout the research (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

Validity. The purpose of validity in a mixed methods study is to ensure what was intended to be measured and recorded, was recorded accurately, and how well that was accomplished (Rose & Johnson, 2021; Sürücü & Maslakci, 2020). As stated by Sürücü and Maslakci (2020), "Validity is determined by the meaningful and appropriate interpretation of the data obtained from the measuring instrument as a result of the analyses" (p. 2696). Creswell and Creswell (2018) explained the intent of a mixed methods study is "To understand the data at a more detailed level by using qualitative follow-up data collection to help explain quantitative results, such as a survey" (p. 127). It is imperative that the techniques and strategies used in the study match up with the research questions and the

universal purpose of the study as well (Rose & Johnson, 2021). To ensure the validity of the qualitative instrument, a group of certified teachers not participating in the study were asked to perform the Validation Rubric for Expert Panel on the focus group questions. According to Simon and White (n.d.), the "VREP is designed to measure face validity, construct validity, and content validity" (p. 2).

Data Collection

After receiving school district permission from the superintendent (see Appendix A) each building principal was contacted by phone and informed of the research. Building principals from each participating building were then sent an email (see Appendix B) with a copy of the survey participation letter (see Appendix C), the research information sheet (see Appendix D) and the survey link (see Appendix E) link and asked to forward the information to certified teachers in their respective buildings. For the purpose of this study, a certified teacher referred to teachers who had taught for two or more years, had taught students in grades K–12, and who were professionally certified by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The survey link remained open for one week. The last question on the survey asked participants to indicate if they would be willing to participate in a focus group discussion by including their email address. The first two teachers from each building who submitted their completed survey and indicated interest in participating in the focus group discussion were selected to participate in the focus group.

After participants were selected the certified teachers were emailed a letter of participation (see Appendix F), a copy of the research information sheet, and a copy of the focus group discussion questions (see Appendix G). The focus group took place virtually.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data from this study was analyzed and presented through the use of descriptive statistics (Burkholder et al., 2020; Gayle, 2000). Gayle (2000) stated, "Descriptive statistics provide simple summaries about the sample and the measures. Together, with simple graphics analysis, they form the basis of quantitative analysis of data" (p. 1). Tables and figures were used to display percentages and present the survey data from the study. Once the data was collected through Qualtrics, the data from each survey statement was downloaded to excel. Percentages were established for each response and tables and figures were created to present the data.

Open and axial coding was used for the analysis of the qualitative data. Garvey and Jones (2021) described open and axial coding as building concepts and theories from already existing data. Burkholder et al. (2020) defined open coding as, "the process of identifying, labeling, examining, and comparing your codes and categorizing them into larger, conceptual categories encompassing a variety of similarly themed codes" (p. 236). Once categories are established, the process of axial coding takes place. Axial coding involved grouping the open coding categories into themes (Burkholder et al., 2020). Garvey and Jones (2021)

stated “Through open and axial coding, researchers break data down into parts, or codes, that are then interrelated to explain social phenomena” (p. 2). Open and axial coding allows for the deciphering and analysis of themes and concepts from the focus group questions, backed by literature from the literature review, in order to draw conclusions (Burkholder et al., 2020; Garvey & Jones, 2021).

For this study, the focus group discussion was transcribed using an online transcription tool. Once transcribed, the transcripts were emailed to the participants for verification. After participants had verified their responses, the process of open coding took place. Categories were established during open coding. After the main categories had been established, further analysis allowed for the identification of the major themes during the axial coding process.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations must be considered when conducting a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods study (Burkholder et al, 2020; Johnson & Christensen, 2020; Mertens, 2020). The research information sheet included the purpose of the study, risks of the study, and instructions for subjects in the study to opt out of participating whenever they deem necessary. No identifiable information was collected from survey participants and participation in the survey was voluntary. Focus group participants were assigned alphanumeric codes to protect their identity and data is secured on a password-protected computer (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Prior to the focus group discussion taking place, the participants acknowledged and were advised that the information and comments

they provided to the study might be recognized despite all attempts to protect their anonymity.

Summary

Chapter Three provided a discussion on the methodology used in the study. The problem and purpose overview outlined the importance of teacher preparedness and analysis of individual teacher performance through the self-efficacy theory. Specifically, teachers analyzed performance of themselves and the school district while implementing and providing virtual instruction for students due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The research questions were restated.

Chapter Three included the research design, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations of the study. The research design included a mixed-methods approach which utilized a survey and a focus group discussion (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The population and sample for the study were selected purposefully, utilizing location and district size (Johnson & Christenson, 2020). The instrumentation used in this study included a survey and a set of focus group discussion questions, which were supported by research provided in the literature review.

The data collection process included a permission letter from the district superintendent, as well as cooperation from each building principal at the elementary school, middle school, and high school in the district. Certified teachers, with at least two years of experience, voluntarily participated in a survey. Survey participants indicating an interest in participating in the qualitative

portion of the study were selected to participate in the focus group discussion. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data. For the analysis of the qualitative data, open and axial coding was utilized. Using the information gathered and organizing the data into themes and concepts allowed for the analysis and examination of the represented themes (Burkholder et al., 2020). Chapter Three also provided a discussion of ethical considerations in the study, which must be discussed when utilizing a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods study (Burkholder et al, 2020; Johnson & Christensen, 2020; Mertens, 2020).

Chapter Four will include a presentation of the data. Tables, figures, and percentages will be used to illustrate the data. Both direct quotes and a synthesis of participant responses will be used to present the qualitative data.

Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

Introduction

Education was drastically changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic; students and teachers used virtual learning to explore different avenues to administer educational resources (Daniel, 2020; Mallillin et al., 2020). Furthermore, analyzing how teachers were affected by the transition to virtual learning throughout the COVID-19 pandemic can allow teachers, administrators, and school districts to reflect on past practices and learning opportunities to evaluate the transition to virtual learning. The purpose of this study was to add to existing research and examine how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted teachers' transition to distance and virtual learning through the social cognitive and self-efficacy theory. Specifically, the study analyzed the preparedness of teachers and their experiences when challenged with providing virtual learning for students throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

A researcher-created survey and focus group interview questions were used as data collection instruments. The survey included 13 Likert-type scale statement questions. The survey was created to identify how school districts prepared and handled the transition of virtual learning through the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as how teachers viewed, reflected, and assessed their own experiences as an educator through the virtual learning transition. A total of 128 certified teachers at one Southwest Missouri school district were sent the survey for completion. Data collected were based on the sample (n= 32) of educator

responses to The Impact Virtual Education had on Teachers Transitioning through COVID-19 Survey.

Phase two of the study included a focus group interview. Interview questions were created by the researcher in order to receive qualitative responses from participants. The focus group interview questions were aligned with the research questions of this study and open-ended responses allowed the researcher to analyze the results. The focus group interview included fourteen interview questions to ascertain reliability. The data consisted of a sample (n=6) of MODESE certified educators' responses.

After collecting the data from The Impact Virtual Education had on Teachers Transitioning through COVID-19 Survey, descriptive statistics, utilizing histograms to analyze each statement's response, were used. Focus group interview data were analyzed and themes were identified using open and axial coding.

Quantitative Data Analysis

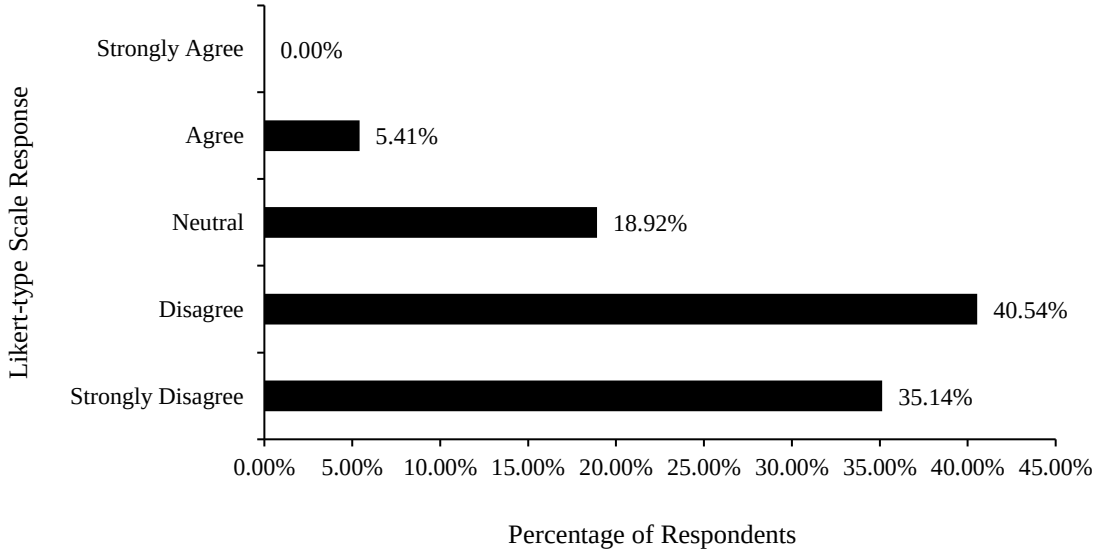
Survey Statement 1

The first survey statement asked participants to respond to the statement, *I enjoy teaching virtually*. Of those participants, 75.68% responded strongly disagree or disagree (see Figure 1). Of the 75.68% of study participants who strongly disagreed or disagreed, 35.14% strongly disagreed while 40.54% disagreed that they enjoyed teaching virtually. Subsequently, 18.92% of the survey participants responded neutral, and only 5.41% of participants agreed that

teaching virtually was an enjoyable experience. No survey participants indicated that they strongly agreed with enjoying the process of teaching virtually.

Figure 1

I Enjoyed Teaching Virtually



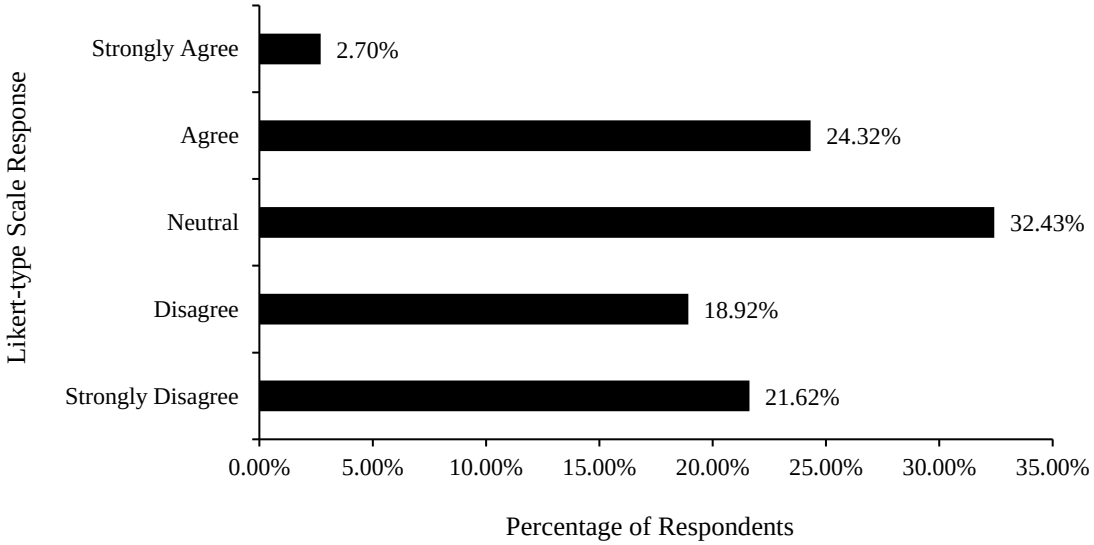
Survey Statement 2

Participants in the study were asked to respond to the statement, *I learned how to be a better teacher through virtual learning*. Survey response data indicated 21.62% of teachers strongly disagreed with that statement (see Figure 2). The survey data also indicated 18.92% of teachers disagreed with becoming a better educator through virtual learning. A total of 40.54% of educators strongly disagreed or disagreed with the survey statement. Of the teachers participating in the survey, 32.43% of teachers remained neutral when asked about becoming a better teacher through virtual learning while 24.32% of teachers agreed with the

statement. Only 2.70% of teachers strongly agreed they learned to be a better teacher during virtual learning.

Figure 2

I Learned How To Be A Better Teacher Through Virtual Learning



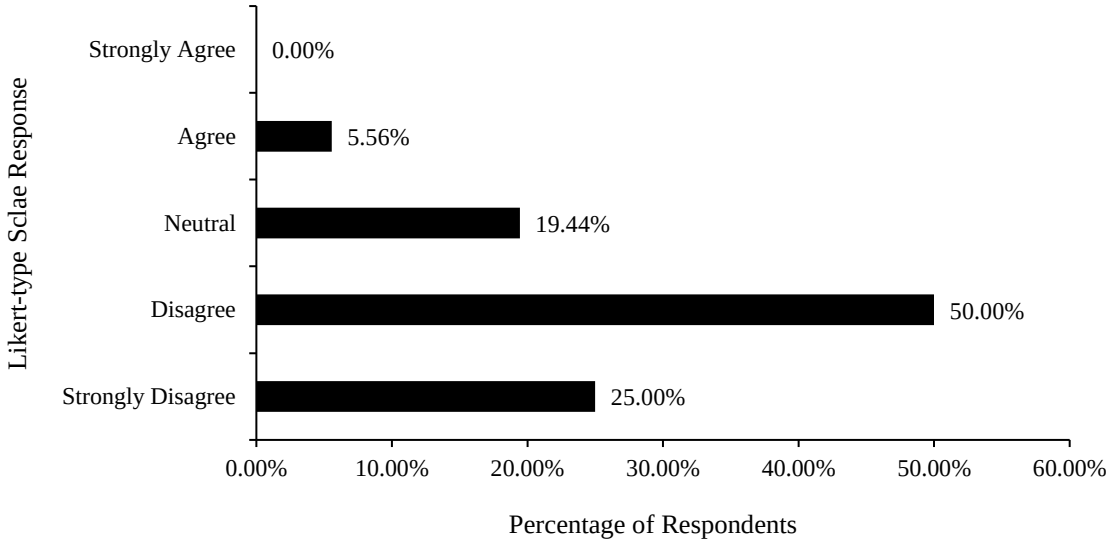
Survey Statement 3

Survey statement 3 asked participants to identify if their transition to virtual learning during COVID-19 was smooth. Survey response data indicated that 75% of participants strongly disagreed or disagreed that the overall school district transition to virtual learning during COVID-19 was smooth (see Figure 3). Of the 75% of participants who indicated the transition to virtual learning during COVID-19 was smooth, 25% strongly disagreed and 50% disagreed. Of the teachers participating, 19.44% of survey participants indicated a neutral response and only 5.56% of survey participants agreed that the transition to virtual learning

during COVID-19 was smooth. No respondents indicated they strongly agreed with the smooth transition to virtual learning during COVID-19.

Figure 3

The Transition to Virtual Learning During COVID-19 Was Smooth



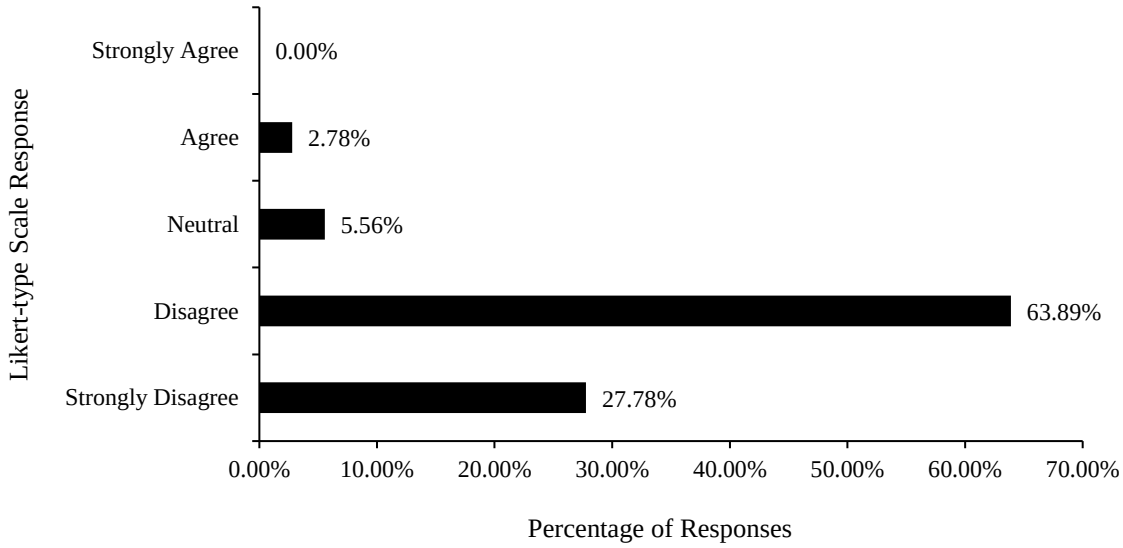
Survey Statement 4

Participants in the study were asked to respond to the statement, *Students were prepared when school returned in session in August 2020*. Survey response data indicated 91.67% of participants strongly disagreed or disagreed that students were prepared when school returned in August 2020 (see Figure 4). Of the 91.67% of respondents who strongly disagreed or disagreed, 27.78% strongly disagreed that students were prepared when school returned in August 2020 and 63.89% of respondents disagreed that students were prepared when school

returned in August 2020. However, 5.56% of survey participants responded neutral, and only 2.78% of survey participants agreed that students were prepared when school returned in August 2020. No participants strongly agreed with the statement.

Figure 4

Students Were Prepared When School Returned in August 2020



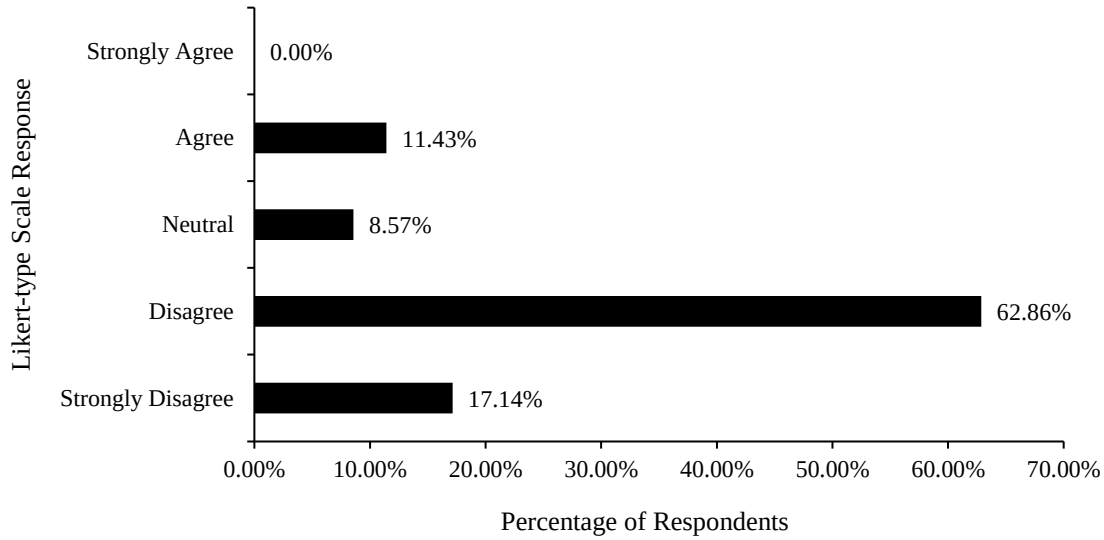
Survey Statement 5

Participants in the study were asked to respond to the statement, *I taught my students the same way when school resumed session in August 2020.* Survey response data indicated that 80% of participants strongly disagreed or disagreed that, as teachers, they taught students the same way when school resumed sessions in August of 2020 (See Figure 5). Of the 80% of respondents who strongly

disagreed or disagreed, 17.14% strongly disagreed that they taught students the same way when school resumed in August 2020, and 62.86% of respondents disagreed that they taught students the same way when school resumed in August 2020. Only 8.57% of survey respondents indicated a neutral response to teaching the same way when students returned in August 2020 while 11.43% of participants indicated they agreed with teaching the same way when school resumed session in August 2020. No participants strongly agreed with the statement.

Figure 5

I Taught My Students the Same Way When School Resumed Session in August 2020

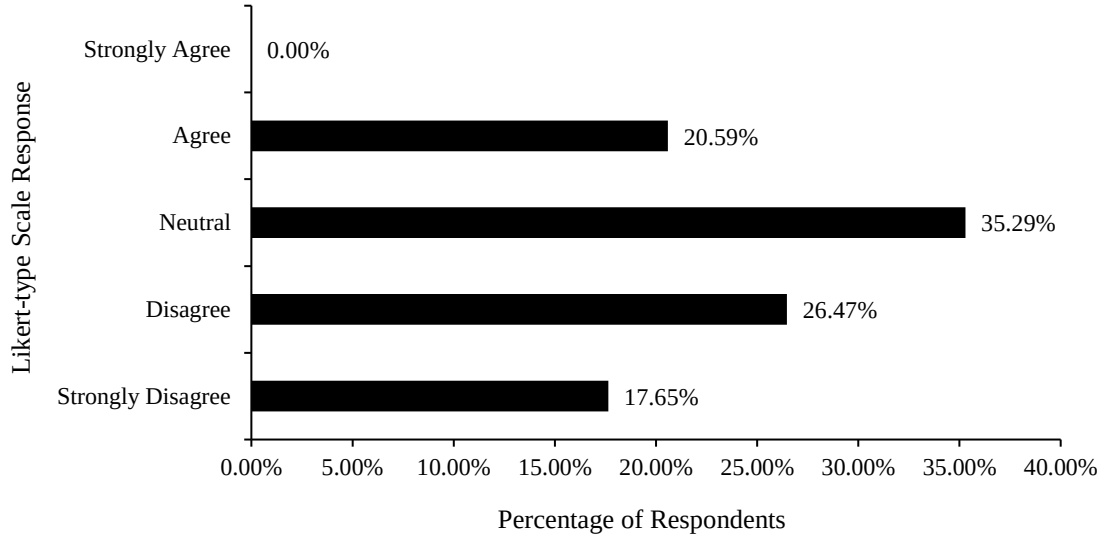


Survey Statement 6

Participants in the study were asked to respond to the statement, *My administration adequately prepared me for teaching virtually.* The data from the survey responses indicated that 44.12% of participants strongly disagreed or disagreed that school district administration adequately prepared them for teaching virtually (see Figure 6). Of the 44.12% of participants who strongly disagreed or disagreed, only 17.65% strongly disagreed that administration adequately prepared them to teach virtually whereas 26.47% of survey participants disagreed. However, 35.29% of survey participants remained neutral that school district administrators adequately prepared them to teach virtually. Conversely, 20.59% of survey respondents indicated they agreed that administration adequately prepared them to teach virtually. No participants strongly agreed with the statement.

Figure 6

My Administration Adequately Prepared Me for Teaching Virtually



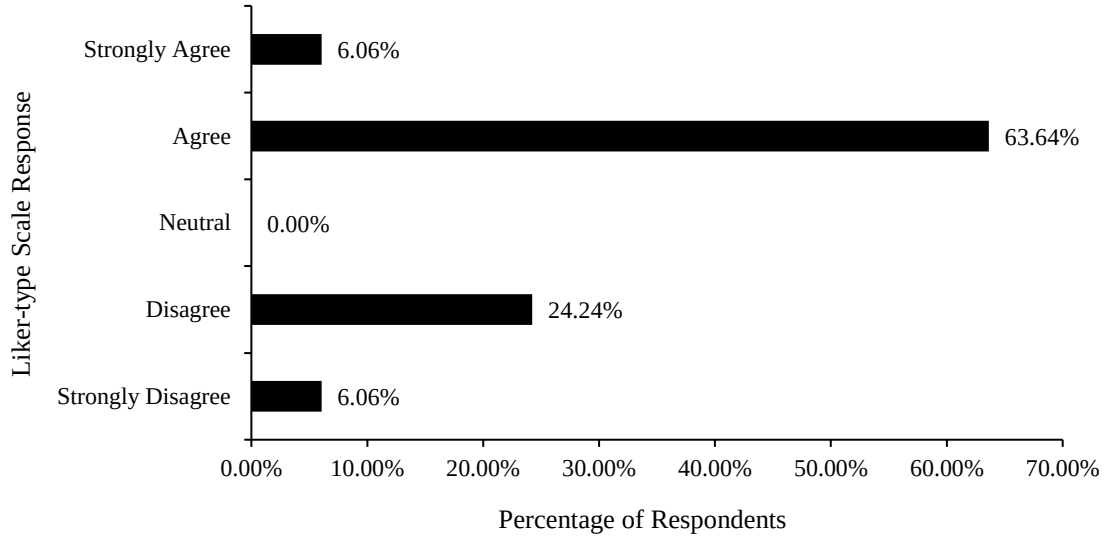
Survey Statement 7

Participants in the study were asked to respond to the statement, *As an educator, I played a vital role in transitioning to virtual education.* Survey response data indicated 69.70% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that as educators, they played a vital role in transitioning to virtual education (see Figure 7). Of the 69.70% of participants who strongly agreed or agreed, only 6.06% strongly agreed that they played a vital role in transitioning to virtual education. In addition, 63.64% of respondents indicated they agreed that as an educator they played a vital role in transitioning to virtual education. No participants were neutral with the statement. However, 30.30% of respondents indicated they strongly disagreed or disagreed they played a vital role in transitioning to virtual education. Of the 30.30% of participants who strongly

disagreed or disagreed, only 6.06% strongly disagreed whereas 24.24% disagreed that they played a vital role in transitioning to virtual education.

Figure 7

As An Educator, I Played A Vital Role in Transitioning To Virtual Education



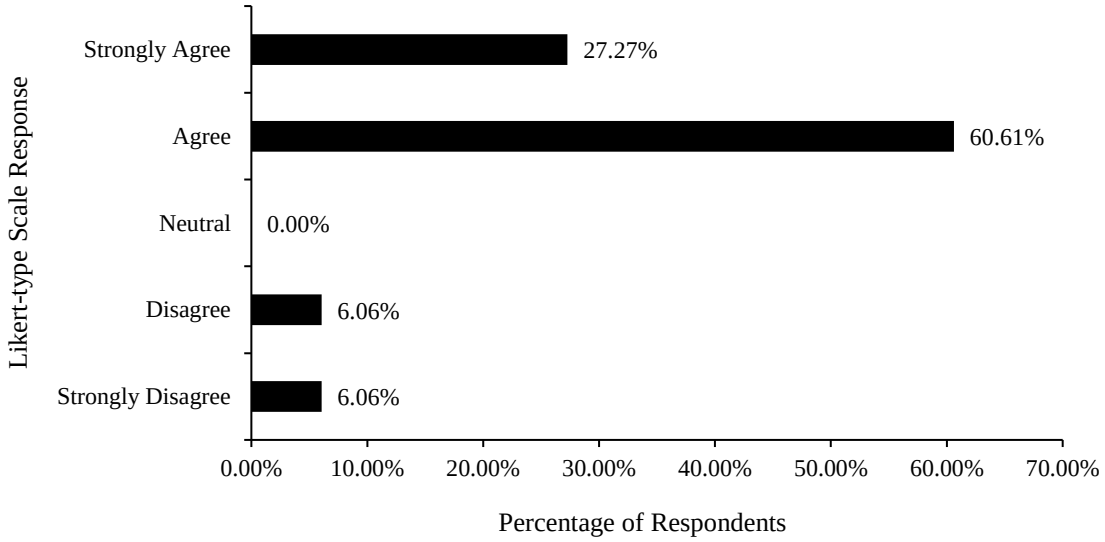
Survey Statement 8

Participants in the study were asked to respond to the statement, *The administration supported me through teaching virtually.* Survey response data indicated that 87.88% of survey participants strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that administrators supported them through teaching virtually (see Figure 8). Of the 87.88% who strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, 27.27% of participants strongly agreed and 60.61% of participants agreed that the administration supported them through teaching students virtually. Conversely, only 12.12% of survey participants strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that administration supported them teaching virtually. Of that 12.12%

who strongly disagreed or disagreed, there was only 6.06% of participants who strongly disagreed and 6.06% of participants who disagreed that administration supported them through teaching virtually. No participants were neutral with the statement.

Figure 8

The Administration Supported Me Through Teaching Virtually



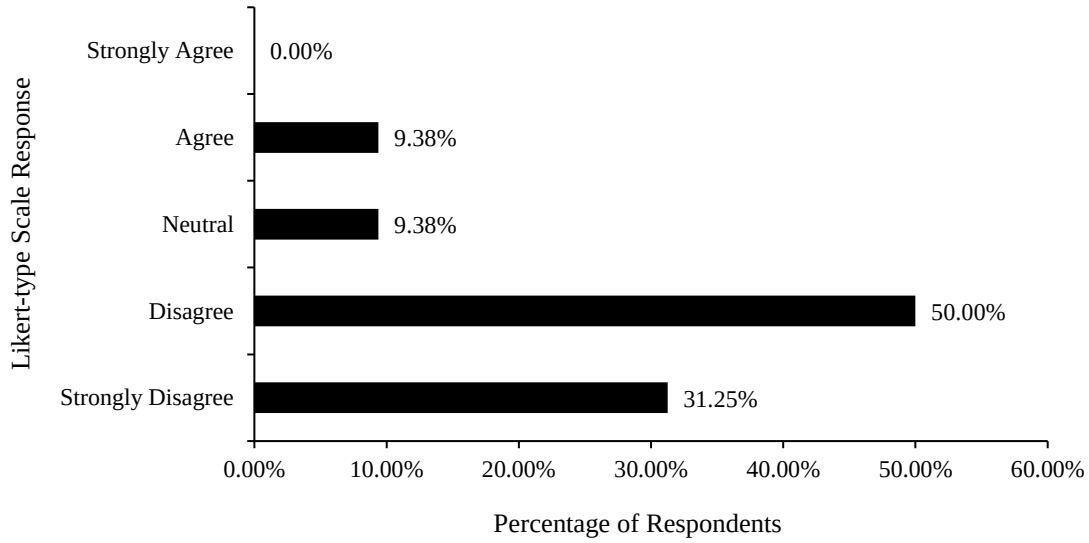
Survey Statement 9

Participants in the study were asked to respond to the statement, *Virtual learning has not changed from spring 2020 to present day.* Survey response data indicated that 81.25% of survey participants strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that virtual learning has not changed from spring 2020 to present day (see Figure 9). Of the 81.25% of participants who strongly disagreed or disagreed, 31.25% strongly disagreed with the statement. However, 50% of survey participants disagreed with the statement that virtual learning has not

changed from spring 2020 to present day. Of the survey participants remaining, only 9.38% agreed with the statement that virtual learning has not changed from spring 2020 to present day. Another 9.38% of survey participants remained neutral about the statement. There were no participants who strongly agreed with the statement.

Figure 9

Virtual Learning Has Not Changed From Spring 2020 To Present Day.



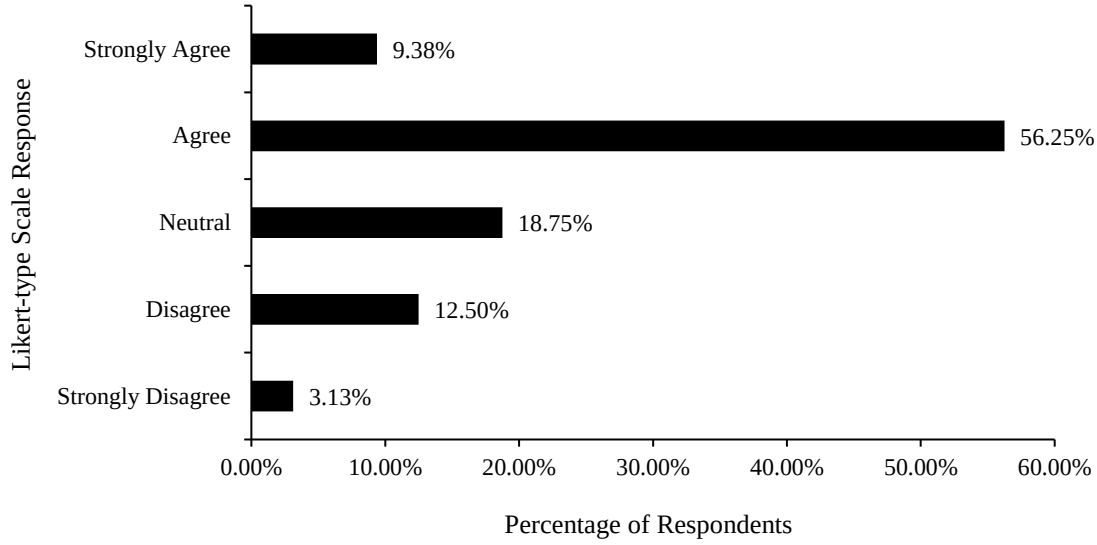
Survey Statement 10

Survey participants were asked to respond to the statement, *My administration provided educational support during the COVID-19 pandemic.* Survey response data indicated 65.63% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with that statement (see Figure 10). Of the 65.63% who strongly agreed or agreed, only 9.38% of participants agreed that administration provided educational

support during the COVID-19 pandemic. Whereas, 56.25% of survey respondents agreed that administration provided them with educational support through the COVID-19 pandemic. However, 18.75% of participants were neutral in response to the statement that administration provided educational support during the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast, only 15.63% of respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement. Of the 15.63% who strongly disagreed or disagreed, only 3.13% strongly disagreed that administration provided educational support during the COVID-19 pandemic, and 12.50% of participants disagreed with the statement.

Figure 10

My Administration Provided Educational Support During the COVID-19 Pandemic

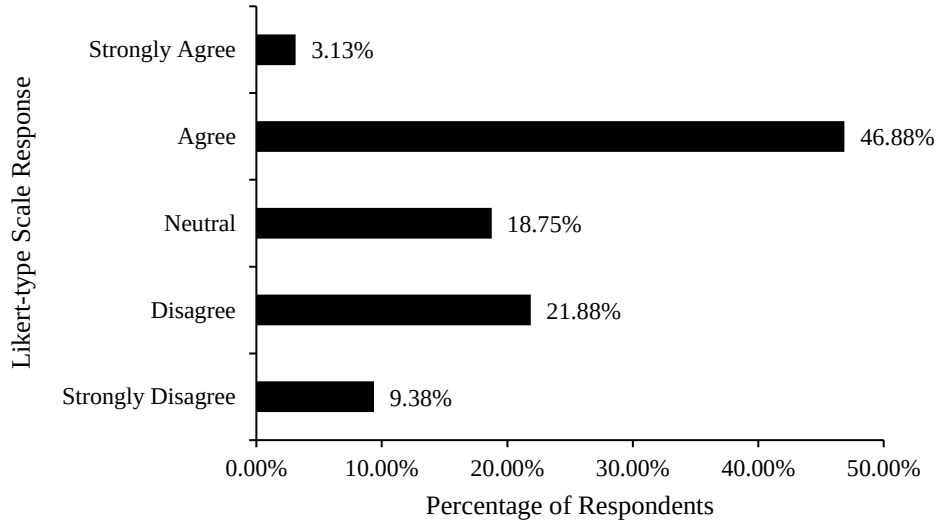


Survey Statement 11

Participants in the study were asked to respond to the statement, *My administration offered professional learning opportunities regarding virtual learning.* Survey response data indicated 50.01% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. Of the 50.01% of survey respondents who strongly agreed or agreed, only 3.13% strongly agreed. However, 46.88% of survey participants agreed that administration offered professional learning opportunities regarding virtual learning. In addition, 18.75% of survey participants were neutral on the statement. In contrast, 31.26% of participants strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that administration offered professional learning opportunities regarding virtual learning. Of the 31.26% of participants who strongly disagreed or disagreed, only 9.38% strongly disagreed with the statement, and 21.88% of participants disagreed with the statement that administration offered professional learning opportunities regarding virtual learning.

Figure 11

My Administration Offered Professional Learning Opportunities Regarding Virtual Learning.

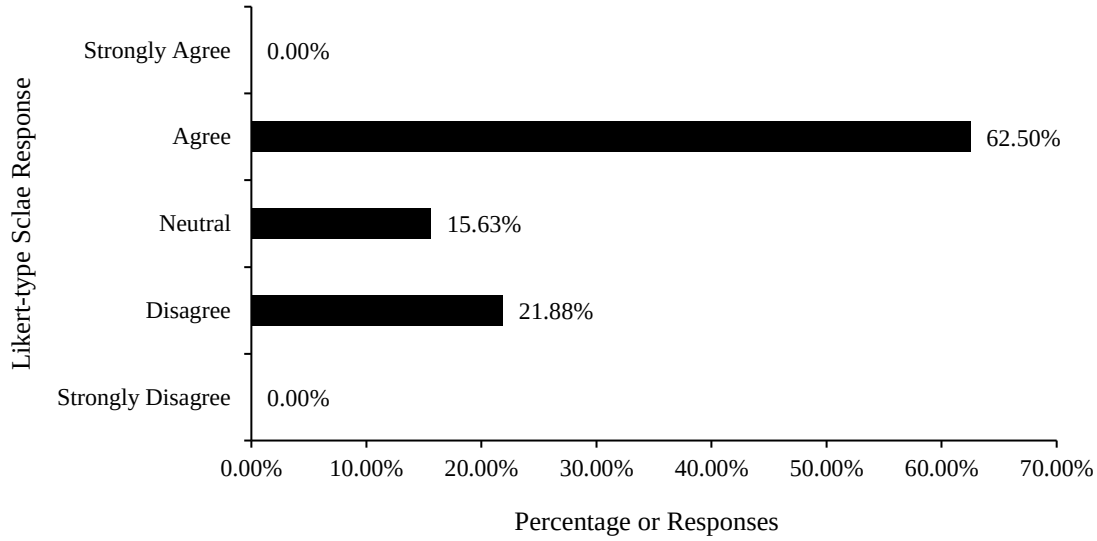


Survey Statement 12

Participants in the study were asked to respond to the statement, *My district and building have adapted to virtual learning since 2020.* Survey response data indicated that 62.50% of participants agreed with the statement that the district and building adapted to virtual learning since 2020 (see Figure 12). Only 15.63% of survey participants were neutral to the statement. However, 21.88% of survey respondents disagreed with the statement that the district and building adapted to virtual learning since 2020. No participants strongly agreed with the statement. No participants strongly disagreed with the statement.

Figure 12

My District and Building Have Adapted to Virtual Learning Since 2020



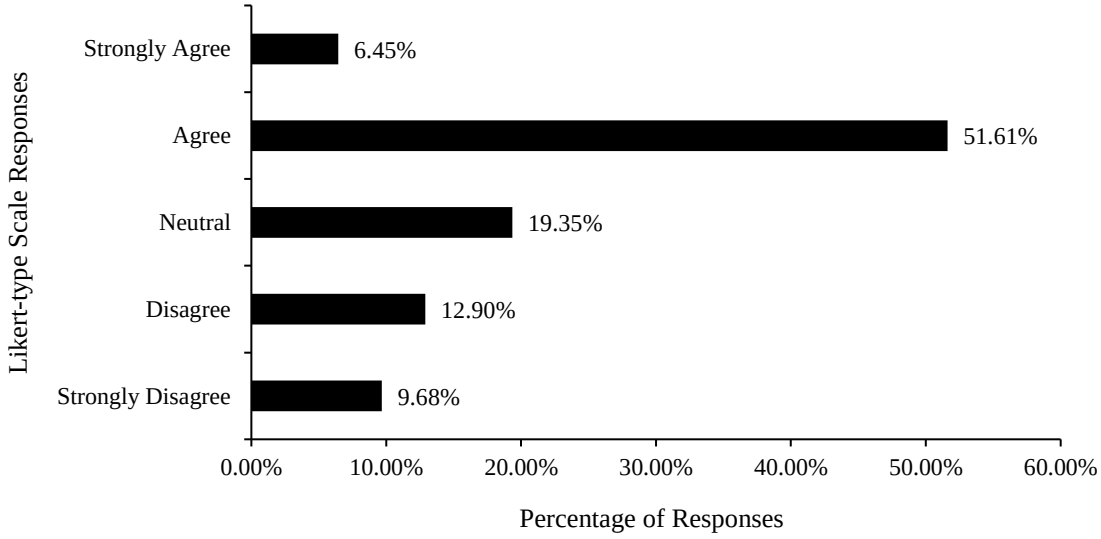
Survey Statement 13

Participants in the study were asked to respond to the statement, *I have shown growth as an educator by teaching through the COVID-19 pandemic.* Survey response data indicated that 58.06% of participants strongly agreed or agreed with the statement (see Figure 13). Of the 58.06% of participants who strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, only 6.45% of participants strongly agreed; whereas, 51.61% of survey participants agreed that they have shown growth as an educator by teaching through the COVID-19 pandemic. However, 19.35% of survey participants were neutral in the statement. Moreover, only 22.58% of participants strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement. Of the 22.58% of participants who strongly disagreed or disagreed, only 9.68% strongly disagreed that they have shown growth as an educator by teaching through the

COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, 12.90% of survey participants disagreed that they had shown growth as educator by teaching through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 13

I Have Shown Growth as An Educator by Teaching Through the COVID-19 Pandemic



Interview Data Analysis

After participating in the survey, respondents (n=6) indicated a willingness to participate in a focus group. The focus group interview contained fourteen questions. The questions in the focus group interview hinged on the three research questions:

1. -What practical knowledge/experiences have Southwest Missouri teachers gained during the transition to virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?

2. -How did the transition to virtual learning affect the views of Southwest Missouri teachers regarding administrative support?
3. What professional learning experiences were provided to Southwest Missouri teachers during the transition to virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Themes were identified through analysis and open coding of the focus group interview.

Focus Group Interview Question 1

When it was decided that school would not resume session in the spring of 2020, what was your immediate reaction and how did you handle the decision?

Focus group participants indicated similar reactions to being sent home because of the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020. Participant 2 responded,

> Yeah, I know that when the talk of missing was kind of brought up, I was brought to the admin office and they said, 'Hey most likely, it's not going to happen, but kind of mentally prepare for the possibility of not coming back.' But it kind of like everyone else. I kind of thought, you know, I, I highly doubt we missed the rest of the school year until we actually did.

Participant 3 agreed and suggested,

> I agree. I mean I was kind of relieved at first because I needed that extra break, not gonna lie, but yeah, I was… I, I was really shocked that it was gonna be like that. I had no idea [it] would last that long, I was kind of like

> yeah, two or three weeks but I didn't figure we'd be out the rest of the year.

Similarly, participant 1 and participant 4 had shared viewpoints. Participant 1 stated,

> So… girls were in the state championship, right? And they let us out that Friday. The before spring break. And I thought we were just gonna be back for it or gone like two or three weeks and be back. So, my immediate reaction was like, alright, we get extended spring break. That's the only thing I thought.

Participant 4 echoed that sentiment stating,

> Yeah, same, I thought we were gonna be gone for a little bit. We'd go back to school, and we would resume like normal. And so it was kind of like, yeah I get to sleep late for a little bit, you know, another week or so or whatever. So, I didn't really take it too seriously at first.

Focus Group Interview Question 2

What did you learn from having to transition to virtual learning?

Respondents indicated that the transition to virtual learning was a huge learning curve for everyone involved including, administrators, teachers, and students. Flexibility was an action discussed by two participants. Participant 3 shared,

> Um, I think the first thing I learned, especially teaching science, was going to learn to be flexible. I remember that word being used quite a bit

> because… there was a such, for me, it was such a drastic change because I was not so much [flexible]. Even online with my students, even in class, so being virtual was gonna be totally different for them. And for me.

Participant 2 echoed flexibility,

> Yeah, kind of piggyback that the flexibility of it being stem. A lot of my stuff is either on electronics or the kids have to have materials to make certain activities. And so, when I came up with ideas, I had to make sure that it was something that I thought everyone would have, or at least the most common household items, so that severely limited the different activities that I could even provide for the kids to do.

While there was a learning curve for everyone involved in virtual learning, participant 1 had a different experience. Participant 1 stated,

> Yeah, I found that PE is really hard to do virtually. I mean, you can like give them workouts but they don't have to do anything if they don't want to, which I mean… it turned out none of them really did anyway. So, but I think the thing I learned, if anything, was how important communication was with the kids, with the parents, [and with] admin too.

Participant 5 discussed how students had to be trusted to be independent,

> I tell you, you had to kind of trust that they were gonna do it on their own. I mean, they pretty much, with most of my assignments, could just look it up on the Internet or anything like that, so.

Focus Group Interview Question 3

How did you improve or regress as an educator transitioning to virtual learning through COVID-19?

Responses to this question all stated they improved as educators through the virtual learning transition because of COVID-19. Participants agreed that communication and preparation skills improved drastically because they were unable to physically be with their students. Participant 3 said,

> I think one of my bigger improvements would have been, during that time, would have been the communication factor with my students. But I mean, because I actually could interact with the students to me that are more quieter [in class]. And that maybe I don't reach out to in class as much as I did virtually.

Participant 4 shared a similar outlook with experiences teaching virtually,

> It's kind of… like I was able to give kids more feedback, probably because I wasn't dealing with behavior management and looking for lost folders and lost books and things like that. So, my, I spent a lot more time actually providing them with feedback… I was kind of excited about the fact that I was able to respond to every kid individually.

Participant 5 also shared this viewpoint saying,

> I would say, you had to make sure that you had very clear instructions [with] exactly what they had to do on each assignment and stuff as you were going through because they, you know, they had to be able to do it.

Participant 1 and participant 2 discussed the preparation and planning of the virtual learning transition. Participant 1 stated,

> For PE, I think it improved preparation for classes because, you know, when we were virtual for so long, you had to go and find different resources for assignments, different. You had to kind of research a little bit more too, I guess, broaden the amount of things that you did and some of those things I'm still using now. So, I think I improved… researching to new stuff to do.

Similarly, participant 2 added to finding new resources stating,

> Yeah, I know for STEM, I was able to find brand new resources that I didn't know were out there that kind of moved towards the forefront because of everyone being at home. They wanted their stuff to be stuff that everyone used and were able to talk about as the materials you can use during COVID… but, there's some websites I'd never know existed and if COVID never happened, I might not have found them.

Focus Group Interview Question 4

How did virtual learning impact student achievement when we returned to school in August 2020?

Responses to this question resulted in a discussion about students being behind not only academically, but socially and emotionally, as well. Participants also stated that students had to re-learn basic classroom procedures, which resulted in classroom management being more difficult. Participant 4 shared,

> Our kids were behind. Definitely not just, I mean, academically. Yes, socially. Yes, we spent so much time going over, you know, just like classroom expectations and reviewing those things, like how to sharpen a pencil or stay in a seat because these kids had… [not] been in practice for so long that it cut down, even on teaching time. So, not only were they far behind, but then we had to spend time getting them caught up on the social aspects in the classroom expectations.

Participant 3 agreed with participant 4 stating,

> Well, and I know when we came back it was just the way we had our classes was totally different than what the kids were used to like being with the same group of kids. I know that just really, that was hard for our eighth graders to comprehend when we came back. And… just going over the procedures and thinks like in our procedures were a little bit different coming back because we had all these restrictions and things that, that was hard, [for] them to fathom I think at first. And then you want them to learn at the same time, it was I think the first quarter was a struggle for I know the eighth grade…

Another group of respondents indicated that the transition back to seated instruction was more difficult for students entering a new building. Participant 1 disclosed,

> I think the groups that were entering a new building were hurt the worst. The groups that stayed in the same building that had a set level of

> expectations seem to be okay, but the eighth graders going into ninth grade, the elementary kids going [into] middle school really, really struggled because especially the kids going into high school when homework was more important. Not that it's not important in middle school, but I think those kids really struggle more than the other ones.

Participant 2 agreed with participant 1 about kids entering a new building,

> Oh, pre-K, kids going into kindergarten now. And then those kids are now, third or second graders I believe and you can still kind of see [it]. Like I was talking to a teacher earlier this week that mentioned some of these kids haven't been at the elementary before last year with a working water fountain. So those kids, they're asking, 'Hey go get a drink of water,' and they're like, 'I don't… what do you mean? Like the water fountain hasn't worked since I've been here.' So, they're having to teach those skills on top of, hey, here's new material.

Participant 2 also suggested that the learning curve coming back was difficult for everyone stating,

> Now with it is just the whole new process of the things that weren't working for the last two years when we got back from COVID. That now, we as educators are expected to be a given that you know how to do that. And so, that's a big thing with elementary too.

Participant 5 echoed what participant 1 stated about homework.

Participant 5 said, But, I would say just on the homework assignments,

> trying to get them to turn them in. You know, some of them would be getting g them online and turn them in our classroom and then turn them in person. Trying to keep track of those. And then just trying to get them used to an expectation that you have to have them in at a certain, certain time in order to get credit for. It was pretty difficult with freshman.

Participant 5 continued and discussed procedural changes upon the return to seated instruction,

> I know that, that first year we're back, plus we're masked so that was pretty difficult too for them. You know [it was difficult] probably to read me and for me to read them and, and to get to know each other and as you're going around, you had to deal with that and the discipline and all the absences due to people being quarantined constantly. It was just a lot to keep up with as a teacher. I'm sure with the kids, it was pretty problematic as well.

Participant 6 had similar experiences about expectations and students being behind, but also thought teachers lost more classroom instructional time than a normal school year saying,

> Not only just being behind academically, but I feel like we lost more time when we came back because we had to go through all these expectations for online and it was like, we got a late start to the year, just because we had to take so much time, messing with all that, and getting that set up. I mean… the adjustment period was longer obviously than you would have

liked it. And I think that was the biggest problem for me was trying to get everybody on board so quickly.

Focus Group Interview Question 5

How did the transition to virtual learning impact how you taught your students the following year?

Responses to this question differed in a few aspects. Students were now technology dependent, and for some educators, building relationships was difficult. In some classes, as it was mentioned earlier, turning in work and staying on task, on top of grades, and being prepared for class was also difficult for students. Participant 1 stated,

> My PE class, one day a week, turned into a study hall. The transition back into school, and I was two classes of freshmen PE. And it was kind of that group—this is why I thought that group struggled so much with the transition. We, I had to, like, go through their entire classes and say, English One had a paper due, 'Did you turn it in? Did you turn it in? Did you turn it in?' And just because they had been at home for so long and, and the assignments didn't matter, my class kind of morphed into a study hall sometimes and just make sure they turned all that stuff in because for eight months, we assigned them stuff and they didn't have to turn it in, and I think they kind of created a habit of not turning that stuff in and we got back and they really struggled early.

Participant 2 had a different outlook with elementary students. Participant 2 stressed,

> I think in the elementary, we, we had a bunch of kids that were now one to one with their chrome books. And so now it was not only how to type anymore, because that was the big thing when I got there, was hand placement and everything. Now, it's how do you do a Google Classroom? How do you click a link? How do you follow that? And how do you use technology that you have to use now? Because as an enrichment teacher, I have every student K through five, and now I have virtual students who may not have the right things, but do they know how to access Google Classroom the correct way I have the students in the classroom that I can teach to do that. And so, it kind of just changed that way for me. Having every student basically have their own Chromebook in third, fourth, and fifth grade, and then kindergarten, first grade, and second grade all have their own iPads now, so that was a little bit of [a change].

Participant 6 again brought up the importance of effective communication. Participant 6 suggested,

> I was just saying I feel like I realized really the difference between communication… but not only just communication with directions and what to do, [but] just communicating with your students and the person like being personable with them and building their relationship even more. Because you could tell that [when] we got back, students were like,

> craving that, oh you have not talked to, some have maybe not even talked to an adult that cared to listen. But, you know, they talk to the same people so long. You could tell that they were creating that extra person or extra like, resource, to be able to reach out too, and I just liked that change. My whole outlook on education in general, is like, this is why we do it. And that's when I really started pushing to try and reach kids that way.

Participant 3 had a different experience with student relationships and stated, "and I, you know, it was hard to build those relationships with the students like you wanted to, especially come right off the bat coming back… so we had to figure out a new way."

However, Participant 4 talked about the continued use of online resources because of the COVID-19 pandemic and responded,

> I think that for me a big thing I noticed when I came back was that I continued using a lot of those online resources that I had used during the pandemic that I maybe didn't use so much before. A lot of the stuff that we did was kind of hands-on. We did a lot of notebooks stuff, we did a lot of you know, the hard copy books and things like that, and I had transitioned so much into the online stuff that we just kind of stuck with that. Because then, when a kiddo was sick or quarantined, it was just so much easier for them to access that assignment or whatever that when it was online.

Participant 4 continued talking about the accessibility of online materials and said,

> Instead of having to go on Amazon and order books for all my kids, and how to mail to their home address and that was just a mess, so I kind of moved away from them having to have a hard copy book and more into the online stuff.

Focus Group Interview Question 6

How did your administration help prepare you for the transition to virtual learning?

Respondents shared similar thoughts and outcomes with how district and building administrators prepared them for the virtual learning transition. Participant 1 stated, "There was no rule book to how to survive or teach during a global pandemic. I felt like I felt positive about my administration going through it." Participant 2 echoed that and said, "Yeah, I feel the same way about the elementary… I felt like if I had a question that they would be there to answer it…." Participant 5 agreed "I would say they did the best that they could. There's no telling how things were gonna go or what we're going to have to do… I don't know what they could have done different, honestly, with the way thing went when [COVID-19] hit."

However, Participant 4 suggested there was confusion throughout the building,

> I think it was really hard because we… I don't think anyone really knew exactly what was coming. And so, like they tried, we had meetings, like we talked about the expectations and things like that, but I don't know that

anyone really could tell us how to do the things they wanted us to do, so like our expectations were clear, but I just don't know.

Participant 1 reflected and said,

I think, I mean, it's easy to look back on admin now and say could have done that, could have done that, you know, we kind of have the benefit of 20/20, you know… You know, it felt like we were all kind of in this together a little bit? Nobody had an idea [what] was going on.

Focus Group Interview Question 7

What protocols and procedures did your administration have in place while transitioning to virtual learning? As an educator, what was your role in the transition?

Different buildings had different expectations during the shift to virtual learning. However, being available to students was significant. All six participants indicated availability played a vital role in the transition to virtual learning. Participant 6 said, "I had a set time from ten to noon every day… And then make sure that I was available for… an email at all times during school like normal school hours." Participant 5 stated, "And we had the same procedures in the high school when they came back, just certain time to be on [online]." These respondents agreed that availability was imperative to student success during the virtual learning transition. For some students, it might be the only time they are able to connect with someone outside of their house or build a relationship.

Participant 6 continued, “I think that the biggest thing was, hey, just try to be there for the kids… we’re all in this together.” As educators, their roles were to be there to support students in any capacity they could. Participant 3 talked about assignments and said, “I mean, we posted the one assignment, and we were, you know, we were trying to encourage them to get it done.” Participant 3 also echoed the importance of building relationships with students as their teacher,

> I think, what our principal wanted, was this to more to just try to build [and] keep in touch with them… so they’d have somebody to discuss with, you know, because like we said, some people don’t have anyone to talk to at home. So, you could kind of see, I remember getting emails back and forth, and you could kind of see those kids that, that just wanted someone to, you know, discuss something with. I mean, it was simple, simple little things, but it just… they liked, you know, having someone to reach out to.

However, participant 5 stated the worst thing about the transition to virtual learning was having to wear a mask in the fall of 2020, “[We were] trying to see who had it on, were we supposed to get onto him, all that stuff… Fortunately, I had to do that only one year.” Respondents acknowledged that their roles in the transition changed from spring to fall. They had to do a lot of work just to get through the school day. Participant 3 mentioned the annoyance of cleaning and keeping up with kids between every hour, “I think our worst thing would have been the hand sanitizer in between every hour.”

Participant 2 reflected on the experience students went through during the summer transition for athletic workouts,

> You're supposed to wipe down the weight that the kids used in between every single rep the new kid did. So, [it] was just a nightmare. A kid [was] bench pressing and then tell them to stop, so we could run over with a rag and a spray bottle and just spray it down and clean it off and then the next person would go….

Participant 2 continued and discussed how the cleaning process from the summer lasted throughout the school year as well. One class leaves, the next one comes in. You got to wipe down all the chairs, you wipe down the equipment. They used to clean off the tables, and if multiple kids set there and then if a kid did get sick, then you had to pull out the seating chart.

> Here's all the kids that came into contact with, here's who sat 'x' amount of feet away, and then you had to ask, where were they there? 15 minutes with them total, and then you're like, well, I have no idea. I don't keep a stopwatch next to a kid, and so just kind of snowballed and… luckily, it only lasted for roughly about a year.

Participant 1 had their entire class change,

> Yea, PE turned into like you couldn't play a game where an object touched more than one person. Not many PE games were you know, you couldn't, you couldn't do much. You couldn't. I mean, we walked the track and we did work out stations, and the kids, really, really hated it. And I think they go to PE to like, you

know, release some energy and have fun and run around and they didn't do any of that. I mean, it was not super fun for anybody.

Focus Group Interview Question 8

How has the administrative support changed from being sent home, spring 2020, to being seated in August of 2020 and 2021?

Two respondents indicated that they felt more supported since the COVID-19 pandemic. Participant 3 said, "As long as we're showing what's best for kids… our administration has had our back really well in it because they know that we're trying, you know, because things have changed." Participant 4 echoed this and discussed, "I feel like administration is checking in to make sure that we have what we need and that we're doing okay… I feel like administration's being… overly helpful and trying to make sure that we have what we need."

Participant 2 stated that the administration has backed off with evaluations and tedious procedural things in order to ascertain teachers feel supported. Stating,

> We don't feel like we're just left out on an island, you know. I noticed that coming back, like, observations were way down… and I think part of that is in trusting us and giving us less pressure to have to feel like we have to teach a certain way knowing that these kids are coming back from an unprecedented situation, so our teaching may look a little bit different than what maybe they were once accustomed to seeing.

Focus Group Interview Question 9

In what ways has your administration helped you grow during the last two years in regard to virtual education and as an individual?

Respondents discussed how imperative communication and confidence building was during this growth process. Participant 1 stated, "I think communication is more important. Now, I think our administration really put an emphasis on reaching out to your kids, reaching out to the parents, [and] having a better line of communication with the admin." Participant 2 agreed but also stated the ability to learn and grow was significant, "She allowed me to mess up a little bit, and then allowed me to go seek information on how to be better at what it is I was trying to do individually. I feel like they just kept building my confidence… and they were always there to kind of give a word of encouragement or to see where I may have failed at, and kind of give me some pointers on how to improve it going forward. And so they were, I never sense a hint of negativity at all… [they were] always trying to build me back up.

Focus Group Interview Question 10

What aspects of virtual and distance learning would you change? How has virtual learning already changed from spring 2020 to now?

One focus group participant indicated they would not change anything in virtual learning. Participant 2 stated, "I don't know if I would change any aspect of it because… we did the best we could with what we had at the time." Participant 2 continued and discussed that because of COVID-19 and going

through that experience, it has prepared them for future situations, “We’re already prepared for it. It’s not like a brand new thing that we have to figure out on the fly… We know if we need to do a quick zoom meeting or google meet meeting, we can get the links shared and everything a lot easier.” Participant 4 shared a similar viewpoint stating, “And now that we’ve been through it, and we’ve kind of experienced it, we kind of can be a little more proactive and making sure that we’re reaching out to all of those kids.”

Four respondents agreed that virtual learning has made it more feasible to check in regularly with students, as well as update missing work for absences, vacations, etc. They felt more prepared for future educational situations that might arise because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participant 4 stated, “We kind of can be a little bit more proactive and making sure that we’re reaching out to all of those kids… a lot of our stuff, even in class, teaching remains online.” Participant 3 also thought online learning helped and said, “Like, before, I would have never probably have had as much online stuff available to students… if they were absent or on vacation or something as I do now. Now, we even just got a new curriculum in science that’s online based.” Participant 5 agreed and said, “I agree… I’ve got all that stuff now. So, when kids are absent, I just say, Hey, go check the classroom and stuff and you go look up all the stuff will be on there if you need.”

Participant 2 stated, “The way I feel like it’s changed is kind of like to everyone else’s point. We’re already prepared for it. It’s not like a brand new thing that we have to figure out on the fly.”

Focus Group Interview Question 11

What educational support did administration offer during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Respondents acknowledged that resources from teachers and administrators throughout the COVID were helpful. Participant 2 stated, “There’s stuff that I never knew existed before COVID came, and since then I’ve been able to branch out and see all these other resources that I now know are available because maybe an admin sent it or another teacher found it and sent me a message with the link to it.” Participant 1 agreed with Participant 2 and said the importance of shared resources encouraged them. “I remember getting a bunch of emails… saying hey, this is a safe way to take a test, use this link, or this is a safe way to share documents with kids, use this.”

In addition, Participant 3 echoed the educational support administrators provided. “They were very supportive [of] getting things out to us and sharing and everyone shared… whether it was coming back in August, [or] when we started out new.” Participant 4 stated, “There was never a question as to, you know, why are you using this instead of whatever? It was, hey, if this is something that’s gonna be helpful for you, use it… so we had a lot of that, a lot of new apps, a lot of resources…”

Focus Group Interview Question 12

Since spring 2020, what professional learning opportunities has your district offered you in regards to virtual and distanced learning?

Respondents discussed that the district did not necessarily offer explicit, formal professional development for virtual learning. They expressed numerous resources and informal clinics and professional development opportunities, but there was not a formal professional learning opportunity. Participant 5 stated, "We had some workshops and professional development days where we tried to go over more technology… [we were] sharing this stuff on email." Participant 1 also said their librarian played a vital role in providing learning opportunities for the building, "Our librarian sends a ton of, you know, how to work… google classroom better. Make sure you know [what] you're doing online. I don't know if they have ever said, 'this is in case of another global pandemic.' But, I've gotten used to working online." Participant 5 continued and said the district provided help guiding the return to school using virtual learning materials. "As far as virtual learning, or what we had to do on google meet and how to record it or something, when we first came back, or those lectures we had to record and send out every day, those things [helped]."

Focus Group Question 13

How has your district and building adapted to virtual learning since spring 2020?

The respondents stated the district and respective buildings have moved to a more accessible approach with use of online materials and platforms. Participant 1 said, “Every single class turns assignments in through google classroom.” Participant 2 stated the same happens in the elementary, “Individual google classrooms that the students can sign into their google account and then click it. And then they’ll have their assignments on there, which has really helped.”

Respondents also indicated that implementing virtual learning techniques has helped with snow days and other absences. Participant 1 mentioned, “We have some AMI [Alternative Method of Instruction] day stuff that we have to have assignments read for. I think we’re just more prepared.” Participant 3 also said,

> Yeah, I tell my students at the beginning of the year, like, every week I post what we’re doing for that week. That goes out in our parent email… I try to emphasize and I remind them throughout the year… I just put it all on there [google classroom] for, you know, whether it’s a kid who needs extra time writing their notes, or whether it’s a kid that’s absent. Like, that is a way that we kind of have that covered, and it’s not that I don’t have to give it to them when they get back. They have immediate access to it.”

Participant 2 reinforced the importance of google classroom and said, “Hey, if you missed today, go to miss so-and-so’s google classroom. Click that link on this folder, and you can figure out what you need to do. So, they’re just a lot more prepared.”

Focus Group Interview Question 14

As an individual, what professional learning experiences have you had to ensure growth as a teacher in virtual learning?

Researching, reflecting, and trying to find resources that best supported students provided learning experiences for multiple participants. Participant 1 discussed the importance of new resources and branching out and trying new things proved paramount. “I can go to five or six different websites, or two or three different Twitter accounts. And say if I’m struggling to find something to do for this class, I know they will have good opportunities… Professional learning is figuring out where this stuff is that you can find that. That was the biggest thing for me in a positive way.” Participant 6 shared a similar experience and relied on peers for guidance, “It was important for me… to learn from my peers… ask the guy across the hall, ‘hey, what do you do in this situation?’ Or, ‘what resources are [you] using for homework?”

However, Participant 3 stated growth occurred from being forced to use more online materials, “Adjusting to putting all more science online… And I think that is one thing that helped me a lot too, is being able to search up different, you know, realizing that I could have, I could have probably had more things online before even the pandemic happened. So, that was a big. That was a big thing for me to learn.” Participant 5 also mentioned moving to an online platform. “The amount of stuff I have on the schedules that I sent out. I mean, they [students] can pretty much not be in class for a week and have everything ready…

Every material that you would need for my class would be on there on their google classroom."

Participant 4 had a different perspective and stated that virtual learning almost allowed a better opportunity to provide feedback and growth as an educator than in the traditional classroom. "The amount of feedback that I offer, I try when we do online stuff, I try to make sure that I comment on every single kiddos assignment, so that they are still getting that feedback." Furthermore, Participant 4 continued to elaborate on feedback and the lasting effect it can have with students,

> Writing [feedback] online, gives them something to go back to later. That's something I didn't necessarily do before. A lot of my feedback was offered in person and so you know, maybe they hear it and then it's gone. But if I, you know, on writing alone, then when they go home and they're looking at grades with, you know, their parents or whoever's with them at home, they can kind of see why I got this one wrong, and this is what she told me… So, the amount of feedback and the way I provide feedback has definitely changed.

Summary

In Chapter Four, an analysis of the data collected was provided. The quantitative data from the survey were included in phase one. The qualitative data to answer the three research questions were included from the focus group discussion in phase two. The experiences and information of MODESE certified

educators were gathered using The Impact Virtual Education had on Teachers Transitioning through COVID-19 Survey. The data from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics and histograms. The focus group interview transcripts were subsequently used and analyzed to assess a thorough understanding of teacher experiences through the virtual learning transition because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Open coding was utilized to determine themes that will be discussed in Chapter Five.

The findings of the mixed-methods study of the Impact Virtual Education had on Teachers During COVID-19, and the conclusions of the study, are included in Chapter Five. Also included will be implications for practice. Finally, recommendations for future research on virtual learning ends the last chapter.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Implications

Harrison and Barber (2021) suggested school districts, employees, and communities struggled with the transition to provide virtual learning. The transition to virtual learning, which included changing the learning environment of students, drastically impacted teachers and students (Bandura, 2017). Ramezani et al. (2019) reported teachers and students had to analyze themselves and their performance in order to ascertain those expectations of virtual instruction had been met. Brunetto et al. (2021) found the educational process in which teachers and school districts used to teach students was forced to change because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The purpose of this study was to add to existing research and analyze how the COVID-19 pandemic influenced and impacted teachers' transition to virtual learning. The focus of the study was to analyze teacher preparedness and their experiences and challenges they faced with providing virtual learning methods of instruction. Teachers and school districts had to adjust instruction from seated, in class discussions and assignments to an online learning format, which provided new educational experiences and opportunities (Minkos & Gelbar, 2021). Harrison and Barber (2021) believed communication was imperative in the transition to virtual learning; school districts had to be flexible and increase options of communication and engagement with students and their families.

Introduced in Chapter Four were the findings and data analysis discovered in this study. The aforementioned results are further outlined in this chapter. Also,

conclusions based on the findings of the study, and the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, are also provided. Implications for practice and suggestions on the transition to virtual learning, including professional learning opportunities based on certified educator experiences. Chapter Five concludes with suggestions for future research.

Findings

Educators' practical knowledge and experiences transitioning to virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, administrative support through the transition to virtual learning, and professional learning opportunities regarding virtual learning were analyzed in this study. Three research questions were utilized to guide this study, the research questions were answered using a mixed-methods approach collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. In phase one of the study, The Impact Virtual Education had on Teachers Transitioning through COVID-19 Survey allowed quantitative data to be collected from MODESE certified educators. At the conclusion of the survey, phase two included a focus group interview. Data from the survey and focus group interview identified teacher perceptions and experiences on the transition to virtual learning, administrative support through the virtual learning transition, and professional learning opportunities regarding virtual learning.

Research Question One

What practical knowledge/experiences have Southwest Missouri teachers gained during the transition to virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Participant responses indicated educators had numerous experiences throughout the virtual learning transition. For example, educator experiences can be categorized into three areas, (1) the transition to virtual learning, (2) preparation and planning, (3) teacher roles during the virtual learning transition.

Quantitative data from The Impact Virtual Education had on Teachers Transitioning through COVID-19 Survey demonstrated teachers' experiences in the virtual learning transition during COVID-19. A total of 75% of surveyed educators identified a rough transition to virtual learning. In addition, 75.68% of educators did not enjoy teaching students virtually. Another 44.12% of surveyed educators revealed they did not feel adequately prepared to teach students virtually. The majority of educators who participated in the survey felt students were not adequately prepared to return to school in August 2020. Survey response data demonstrated 91.67% of certified educators believed students were not academically, socially, and emotionally prepared when school resumed in August 2020 following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The quantitative analysis demonstrated educators did not feel prepared for the transition, planned for the transition, but ultimately felt they played a vital role in the virtual learning process. Even through the transition was not smooth, surveyed educators provided responses demonstrating that 69.70% believed they played a vital role in the transition to virtual education.

Analysis of qualitative responses regarding practical knowledge and experiences of teachers' transition to virtual learning through the COVID-19

pandemic indicated that every teacher's experience focused on a few areas. Teachers had to be flexible, communicate effectively, and analyze their own practices. The COVID-19 pandemic was a global epidemic that provided school districts, teachers, students, and communities with unprecedented issues.

Participants noted the "unknown" and stressed without effective communication, more problems could have arisen. Participants discussed trust in students, as well as a learning curve to all the new online materials, was an adjustment to virtual learning from seated instruction. Teachers had to be accessible and interact with students through various mediums such as Zoom, Google meet, Google classroom, and email. Teachers were forced to learn on the fly with little preparation and training. Focus group interview participants also elaborated on transparency with administrators. The open communication and sense of belonging from administrators to staff helped ease anxiety associated with the unknown. Without effective communication, participants believed they would not have been as effective in the virtual learning transition.

Research Question 2

How did the transition to virtual learning affect the views of Southwest Missouri teachers regarding administrative support? Participant survey responses demonstrated that educators felt supported by administrators through the virtual learning transition. While educators did not feel ready and prepared to make the transition, they felt administrators supported them through the transition. Of the survey participants, 87.88% believed administrators supported them through

teaching students virtually. In addition to feeling supported, 65.63% of survey participants indicated that building and district administrators provided educational support for virtual learning through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Certified educators indicated that virtual learning has also changed from Spring 2020 to present day. Teachers demonstrated virtual learning was an evolving phenomenon; 81.25% of educators identified that virtual education has changed from spring 2020 to present day in the classroom. In addition, 80% of survey participants indicated they taught students differently when students returned to seated instruction.

Qualitative analysis of the focus group interview responses regarding administrative support through the transition to virtual learning yielded similar results. Many respondents shared positive feedback regarding their respective building administrators. Some participants were included in closed door conversations that allowed them to feel part of the decision-making process. The resources, clear communication, and sense of togetherness proved imperative to the respondent's viewpoint of their administrators. The culture of the school district and individual buildings allowed for growth to transpire through the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondents agreed that having set expectations and open dialogue with administrators allowed them to feel supported and valued while transitioning to virtual learning.

Research Question Three

What professional learning experiences were provided to Southwest Missouri teachers during the transition to virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic? Quantitative data analysis identified that administrators offered professional learning opportunities for virtual learning, that districts and buildings have adapted virtual learning since spring 2020, and because of the opportunities provided, educators have shown growth by teaching through the COVID-19 pandemic. Professional learning opportunities were provided by administrators to teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic and was perceived as a positive by 50.01% of the survey participants. However, 18.75% of survey participants neither felt the professional learning opportunities were positive or negative. Additionally, 62.50% of survey participants indicated that school districts and buildings have adapted to virtual learning since it started in 2020 while 58.06% of survey participants indicated they improved as educators during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the professional learning opportunities and growth experienced through the virtual learning transition experience.

Qualitative analysis also revealed educators felt like the learning experiences offered by administrators and growth through the transition to virtual learning because of COVID-19 was beneficial. Respondents indicated the amount of resources provided by administrators, peers, and colleagues proved helpful in the virtual learning transition. Respondents agreed that collaboration and communication with all stakeholders was valuable and benefited them. They also

felt like administration allowed them freedom to learn on their own, while still supporting them when needed, and allowed them the space to make mistakes, lean on each other, and grow together. Participants believed that the transition to virtual learning, and having to learn on the fly, allowed them the best opportunity to learn. They did not mention specific, formal, professional learning opportunities, rather they discussed the amount of resources shared between co-workers that created a collaborative culture allowing them to learn together with support from administration.

Conclusions

There were three research questions that were designed to assist in the cohesion of quantitative and qualitative data in a mixed-methods study related to the impact virtual education had on teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Daniel (2020) and Mallillin et al. (2020) suggested virtual learning changed the educational landscape, and because of COVID-19, virtual learning gave students and teachers opportunities to explore new opportunities for learning. Educator's knowledge and experience through the transition to virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic was directly affected by their learning environments. School districts, teachers, and students across the United States and Southwest Missouri faced numerous challenges when forced to evacuate seated instruction and transition to virtual learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic (Cinteza, 2020; Harrison & Barber, 2021; Wilcha, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic closed schools in March of 2020 and the learning process for students was disrupted and teachers had to learn the new skill of virtual learning (Cinteza, 2020; Daniel, 2020; Mallillin et al., 2020). Because of the pandemic, teachers experienced numerous new expectations, gained new knowledge, and demonstrated improvement and growth as an educator. Harrison and Barber (2021) felt the pandemic also forced school districts to transition to a virtual learning platform. The transition to virtual learning proved difficult and schools were unprepared; however, districts and administrators had to support teachers through the change in learning environment to incorporate technology as the sole provider for educational instruction (Bojović et al., 2020; Loose & Ryan, 2020; Webb et al., 2021).

The data collected in the study from the survey and focus group interview were used in conjunction with the literature review to triangulate and develop themes. The three themes that were identified included communication, administrative support, and self-efficacy.

The Importance of Communication Amongst Stakeholders When Transitioning to Virtual Learning

Data collected and analyzed from the survey and focus group interview in conjunction with the impact virtual education had on teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in this theme. Participants discussed how imperative communication was in the transition to virtual learning because of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Harrison and Barber (2021) supported this conclusion when

they suggested school districts had a shortened timeline to implement this new practice as an initial emergency option.

Communication with students and teachers also changed; students and teachers had to learn how to overcome technological issues and boundaries, as well as establish effective learning environments at home (Daniel, 2020; Orhan & Beyhan, 2020). Focus group participants discussed that administrators played a vital role in identifying and clearly explaining the expectations in order to provide a quality education and interaction with students while they were at home learning virtually. Examples of effective communication included daily Google meet or Zoom meetings, email check ins, and phone calls with parents and students to help establish clear communication with all individuals involved in the virtual learning process. The virtual learning transition and communicating with students was aided by technology and being a one to one school. Harrison and Barber (2021) discussed the importance of virtual learning platforms and strategies that were provided by schools, which allowed flexibility and opportunities to communicate and engage with students.

Pressley and Ha (2020) explained that district administrators who outlined a plan and communicated expectations clearly with teachers while providing professional learning opportunities demonstrated a higher self-efficacy rate. Focus group participants expressed that the transition to virtual learning was not smooth, but the clear communication allowed them to feel positive and supported through the process.

The Importance of Administrative Support When Transitioning to Virtual Learning

Responses from participants in the survey and focus group interview indicated that the importance of administrative support was essential when transitioning to virtual learning. When discussing COVID-19 and virtual learning, administrative support was something participants believed helped. While the transition to virtual learning did not prove to be smooth, participants in the survey and focus group interview revealed without the support from their administration, the transition would have been a failure.

Respondents acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented situation for all stakeholders and members of the school district. They discussed how the collaborative and inclusive culture in the district proved to be an integral piece of feeling supported from administration during the transition to virtual learning. Survey participants indicated that 87.88% of educators felt administration supported them through teaching virtually. The involvement of teachers in the virtual learning transition correlated with their sense of feeling supported by administration; the utilization of teachers, allowing them to take ownership in the virtual learning process and ask questions about teaching and engaging students virtually, was a correlation with administrators support (Li et al., 2020; Torres-Martin et al., 2021).

The Importance of Self-Efficacy When Transitioning to Virtual Learning

The COVID-19 pandemic was a new experience for teachers, administrators, and students. The learning curve through the virtual learning process was steep. Survey data showed that 44.12% of educators did not feel administration adequately prepared them for teaching students virtually. In addition, 40.54% of survey participants indicated they did not become a better teacher after teaching virtually. However, survey participant data showed that 80% of educators taught students differently when returning to school and seated instruction after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Survey data and the focus group interview responses indicated learning and growth transpired throughout the virtual learning transition. Focus group respondents discussed how additional research was required to prepare and aid in the virtual learning transition. They shared that the resources allotted to them through the pandemic, and ability to learn and fail, and re-learn, forced them to become better teachers. While the survey results do not depict this directly, the focus group participants identified the struggles of the transition and learning opportunities as positive learning and growth now that they are on the other side of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pressley and Ha (2021) suggested individuals learning environments affect their overall self-efficacy. So, being sent home and learning to teach students virtually, drastically influenced the educator's opinions of their own teaching capabilities. Pressley and Ha (2021) also suggested teachers measure

effectiveness and success in implementing the virtual learning curriculum and techniques through the transition. Survey data and focus group interview data identified this to be true. Teachers are inherently hard on themselves. Upon reflecting on the virtual learning transition, survey data demonstrated this phenomenon to be accurate. However, focus group participants discussed how after going through a global pandemic, they feel prepared and ready to take on anything. Respondents analyzed the effects of being sent home to educate students, the resources allotted to them, and mistakes they made along the way that have better prepared them to take on new challenges in the future and impacted how they teach their students today.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this mixed-methods study have implications for virtual learning developments and practicalities in school districts. The first implication is that clear communication and expectations should be a priority for school leaders and all stakeholders in identifying new initiatives and transitional opportunities. The second implication is that teachers should have professional learning opportunities to continue to grasp virtual learning and be a lifelong learner. The third implication is that undergraduate institutions need to prioritize virtual instruction and strategies for new teachers. Finally, the last implication is the significance of collaborative school culture in establishing new programs and initiatives in an educational environment.

COVID-19 Impacted Teachers' Transition to Virtual Learning through Communication

School district administrators who communicated expectations clearly with teachers demonstrated a higher rate of success (Pressley & Ha, 2020). Based on the focus group interview feedback, without effective communication, the transition to virtual learning would have been more difficult. Survey and interview responses indicated that no one enjoyed teaching virtually; however, because of open communication with administrators, participants felt heard and acknowledged.

Furthermore, students struggled mentally and emotionally with the virtual learning transition (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021; Sharma & Alvi, 2021). Survey and focus group discussion participants indicated administration encouraged them to consistently reach out to students for check-ins. Participants discussed that the clear communication from administrators and expectations in what to do benefited their overall experience through virtual instruction. School district leaders must not quit communicating. Communication is essential, and heightened, in times of crisis. School district administrators and leaders must continue to keep open and clear communication with faculty members in order to ascertain students are being taught successfully.

COVID-19 Impacted Teachers' Transition to Virtual Learning through Professional Learning Opportunities

Survey and focus group interview response data revealed the significance of professional learning opportunities. Providing opportunities for growth and continued success is imperative to the overall success of educators and students (Caprara & Caprara, 2021). School leaders should put a focus on putting their staff in the best position to be successful. When considering how to help staff be successful, it is essential they are able to learn and continue to grow in order to help students reach their full potential.

School administrators and leaders need to be diligent and intentional about providing learning opportunities for staff members. It is the responsibility of school leaders to grow individuals under their leadership. School leaders should foster a culture of continuous learning and growth in order to motivate and encourage staff to try new things and think of innovative approaches. However, in order to do this, teachers need to be encouraged to attend professional development and advanced learning opportunities. Professional learning opportunities can range from online workshops, remote instruction, and various design workshops (Chamberlain et al., 2020). As a school leader, it is imperative to cultivate teachers and allow them room to learn and grow. Webb et al. (2020) suggested that professional development opportunities are essential to moving education forward and sustaining success when implementing new programs such as virtual learning.

COVID-19 Impacted Teachers' Transition to Virtual Learning through Teacher Preparedness

It is paramount that undergraduate institutions prioritize virtual instruction and virtual learning in their educational preparatory programs. Webb et al., (2020) argued teachers' ability to self-reflect on skills and knowledge in technology should be considered by preparation programs in order to ensure students receive instruction that is high-quality. Education is changing. The world is changing. Students are equipped with so much information at such an early age because of technology. It is imperative teachers are equipped to manage and use technology properly in undergraduate preparation. Survey data indicated teachers were not prepared to teach virtually. They were overwhelmed and uneducated in how to move forward. College prep programs need to establish norms and classes teaching virtual instruction strategies.

Virtual learning is not leaving education and has emphatically changed the environment, giving students and teachers various avenues to explore educationally (Daniel, 2020; Mallillin et al., 2020). Virtual learning is permanent and COVID-19 changed the landscape of education. It is of utmost importance that colleges prepare their students to instruct using virtual learning platforms. Dung (2020) stated virtual learning has many options in which students have the ability to increase the amount of information they consume. Teachers need to know how to use virtual learning to reach students, challenge students, and impact students.

COVID-19 Impacted Teachers' Transition to Virtual Learning through Collaborative School Culture

Focus group interview data determined the significance school culture played in the transition to virtual learning through the COVID-19 pandemic. Pressley and Ha (2020), stated collaboration opportunities allowed teachers to feel better about their instructional abilities. Focus group participants stated the abundance of resources shared from administrators, colleagues, and peers allowed them to feel a sense of togetherness and unity throughout the virtual learning transition.

A collaborative culture is significant for administrators to establish in both a district and building. When teachers trust each other, collaborate with each other, and share resources, reflection and growth transpire. Survey data revealed that teachers changed the way they taught when students returned to seated instruction. Focus group discussion identified this was due to the collaborative culture established by school district leaders and administrators. Teachers now feel more adequately prepared to handle a crisis situation after going through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recommendations for Future Research

This mixed-methods study focused on certified educators' experiences, responses, and actions, as teachers and school districts, throughout the virtual learning transition during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of this study add to existing research and knowledge of teachers' transition to virtual learning

during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, further research is suggested to encourage college undergraduate programs to reconsider how teacher education programs prepare future educators. Another recommendation for future research includes how school districts are providing professional learning opportunities for educators. Specifically, what are districts doing internally and externally to prepare current teachers to be successful when using virtual learning methods? Additionally, further research is needed to assess how teachers are mentally and emotionally impacted by implementing virtual learning.

Undergraduate Teacher Preparation for Virtual Learning

The findings of this study suggest that studies in the future should focus on undergraduate teacher preparation for virtual learning. The data collected from the survey and focus group interview revealed many educators were unprepared for the virtual learning transition. Virtual learning has integrated its way into classrooms and school districts and is now being used for student absences, school cancellations, and daily instructional strategies. College teacher education programs need to adapt to the needs of current students and implement virtual learning strategies, techniques, and skills in their undergraduate coursework to better prepare future educators for the field of education.

Professional Learning Opportunities for Educators Regarding Virtual Learning

The findings of this study also suggest more professional learning opportunities for educators regarding virtual learning would be beneficial. After analyzing survey and focus group interview data, participants indicated there was

little formal professional learning opportunities. Formal professional learning opportunities can help close the gaps educators face with their students when operating and facilitating learning using technology. Students have technology easily accessible to them on a daily basis, so the significance of educating teachers in technology competency is imperative. Data analysis from the survey and focus group interview indicated that teachers did not teach students the same way before COVID-19 and after COVID-19. Therefore, virtual learning drastically impacted classroom instruction and professional learning opportunities for teachers will aid in future teacher performance.

Mental and Emotional Impact the Transition to Virtual Learning had on Teachers

Future research regarding the mental and emotional impact the transition to virtual learning had on teachers is warranted. Analysis of survey data and focus group interview data revealed that teachers did not enjoy the virtual learning transition. Teachers also indicated that the transition was not smooth, and students were not prepared for school when they returned to seated instruction the following August.

Data also showed that the majority of teachers believed they played a vital role in the virtual learning transition. School districts put teachers in positions they were not familiar with using new techniques, strategies, and pedagogies. Teacher workload increased emphatically, and they were forced to do things they had never done before and were not properly educated and prepared to do. So,

teacher's endured mental and emotional trauma and stress having to learn on the fly while still educating and supporting students and families. A quantitative or qualitative study about what teachers endured and how to combat teacher burnout due to the COVID-19 pandemic would prove beneficial.

Summary

The findings and conclusions of the study were discussed in Chapter Five. Educator experiences and opportunities provided to them through the transition to virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic provided answers for the three research questions. Implications for practice were identified and demonstrated through the findings, as well as the theoretical framework of the study. These implications included communication, teacher preparedness, professional learning opportunities, and collaborative school culture throughout the virtual learning transition during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, Chapter Five concluded with recommendations for future research and a summary of the study.

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Appendix A

District Permission Letter

Date: 2/22/2022

RE: Permission to Conduct Research in XXXX Schools

To: XXXX, Superintendent of Schools

I am writing to request permission to conduct research in the XXXX School District. I am currently pursuing my doctorate through Lindenwood University and am in the process of conducting research for my dissertation. The study is entitled *The Impact Virtual Education had on Teachers Transitioning through COVID-19.* I am asking permission to conduct a survey and a focus group in your district. I will email the high school, middle school and elementary school principals to request they email a copy of the survey participation letter, the research information sheet, and the survey link to all certified teachers in their building. The survey will remain open for one week. I will also ask 3–4 certified teachers from each of the participating buildings to participate in a focus group discussion. The purpose of the study is to examine how teachers transitioned to virtual learning, what their experiences were like, and how they taught students through the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you agree, please sign below, scan this page, and email to me at bf720@lindenwood.edu. Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I would be happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have regarding this study. Sincerely,

Brandon Foley

Doctoral Student at Lindenwood University 417-872-7695

Approved by:

_____

Print name and title here

_____ _____

Signature Date

Appendix B

Letter to Building Principals

Date: August 15, 2022

Dear Building Administrator,

My name is Brandon Foley. I am a doctoral student at Lindenwood University, and I am conducting a research study titled *The Impact Virtual Education had on Teachers Transitioning through COVID-19.*

As I stated on the phone, I have been given permission from your district superintendent to conduct research in your building. I am requesting that you forward a copy of the attached introductory survey participant letter, the research information sheet, and the survey link.

Please contact me at bf720@lindenwood.edu with any questions you might have.

Thank you,

Brandon Foley
Lindenwood University
Doctoral Student

Appendix C

Survey Participation Letter

<Survey>

Date: August 15, 2022

Dear Potential Survey Participant,

My name is Brandon Foley. I am a doctoral student at Lindenwood University, and I am conducting a research study titled *The Impact Virtual Education had on Teachers Transitioning through COVID-19.*

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. I have asked your building principal to attach a copy of the research information sheet to this email. If you choose to participate, please follow this link to complete the survey:

https://lindenwood.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eyBrEzwBbwod7Ia

The link will remain open for one week.

Please contact me at bf720@lindenwood.edu with any questions you might have.

Thank you,
Brandon Foley
Lindenwood University
Doctoral Student

Appendix D

Research Information Sheet

LINDENWOOD

Research Information Sheet

You are being asked to participate in a research study. We are doing this study to analyze how teachers adjusted, prepared, and taught through virtual education during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this study you will asked to complete an anonymous survey and be asked if you would also be interested in participating in a focus group discussion about the impact COVID-19 had on education and your specific experiences with virtual learning. It will take about 10 minutes to complete the survey and the focus group discussion will take about 45 minutes.

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or withdraw at any time.

There are no risks from participating in this project. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study.

We are collecting data that could identify you. No identifiable data will be collected for the survey unless you indicate a willingness to participate in the focus group discussion. Your email address will be collected in that case. Every effort will be made to keep your information secure and

confidential. Only members of the research team will be able to see your data.

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. We do not intend to include information that could identify you in any publication or presentation. Any information we collect will be stored by the researcher in a secure location. The only people who will be able to see your data are: members of the research team, qualified staff of Lindenwood University, representatives of state or federal agencies.

Who can I contact with questions?

If you have concerns or complaints about this project, please use the following contact information:

Brandon Foley bf720@lindenwood.edu

Dr. Shelly Fransen sfransen@lindenwood.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a participant or concerns about the project and wish to talk to someone outside the research team, you can contact Michael Leary (Director - Institutional Review Board) at 636-949-4730 or mleary@lindenwood.edu.

Appendix E

Survey

Survey Statements:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I enjoyed teaching virtually					
2. I learned how to be a better teacher through virtual learning.					
3. The transition to virtual learning during COVID-19 was smooth.					
4. Students were prepared when school returned in August 2020.					
5. I taught my students the same way when school resumed session in August 2020.					
6. My administration adequately prepared me for teaching virtually.					
7. As an educator, I played a vital role in transitioning to virtual education.					
8. The administration supported me through teaching virtually.					
9. Virtual learning hasn't changed from spring 2020 to present day.					

10. My administration provided educational support during the COVID-19 pandemic.					
11. My administration offered professional learning opportunities regarding virtual learning.					
12. My district and building have adapted to virtual learning since 2020.					
13. I have shown growth as an educator by teaching through the COVID-19 pandemic.					

Appendix F

Focus Group Participation Letter

<Focus Group>

Date:

Dear <Title First Name and Last Name>

My name is Brandon Foley. I am a doctoral student at Lindenwood University, and I am conducting a research study titled *The Impact Virtual Education had on Teachers Transitioning through COVID-19.*

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. I have attached the Informed consent form and a copy of the focus group discussion questions. If you choose to participate, please respond affirmatively to this email message, and I will be in contact with you to schedule a day and time that are convenient.

Please contact me at bf720@lindenwood.edu with any questions you might have.

Thank you,

Brandon Foley
Lindenwood University
Doctoral Student

Appendix G

Focus Group Discussion Questions

Research Question 1: What practical knowledge/experiences have Southwest Missouri teachers gained during the transition to virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?

1. When it was decided that school would not resume session in the spring of 2020, what was your immediate reaction and how did you handle the decision?
2. What did you learn from having to transition to virtual learning?
3. How did you improve/regress as an educator transitioning to virtual learning through COVID-19?
4. How did virtual learning impact student achievement when we returned to school in August 2020?
5. How did the transition to virtual learning impact how you taught your students the following year?

Research Question 2: "How did the transition to virtual learning affect the views of Southwest Missouri teachers regarding administrative support?"

1. How did your administration help prepare you for the transition to virtual learning?
2. What protocols and procedures did your administration have in place while transitioning to virtual learning? As an educator, what was your role in the transition?
3. How has the administrative support changed from being sent home,

spring 2020, to being seated in August of 2020 and 2021?

4. In what ways has your administration helped you grow during the last two years in regards to virtual education and as an individual?
5. What aspects of virtual and distance learning would you change? How has virtual learning already changed from spring 2020 to now?

Research Question 3: "What professional learning experiences were provided to Southwest Missouri teachers during the transition to virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?"

1. What educational support did administration offer during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. Since spring 2020, what professional learning opportunities has your district offered you in regards to virtual and distanced learning?
3. How has your district and building adapted to distance learning since spring 2020?
4. As an individual, what professional learning experiences have you had to ensure growth as a teacher in virtual learning?

Vita

Brandon R. Foley received his Bachelor of Arts in English Language Communication Arts in Secondary Education in 2016 from College of the Ozarks. Brandon began teaching writing at Willow Springs Middle School in January of 2017. After that spring semester, he received a job teaching eighth grade English Language Arts at Strafford Middle School in August of 2017. While at Strafford, Brandon received his Master of Arts in School Administration from Lindenwood University in 2020. Upon receiving his Masters, Brandon began working on his Doctorate in Administration through Lindenwood University. In 2021, Brandon served as the Hollister Middle School Assistant Principal and Athletic Director. Currently, Brandon is serving as the Stockton Middle School Principal.