

A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF CONNECTIVE
EXPERIENCES BETWEEN ELEMENTARY TEACHERS AND PARENTS IN A
VIRTUAL SETTING

by

Amy Truett

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how connective experiences are built between elementary teachers and parents in a virtual setting at the ABC school district in the southeastern region of the United States. The theory guiding this study was Siemens' connectiveness theory, as it explored the students' knowledge impacted by the connective experiences of the network of elementary teachers and parents in accessing their learning and success in the virtual school setting. Three essential research questions focused on the connective experiences between elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting in the southeastern part of the United States. Data collection for this study consisted of interviews utilizing researcher-designed questions conducted with a purposeful sampling of elementary teachers and parents who have received education through the virtual setting, focus groups, and journal questions from the same teachers. Data collection methods included interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts. Data analysis included the organization, analysis, and synthesis of data through phenomenological reduction, horizontalization, and identification of themes in clusters of significance. The results demonstrated how connective experiences supported connections between selected elementary teachers and parents, including themes relating to their experiences. Significant themes that emerged in the study included: teachers were connected with households due to the teachers teaching in the homes every day while building relationships with parents; accountability contributed to parents and teachers becoming a team to support students; and the virtual setting created an environment for students to become independent learners.

Keywords: virtual setting, parents of students, teachers, students, connective experiences, community, network, connection

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to God, my Father, from whom I have received everything! He has provided all that I need to progress taking the very next breath and never left my side as I completed my work.

I dedicate this to my children, Alex, Coryn, and Brooke, who have shown me my purpose in making a difference in children's lives. They have been my constant reminder that all children are created in the image of our Father, but all have their own molds, including various qualities, hopes, dreams, and differences. Also, to Savannah Ashley and Blake Andrew, whom I know, watch me from Heaven while cheering for me. You two have taught me the true meaning of gratitude. I am so thankful you two were created, and our paths will meet again.

To my husband, Tony, who has supported me through my career and dreams to advance my love of learning to impact others. He has had to be patient while I grow and change through the years after five beautiful children (two of whom are in Heaven) and a desire to pursue more education.

To my parents, who taught me always to work hard to achieve my goals and be the best role model to my children. They taught me never to give up and always persevere in every portion of my life.

To my brother for always believing in me and showing me how to impact others by being an encouraging role model. He has always been present and dependable when life has been difficult.

To my students that have taught me the importance of building relationships and making a difference in their lives before providing the content. The connective experiences we cultivate are remembered, not what I taught them.

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In memory of Austin, who spent countless hours making up homebound hours but teaching me to create lasting relationships and love learning even during difficult times. She never gave up because her love of learning and creating memories with me was more important than resting while receiving chemotherapy.

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List of Abbreviations

Bachelor of Arts (BA)

Distance Education (DE)

Learning Management Systems (LMS)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

Social-emotional learning (SEL)

Socioeconomic status (SES)

The transcendental phenomenological (TPh) design

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The virtual setting presents a flexible learning environment for students and more opportunities for elementary teachers and parents to connect (Saqlain et al., 2020). In chapter one, the background of connective experiences between teachers, parents, and students was cultivated and maintained to different degrees in various historical virtual learning settings. The virtual school has been available for students in various countries since the 1990s, providing education through a distance with flexible instruction in multiple environments (Costa et al., 2020). Numerous factors contributed to or diminished the connective experiences between teachers and parents with students gaining an education through virtual school, including multiple technological capabilities and time restraints. Do some factors contribute to assisting teachers and parents in making connections? Chapter one distinguished the historical context, social context, and theoretical context of connective experiences for elementary teachers and parents with factors that may contribute to connections. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the definitions and research demonstrating the shifts in varying connections between teachers and parents from various settings, including the virtual setting.

Background

In the 2016-2017 school year, principals in public schools in the United States reported that schools and parents have an average of nine opportunities throughout the year to interact on various levels (US Department of Education, 2021a). Parental involvement is determined by participating in school activities where parents and teachers communicate (Meng, 2020). Therefore, parent and teacher connections may include open houses, school events, and subject-area events, with the attendance of at least one parent, including 57% attending an open house for

back-to-school events, 62% attending schoolwide events, 29% attending subject-area events, and 65% participating in signing a school-parent compact (U.S. Department of Education, 2021b). Participation from parents may not occur in all school functions offered by their school due to time constraints, busy schedules, and other obligations. The change to the virtual setting increased opportunities for teachers and parents to connect with additional availabilities of time. As education has progressed and expanded in multiple settings, many students have adjusted to the shift in learning from brick-and-mortar to virtual settings for several reasons. Some reasons students attend school virtually include health problems, disabilities, being geographically located far from school, or the inability to attend daily (Burdina et al., 2019). The setting had shifted to a virtual setting due to the pandemic that affected education beginning in the spring of 2020 (Ionescu et al., 2020), transforming parent and teacher connective experiences. Factors affecting the experiences included a different setting with flexible times for connections and interactions. Understanding the factors that support elementary teachers and parents with connective experiences is significant to creating a network that helps students learn in the virtual setting.

Teachers' and parents' roles have adjusted from the early history of education to the utilization of current settings of various educational frameworks utilized. In early history, with the influence of Calvinism, parents were the teachers that provided education to teach their sons and daughters literacy to read, understand, and interpret the Bible, so their involvement in their children's instruction was interwoven into all their education (Smith, 2020b). Thomas and Esther Edwards impacted education by influencing families to teach their children academically, morally, and spiritually incorporating Latin into their studies to advance to the Boston finishing school in their teenage years.

Instruction has shifted from the parents being the teachers to teachers from outside the family with varying levels of parental assistance. Schools progressed to brick-and-mortar education, while some students were homeschooled by their parents as their teachers (Eggleston & Fields, 2021) or obtained their education through a virtual school. Modern social influences of society have affected the dynamics of families, affecting their roles in their children's education and their involvement in supporting their instruction. Factors include impacts of income, level of income, and the inclusion of the participants welcomed by schools (Park & Holloway, 2018). With technological advancements, the virtual setting has reduced the challenges that hinder parents from being involved with their children's education and connecting with teachers (Alcena, 2014).

Virtual learning has been occurring since the 1990s (Burdina et al., 2019), many years before the pandemic began in 2020 (Eggleston & Fields, 2021). Introduced in the United States in 1997 in Florida, its expansion grew to fourteen states in one year (Barbour & Reeves, 2009). The virtual learning format during the Covid-19 pandemic became the new foundation for how schools could conduct education. The environment freed teachers from dealing with discipline issues and gave them more time to communicate with parents (Vail, 2001).

Connections between teachers and parents occurred face-to-face if they were geographically close, which built trust in their connections (Burdina et al., 2019) or accommodated by connecting with technological devices. When schools closed, teachers, students, and their parents needed to be socially distant, and teachers and parents had platforms to build upon the history of established virtual schools (Öçal et al., 2021). The need for elementary teachers and parents to communicate remained the same throughout time; however, the platforms changed to allow connections according to their circumstances.

Historical Context

Parents supported their children's education to varying degrees, as their beliefs, culture, and experiences influenced their level of participation. Diverse experiences socially and culturally created various perspectives on how important education is for students and the need for parents to participate in supporting them (Berthelsen & Walker, 2008). The dynamics of families and their child's education vary from country to country, in various geographical locations, depending on their family's support and needs. Education in a school setting was not a priority for some families, as some families needed children to help work to survive, which placed importance on children working on the farm, in factories, or earning money based on their abilities (Katz, 1972). Some families repeated the cycle of raising children to learn to farm and extend their family heritage to future generations. In contrast, other families needed children to earn money to help purchase food or supplies. For these families, connections did not occur between the teachers and the families.

Other parents viewed education as the freedom to earn funds differently than a repeated cycle of working for the family with better circumstances. Some parents have actively supported their children from home throughout education, beginning with total support in delivering all the instruction as teachers (Smith, 2020b). As families develop into both parents working outside the house or through co-parenting family dynamics (Berryhill, 2017), the support provided for their children has diminished as tasks and activities have increased. Connections between parents and teachers transformed into receiving information through electronic connections, such as emails or other electronic platforms (Black et al., 2021), notes, newsletters, and other written communication.

Literacy originally began at home, with children learning their mother tongue to read the

Bible and the education offered by their parents (Smith, 2020b). Parents were obliged to teach Bible principles to their children to form a foundation around their beliefs. Families bound by slavery were taught to read the Bible and teach their children in the hope of a free future. As a result, over the past decade, educators have incorporated reading journals to communicate with parents about a student's progress in reading to establish connections and support teachers in school (Morningstar, 1999). Reading journals were a form of parents communicating briefly with teachers by commenting on students' reading progress and demonstrating that parents were involved with participating in nightly reading. Some connections between home and school consisted of making connections during the required parent and teacher conferences in the fall with parents who attend (Morningstar, 1999). The value of parents' involvement is significant in supporting their children (Berthelsen & Walker, 2008); however, connections have been complicated due to the busy schedules of parents and teachers. The roles of parents have switched from actively being involved in their child's education to observing their children's learning (Lau & Ng, 2019). To provide parents with more opportunities to collaborate, educators have incorporated various connective systems to differentiate their parents' support and busy schedules, including multiple technological methods, such as emailing, texting, and connecting live on Zoom. Increasing technological devices for all family members have helped connections between teachers and parents. The trend toward incorporating technology into daily uses for virtual learning and making connections has required adjustments to people's brains and ways of thinking (Siemens, 2017). Electronic connections relay messages quicker than the paper trail sent back and forth to school. Indeed, social media allows busy parents to be more involved with their children's education consistently through social media apps chosen by educators. Parents receive communications quickly, allowing issues to be addressed when convenient (Alcena, 2014).

Three areas that have supported effective connections are expertise, requirements of materials and devices, and the incorporation of positive psychological appeal (Yushawu, 2020). Social media allows parents from all socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds to be involved in their children's education, creating more prosperous connections between parents and teachers.

Social Context

The dynamics of parents in the home have changed, changing the dynamics of family structures. The requirements and roles of parents have changed, including more families with both parents working outside the home, blended families, or consist of dysfunctional families with some children placed in childcare during the school day or after school to assist with homework (Adams & Todd, 2020). In the 1970s, the workforce shifted to parents working outside the home for many families as the attitudes changed about women working jobs (England et al., 2020). Therefore, families needed more income to meet their daily needs, and men's salaries began to decrease. Because of this, fewer families have been involved with homework, instructional support, and connecting with teachers, leaving them unaware of the strengths and weaknesses in particular subjects.

Multiple factors have prevented parents from actively participating in their children's education, including connections with their teachers (Lynch, 2021). Additional challenges may be present in hindering parents from making connections with teachers in Title 1 areas, including obstacles that occur with at-risk children with low socioeconomic status (SES) (Tan et al., 2020), children from families that speak English as a second language, or immigrant families that have not been in the school area for some time (Smith, 2020a). Consequently, less involvement occurs with many families that struggle with work schedules or lifestyles that have led parents away from the focus of supporting their children's education (Kim, 2020). Involvement in children's

activities is affected by parents' long work hours involving their spontaneous interactions, routines, and extensive involvement as families (Schneider & Harknett, 2022). Other factors that affect parent involvement include the expectations of the amount of time various ages and gender may require: the age of the parent or guardian; the size of the family; SES; the time of the week and year with changing obligations; the effects of a single-parent home; the family philosophy from employment; and other factors that affect individual families (Ilari et al., 2022).

Uzun et al. (2021) found that mothers in the traditional family dynamic were active parents who supported their child's early education with various levels of support during the Covid -19 pandemic. Demand was higher for fathers to work, and there was less flexibility for free time for their children (Kelland, 2022). However, students of non-traditional families have members who are less involved with their progression in school and connections with teachers than students with two biological parents (Pribesh et al., 2020). Parents needed connections and involvement beyond the essential connective experiences of corresponding with notes and limited activities that invite parents to attend (Lynch, 2021). Students need teachers and parents to connect to understand learning more efficiently, which impacts students' success in education. New technological developments have allowed connections to be made possible between teachers and parents in the virtual setting.

Theoretical Context

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) seminal work proposed a theory of the connections through a social system when they found that proximal and distal social systems impacted the development processes and the outcomes that relate directly to human development. Bandura (1989) contributed to the theory of the relationship between parents' involvement in supporting their elementary children's education. He stated that parents' specific

behaviors were related to their perceived efficacy by contributing to or hindering positive outcomes. At the same time, their self-inefficacy hinders their involvement in their child's education at a young age, affecting their students' setting high goals and higher performance. After an extensive review of the literature to define parental involvement, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) stated,

Our definition of parental involvement incorporates the range of parental activities cited in the involvement literature. Broadly categorized, they included home-based activities related to children's learning in school, for example, reviewing the child's work and monitoring the child's progress, helping with homework, discussing school events or course issues with the child, providing enrichment activities pertinent to school success, and talking by phone with the teacher (p. 5-6).

Empirical research by Hidayat and Arini (2022) suggested that underlying factors of teacher-parent connections and participation have guided students' academic outcomes in early childhood education. Initially, discussions about connections among networks began with Homans' (1958) social exchange theory, which is based on the social behavior explored through the influence, behavioral psychology, economics, and propositions involved in the structure of small groups. Small groups, or networks, are created between the teachers and parents of students, and the social exchange theory encourages connections between teachers and parents, which support the connectivism theory. Homans' social exchange theory presented similarities to Siemens' (2017) connectivism theory, while connections involved social interactions and approval through connective experiences.

Notably, the connective experiences in the social exchange theory are based on social behaviors, including the dynamics of influence, behavioral psychology, economics, and the

propositions included in the structure of small groups (Homans, 1958). According to the theory, connections rely on sentimental social approval and interaction through connections. More prosperous connective experiences were compelling when teachers and parents connected to support students. Homans' social exchange theory is believed to have been linked to Skinner's operant conditioning theory (1976), in which constructive, positive connections were reinforced, and future interactions were welcomed. When interactions were positive between teachers and parents, the positive contact reinforced the behavior by strengthening the connective experiences to encourage more connections. The positive attitude presented by the teacher encouraged and enticed parents to maintain connections within a consistent network. Extending the study to determine factors that support connective experiences between teachers and parents has supported Siemens' connectiveness theory by extending the significance of connectiveness to support students' learning.

Problem Statement

The problem is that the connective experiences of the teacher and parent network are often hindered in the virtual setting due to time and technology restraints. This study explored how teachers and parents managed connective experiences to support their students. Less research has been conducted on the connections between teachers and parents related to the study before the Covid-19 pandemic. There were increased school-home connections based on a shared understanding of core connective concepts. Knowledge and improved collaborative skills have increased with expected outcomes related to implementing new frameworks to incorporate trust and connectiveness to support improved student outcomes (Murray & Mereoiu, 2016). Connections with peers and teachers have been explored, and they do not show a diminishing effect on distance learning in asynchronized and synchronized environments (Vincenzo Ferraro

et al., 2020). A study concluded that virtual education will continue to grow, and a high percentage of technology is already present in education. In contrast, the impact of technology will affect all teachers and students at some point in time (Amirault, 2019a). Research is limited based on the virtual setting's connective experiences between elementary teachers and parents.

The rapid worldwide change in virtual school attendance in March 2020 created new avenues of learning that many students and families had not explored (Eggleston & Fields, 2021). Instruction has grown to include education delivered in various settings, including a virtual environment. Teachers and parents have a significant role in supporting students while monitoring their behavior or experiencing new challenges they have not faced before. Some new challenges were conducting education with technology, accessing technology if students and their parents had devices, access to reliable internet, and adequate materials (Öçal et al., 2021). Teachers and parents must connect effectively, including being more attentive to students' feelings and supporting their needs (Ionescu et al., 2020). Many students remained in the virtual environment to continue their education after discovering the flexibility of their school day and incorporating various activities available into their schedule. Exploring the connective experiences of elementary teachers and parents in the post-pandemic stage of education was significant to understand factors that support students in making adequate progress and academically progressing their social skills with peers and educators.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how connective experiences are built between elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting at the ABC school district in the southeastern part of the United States. The connective experiences

of the network between elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting are defined as the nucleus of knowledge flow supported and nurtured for the student.

Significance of the Study

Conducting a study to explore the factors contributing to connective experiences between teachers and parents of students in the virtual setting provided data for future practices to determine how to support students. It was essential to consider the empirical, practical, and theoretical significance to provide a purpose for implementing consistent connections.

Connections have occurred in various formats, with technology assisting in non-traditional ways, such as online meets, emails, communication apps, and texts. Some connective methods using technological devices include Smartphone or iPad apps, including Google Voice, Viber, WhatsApp, Email, and Skype (Duraku & Hoxha, 2020). Determining the importance of connections and connective methods supported the need to identify options for elementary teachers and parents.

Empirical Significance

Teachers must acquire skills in developing a network with teachers and parents, an adequate knowledge base, positive attitudes, and realistic experiences in cultivating connective experiences with parents, according to a study by Ratcliff and Hunt (2009). It has been found that elementary students are younger and need support from parents in organizing their virtual learning (Bansak & Starr, 2021). Since elementary students need more support connecting with teachers in the virtual setting, their parents played a significant role in bridging the connections. Parents of elementary students have a more prominent role for their children in the virtual setting to connect with teachers and support their child's learning and participation daily (Gouseti, 2021).

The connectivism theory provided students with connective experiences between teachers and parents while demonstrating the importance of finding information instead of acquiring fixed knowledge, allowing them to learn to make academic decisions and prioritize their information (Cleary, 2021). According to Cleary, the virtual experiences of students vary from the face-to-face experience in the classroom; consequently, it should not be. Therefore, this study aimed to advance the theory to explore the factors supporting, developing, and maintaining the connective experiences between elementary teachers and parents. The significance of this study was to contribute to connections between elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting by exploring lived experiences of current teachers and parents from various backgrounds that supported recent, expanding literature supporting the progression of the quickly advancing educational settings. This study was similar to other studies, exploring the factors that support the connections between elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting. The empirical significance extended the existing literature, studying the connective experiences between elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting to gather data to adequately describe how to build connective experiences, how often the connections should occur, and how to encourage more connections. The use of interview questions and journal prompts for this transcendental phenomenological study helped contextualize the experiences of teachers and parents so that the phenomenon could be clarified.

Practical Significance

The practical significance of this systematic investigation was to inform and offer guidance to elementary teachers and parents on new practices based on research that enlightened them on factors that promoted and allowed more connective experiences in the virtual setting to support the students adequately. The goal was to understand aspects implemented to enable

exchanges, to become fluid, utilize mobile devices (Keyes, 2000) and messenger apps to explore the factors that affect teachers' and parents' roles and effectiveness. Creating and educating parents about connections with teachers in virtual learning is critical to promoting learning (Garbe et al., 2020). The lived experiences of teachers' and parents' connections in the virtual setting were examined to understand how the connective experiences are obtained, which helps teachers in a virtual setting connect with parents in the future.

Theoretical Significance

The theory guiding this study was Siemens' (2017) connectiveness theory, which encourages a network of parents to connect with the teacher to help students' educational advancement. Connections are significant for the teachers to extend information to the parents regarding how to utilize and understand virtual education and its protocols. The use of the connectivism theory aligned with this study, since the connectivity between teachers, parents, and students is essential to virtual learning so that students understand expectations, social needs, and consistent connections with elementary parents (Daum et al., 2021). The perceptions and ways teachers and parents connect are essential in making school-home connections for students in the virtual setting. Current information promotes communication by incorporating social media apps to assist communication quickly while reducing time and preventing face-to-face contact (Yushawu, 2020).

Research Questions

Teachers and parents in virtual settings have various experiences across multiple grade levels across the United States. Factors contributing to successful and unsuccessful experiences affect students academically and socially at the elementary age. Awareness brought forth by

lived experiences supports teachers and parents in future connective experiences to help students within the virtual setting.

Central Research Question

What are the experiences elementary teachers have regarding the parent and teacher connections in the virtual setting?

Sub-Question One

How do connectivity methods improve connections between elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting?

Sub-Question Two

How do the virtual setting's connective experiences between elementary teachers and parents help the student?

Definitions

Terms that are significant in exploring this research are included as follows:

1. *Community* – A community is a diverse group of people formulated by having the same goals to get assistance and connections for academic purposes based on trust and connectedness (Zhang et al., 2018).
2. *Distance Education* – Distance education, also referred to as DE, occurs when technology is used in one or more types to relay instruction to students geographically located in a different place than the educator. Interactions occur regularly and methodologically between the educator and the students synchronously or asynchronously (US Department of Education, 2021a).
3. *Network* – A network of connections between entities, including groups of people integrated as a whole unit (Siemens, 2017).

4. *Parents* – Parents are the people within the home of students that function as the initial teacher of children when they are young (McKinley et al., 2022).
5. *Social-emotional learning* – A child’s learning to develop trusting relationships with peers and adults (Egan et al., 2021).
6. *Title 1* – (Title 1, Part A) is an amendment provided by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESEA) that offers financial assistance to local education agencies for children from low-income families to ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards (US Department of Education, 2019b). Title 1 schools qualify when 50% or more students qualify for free and reduced lunch programs (US Department of Education, 2019b).
7. *Virtual School* – Virtual School is another term also used for an online school, e-learning, distance education, distance learning, distributed learning, independent study, web-based instruction, virtual education, virtual charter schools, virtual academies, online schools, or cyber schools (Singh & Thurman, 2019).
8. *Virtual setting* – Virtual setting is another term for e-learning or online learning. (Ionescu et al., 2020).
9. *Virtual teacher* – A virtual teacher supports students by assisting students in performing tasks and is usually available during select class times, intending to train the students to complete tasks independently (Gillespie et al., 1998).

Summary

Education evolved as parents provided instruction to their children as the sole method of gaining knowledge to education provided by elementary teachers from an educational institution. Throughout time, the dynamics of families changed to incorporate both the mother and father in the workforce, requiring students to obtain their education from an educational institution

commonly called a brick-and-mortar setting. The dynamics of families continued to change, and students experienced living in homes that did not consist of their original mother and father. Parents' roles shifted from full involvement to little to no participation in their daily instruction, as schedules filled with daily requirements to support families, busy work schedules, and additional activities. Research for decades has included parental involvement with teachers and their support in assisting their children; therefore, these factors prevented or helped parental support in connecting with teachers and the effects of virtual learning due to the pandemic that impacted schools in 2020 (Garbe et al., 2020). Virtual education began in the United States in 1997 (Barbour & Reeves, 2009), and the setting has remained for many students. It will continue to grow as it accommodates their needs, providing various flexible components for the students and their families. Additional research is needed to explore the factors contributing to building successful connective experiences for elementary teachers and parents to support students in the current, post-pandemic virtual school environment. It was significant to explore the factors to contribute to a healthy network between home and school in the future as virtual school continues to grow.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

A systematic review of the literature was conducted to explore the connective experiences between teachers and parents in a virtual setting. This chapter will present the literature on connective experiences formed through a network. The theory included in the first section supports the connectivism theory that promotes connective experiences bound together through a network to support connections that help the student, followed by a collection of current literature based on the factors that contribute to parents' connective experiences with teachers. Finally, a summary of the literature is provided based on the technological tools teachers and their student's parents utilize.

Theoretical Framework

Numerous theories have contributed to the connectivism theory of Siemens (2017) and encouraged a connective network of elementary teachers and parents. Connections to sustain and maintain connective experiences intend to enhance students' positive behavior and educational progress. Initially, past and present experiences of the connective experiences between teachers and parents affect how students learn and develop successful work habits and responses to new understanding. Therefore, parent involvement is crucial for students to advance in traditional educational settings (Garbe et al., 2020). Because this research is education-based, a theory implicated in psychology supports critical and contextual elements of connectiveness theory vital to students' success. Siemens' connectivism theory (2017), introduced in 2004, focused on the significance of connective experiences between school and family that support students by forming connections in the social networks portion of the entities and taking ownership in learning by observing experiences that affect learners. His theory has advanced the literature that

supports the connective experiences of the social network between teachers and parents.

Memorable experiences with compelling connective experiences between teachers and parents of students affected learners by assisting them in making future decisions based on the experiences students have displayed. Siemens' connectivism theory begins with an individual's personal knowledge that channels through an educational organization allowing connections through a combination of all entities to provide additional learning. The connectivism theory pathways to connect the networks of people, computers, power sources, social entities, and groups as a unified ensemble provides opportunities to manage skills in learning. All pathways of the networks are crucial for supporting elementary students to advance their knowledge in learning.

This study used the connectivism theory to understand the lived experiences of how teachers and parents build connections in the virtual setting. Connections between elementary teachers and parents were essential in supporting students in the virtual setting to gain access to social experiences, electronic devices, and a group of people to support their access to learning. Teachers and parents formulated connective experiences within the social network to create a suitable environment for their students. Due to the significance of Sieman's (2017) connectivism theory, connective experiences between teachers and parents of students are essential to support and gain ownership of the student's learning progress. The connectivism theory was a logical choice to be a firm foundation for this study due to the significance of connections between elementary teachers and parents to support students in the virtual setting. The connective experiences provided opportunities for the social networks between elementary teachers and parents to increase students' knowledge in the virtual setting.

A significant trend in incorporating technology into daily life allows adjustments to people's brains and alters their ways of thinking (Siemens, 2017). Incorporating technology was

essential for elementary teachers and parents to connect in the virtual setting. With the rapid expansion of technology, learning began with a student linked to an educational organization and expanded through various nodes. The students have many nodes in the learning network, including networks of technology, power system, social, people, and groups that support the connections that increase learning. A network of connections with all entities allowed the management of knowledge skills to improve. Therefore, technology, an additional network of acquiring school and making connections, requires the brain to access apps and learning systems outside of traditional face-to-face learning and connections. Furthermore, tools obtained through technology impacted the modifications of the way the brain thinks and learns to acquire virtual access to formalities of learning. Due to the increase in technological tools, the connectivism theory supported the networks among people with similar interests and levels of knowledge in the virtual setting.

Siemens' (2017) connectivism theory was supported by various psychologists' studies exploring social systems involving proximal and distal social systems and their connections to the processes of development and their outcomes directly related to humans' development (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Networks consist of well-connected people who consistently allow and navigate a flow of knowledge. Learning is examined through connectivism as students learn and knowledge progresses, while networks include accumulating learning discoveries in artificial intelligence and neuroscience (Downes et al., 2017). Additionally, connectivism depicts how people adjust to new learning by creating new connections and exploring patterns within a changing environment (Cabrero & Román, 2018). New connections surrounding learning developed new pathways explored to access academic

education. The network among the teachers and parents of students in the virtual setting was significant in ensuring students' success in mastering skills and advancing knowledge.

Related Literature

The goal in virtual school was for students to have support from involved parents to eventually become independent learners when the student had developed to that level. At the same time, learning was a continuing process lasting the learner's lifetime (Siemens, 2017). It was essential to determine the roles of elementary teachers, parents, and students. Determining the roles of educators and their families of students of various ages along their connections in the virtual setting was complicated based on the multiple practices used by virtual schools worldwide.. Online education has been utilized in the US for over two decades and continuously advances to accommodate the progress of education, technology, students, and school systems. Parents and teachers have made connections throughout the history of education in a one-way format (connections made from school to parents), which progressed to a two-way format (connections were made from parents to teachers and teachers to parents) (Bordalba & Bochaca, 2019). The flexible setting of online education has allowed teachers and parents to connect in new, innovative ways by creating more opportunities to perform two-way connections. Like online learning, ways of connecting varied, including texting apps, meeting apps like Zoom, email, and other multi-use apps for instruction, announcements, and making connections. Professionals have defended the connections between elementary teachers and parents while supporting the various benefits of connecting. Educators and parents have experienced connections in various formats, including school functions during and after school, parent-teacher conferences, phone calls, notes, and meetings. Elementary teachers and parents have many connective methods to accommodate their needs. The various technological methods were

explored to look for gaps in the research and understanding of connections between teachers and parents in the virtual setting.

This literature review analyzed the evolvement of education and connective experiences, the influences of parents' roles, the significance of connections, experiences in the virtual setting, and how connective experiences are built between teachers and parents of students. Additionally, advancements in technology, lack of teacher and parent connections, and understanding connections are analyzed for elementary-aged students and their parents, who attend a virtual setting. Electronic capabilities have impacted educational institutions' administration and continuous connecting management by restructuring various connective methods. Furthermore, additional literature incorporating technology to build connections in education supports the educational differences in development. Other domains of electronic modalities, including libraries, the production of books, journals, newspapers, learning environments, and the inclusion of teaching and learning at all levels of education, are already available (Guri-Rosenblit & Gros, 2011). The available technology incorporates additional opportunities within reach of each student. Considering the growth in technological uses for teachers and parents of students in the virtual setting, other purposes include using technological tools to make connections. An analysis of literature diversity, a literature synthesis, and how literature needs to be expanded to support elementary teachers in the virtual setting by understanding what was yet to be discovered needs to be explored further.

Studying literature focused on current teachers' and parents' connective experiences in the current academic, virtual settings supported recent, expanding literature aiding the progression of the quickly advancing educational settings. Previously, education, knowledge, and the delivery of information were measured by the advancement in frames of decades. Learning

development in a virtual setting is progressing exponentially rapidly, and data support the improvements, providing data for future research.

Education and Connective Experiences Evolve

Education and the roles of parents and teachers have evolved throughout history, meeting the needs of students and families. In the early history of education, learning began in the homes of many families (Smith, 2020b). First, parents were their children's teachers and were involved in progressing their knowledge. Second, homeschooling, with the parents acting as teachers, continued for some families while traditional brick-and-mortar settings developed. A teacher outside the family dynamics educated students in various settings, including a virtual setting, which altered the connections between teachers and parents. Later, virtual education was introduced in the United States in 1997 to meet the multiple needs of students to access education in flexible locations in different environments (Barbour & Reeves, 2009). The virtual location has gained popularity and provided opportunities to learn using technology in a flexible environment with various schedules and resources rather than attending a brick-and-mortar school that may not be attainable or preferred. Therefore, virtual learning may be preferred, since it does not require as much time as traditional classrooms, generally 40% to 60% less time (Roberts, 2021).

Initially, education evolved from homeschooling to brick-and-mortar schools to virtual learning through a progression of different types of locations or facilities where education has taken place. Homeschooling and virtual learning have gained popularity over the last few decades with a shift in parental involvement as teachers or assisting teachers. According to the US Department of Education (2019a), homeschooled students are schooled at home, rather than in a public or private school, for students ranging from 5 to 17 and in kindergarten to grade 12.

In 1999, there were 850,000 (1.7%) students in the homeschooled population, which grew to 1,690,000 (3.3%) students in 2019. According to the US Department of Education, homeschooling was used to teach students at home by various ethnicities, including 3.8% White, 3.5% Hispanic, 1.9% African American, and 1.4% Asian. More students attended grades 9 through 12 (3.8%) than grades 1 through 3 (2.4%). Homeschooling has gained popularity throughout the years for some students and their families.

With the newer technology discoveries, virtual learning and its technical developments can support learning from home. Teachers and virtual education systems provide the content, and parental roles shift to facilitators rather than the primary educator. Due to virtual education utilizing a curriculum within an organized educational system, working with helpful teachers is becoming more popular to offer assistance to homeschool families if they choose to receive additional assistance. Learning in the virtual setting is increasingly popular as a modality provided to receive an education each year. Students and families previously homeschooled can participate in school at home through various virtual school programs.

Virtual programs offer a curriculum, educator support, timelines to complete assignments, and an educational institution to participate in opportunities provided by the virtual school. Multiple studies have been conducted regarding virtual learning and its effects on student learning. Currently, 48 states and the District of Columbia support online learning, from part-time to full-time programs (US Department of Education, 2013.). Distance learning has included dual enrollment courses, credit recovery classes, summer school programs, Honors and Advanced Placement courses, and remediation courses, including core subjects and electives in various public, private, and individual schools. Distance learning introduced a different setting than a traditional school. It became more utilized in schools as the concept became more

accessible for higher education while preparing education for online learning. In the 2017-18 school year, approximately 21% of public, 13% of private schools, 30% of charter schools, and 20% of traditional schools offered online courses through distance education (U.S. Department of Education, 2018a). According to Tysinger et al. (2020), in 2020, 32 states allowed fully online schools statewide, with a growing percentage of 6% each year. The online schools' enrollment totaled 300,000 students. Approximately 80% of the student population consisted of grades 9-12; however, the number of enrollments in kindergarten through grade 8 increased the student population (Digital Learning Collaborative, 2019). Research demonstrated the growing need for teachers to provide an education for students in the virtual setting; therefore, more parents have acted as teachers in the home to cultivate a network to assist the students. A diverse group of people networked by connective media to interact and collaborate on the same goals to obtain assistance in academic progress among the virtual teacher and family defines a community built on trust and connectedness (Zhang et al., 2018). Learning in the virtual setting is growing in popularity and will continue to expand among numerous families; therefore, connective experiences between family and school are significant in creating a successful experience for the student.

In contrast, most students were forced to switch from brick-and-mortar to virtual schools during the 2019-2020 school year due to the Covid-19 pandemic that affected students worldwide (Kingsbury, 2021). Teachers' and parents' roles adjusted to provide differently for students' needs. Educational opportunities were expanded to allow more students who may not have had access to learn any other way (Dron, 2019). Students, teachers, and parents suddenly adjusted to distant virtual learning.

Virtual learning is defined as the use of one or more various types of technology (internet, satellite, wireless communication, or audio and video classes) for students to obtain synchronous or asynchronous instruction from the educational program by an instructor that is separated by distance (US Department of Education, 2021a). A meta-analysis of 104 studies found that virtual learning positively and widely affected learning performance (Talan, 2020). Many studies have shown that online education positively affects students' learning performance. Online learning positively affects learning by providing knowledge at any location, any time of the day. One study explored the impact of learning virtually and determined that education is accessible for students to directly have more available access to their professors, teachers, and administration. Teachers' and parents' roles adjusted to assist students in new innovative formats.

Due to the increase of students enrolled in virtual schools, the ability for teachers and parents to connect virtually is a possibility. Because of the expansion of technology allowing settings to be modified, the connective experiences between teachers and parents of students have been modified by more opportunities to communicate more often and through various formats. Social options available are fundamental parts of education in an online design (Diehl & Moore, 2019). Adjusting to the rapid educational changes correlated to the changing formats for teachers and parents to connect to help students progress in the virtual setting.

Influences of Parental Roles

Parents have fulfilled various roles in complementing their child's education to varying degrees, including partners, consumers, or parents who are unavailable or need additional support (Wickett, 2019). Backgrounds of how parents were brought up and influenced by their parents may determine their decisions and actions that affect their role as parents. Students' parents differ in upbringing and have supported their children differently in receiving their

education. Their involvement may have included varying degrees of participation, including close supervision of students' academic progress completed at home to different school functions that provide for parents, such as conferences, classes, and voluntary participation (Đurišić & Bunjevac, 2017). Studies have shown that the lack of connective experiences between parents of students and teachers negatively affects children and their upbringing, with opportunities for connective experiences wasted (Stroetinga et al., 2019). The quality of the connective experiences formed among teachers and parents of students determines the success of the children's transition to school at an early age. Values implemented by parents become engrained into their children as they learn to be students. As students transition from the primary grades, homeschool connections are significant in building trust between families and students (Adams & Christenson, 2000). Students develop personal theories through a lens reflecting on positive and negative experiences with the connective experiences conducted among their teachers and parents. These experiences incorporate work habits and ethics systems that produce determination. Studies show that expectations are transferred to students correlated directly with parents' engagement with their children (Novianti & Garzia, 2020). Theorists have contributed to educational philosophies by how effective learners connect with their teachers by observing the connective experiences formed between their parents and teachers.

The Significance of Connections

Since more than four decades ago, information and knowledge development has progressed slowly. Knowledge progression for students progressed much slower in increments of decades in the past, which is much slower than the progression of knowledge currently (Siemens, 2017). As a result, students were allowed more time to acquire learning content before learning additional content. Due to the increased speed of technology and the influence of expanded

deliveries of education, connective methods, and standards by which people live, demands are placed on the student to learn at a faster pace. Therefore, the possibilities have shifted for students, allowing them to be successful in various educational organizations with a quicker learning rate. However, elementary students have benefited more from involvement with parents to support their virtual learning (Liao et al., 2021). The rapid pace of learning requires the involvement of parents to assist young children in continuing the pace of learning.

With the development of strategies in the digital age, learning and connecting have been based on experiences that create growth in knowledge at the student's educational level. Because knowledge progresses faster, it is measured in shorter amounts of time, such as months and years, rather than decades, due to the exponential growth in all the areas of education, connective experiences, technology, and living standards. Technology has supported a significant trend that allows adjustments to people's brains to influence their thinking and organize various knowledge management skills. Tools have made an impact on the modifications of the way the brain thinks. Furthermore, teachers' experience has been determined to assist in teaching students. Encounters having meaningful connective experiences with their teacher has impacted the students immeasurably. Students working independently in multiple subject areas at various academic levels among diverse grade levels may present a solid necessity for a well-designed program to depend on the council of teachers and parents to gain an adequate understanding of academic knowledge (Candy, 1991). Virtual education has been available in flexible environments in various organizations for accessing learning content with varying degrees of connective experiences with teachers.

Expanding connections have allowed elementary teachers to connect with parents to support students with the transformation of education. Students and parents have felt that

connective experiences are critical when the lack of connections with classmates, face-to-face teachers, and friends is not obtainable (Kundu & Bej, 2021). Because of this, feeling connected among social networks of parents, teachers, and peers has helped students feel connected with others in a similar environment to others accessing learning. In the virtual setting, teachers have furnished the framework of academic content and the facilitation of connections for the network of learners to be involved in the inquiry process (Garrison & Cleveland-Innes, 2005).

Significantly, connections between the networks of people have proven to help students understand and internalize learning in the virtual educational setting. Siemens' (2017) connectivism theory supports the networks organized for teachers and parents to connect to help students make connections to increase their knowledge. Therefore, technology and connections between people have impacted active learning in the digital age. Networking with people to acquire educational competence is derived from making connections rather than experiencing personal learning in a solitary environment (Siemens, 2017). Connections between social networks, including the network of teachers and parents, were crucial for students to be allied to the correct people to learn accurate content in the virtual setting.

Homan's (1953) social exchange theory has supported the connections between teachers and parents, since communication is the gateway to connective experiences. Since students' initial educators are their parents, the network formed between students, their teachers, and parents becomes a formal extension of the family (Mudzielwana & Mulovhedzi, 2020). The primary role of parents is to actively participate in a lifetime obligation of supporting their children to be healthy, flourishing students, while making academic progress. The parents' duties to ensure the development, well-being, welfare, and home environment support their children's learning throughout their school years (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). Some parents are highly

engaged in their children's lives, including their daily activities and routines. Therefore, students examine essential values explored by their parents and implement standards into their own lives when education is prioritized. Studies have demonstrated that parental support in their child's education correlates to their successes, encompassing their progress inside and outside school (Sheldon, 2009). Younger students in elementary school need help setting up and organizing their virtual schools (Bansak & Starr, 2021).

Additionally, younger students and students with disabilities need more support from their parents than older students (Garbe et al., 2020). Previously, some parents of students were rarely committed to managing the decisions surrounding their children until the schools expressed the necessity of their involvement (Wrigley, 2020). Students have learned what is significant to parents through the guidance of their support with academics, extracurricular activities, and sports or musical talent. It explored the significance of connections between people, which is essential for teachers and parents to create significant connective experiences.

Research suggested that parents benefit from assisting their children with acquiring their education virtually from home, since it allows them to become more familiar with the content learned and gives them a deeper understanding of how their child learns (Novianti & Garzia, 2020). The connective experiences between teachers and parents of students support the students in gaining a richer experience in education, being competent in social interactions, developing emotionally, and allowing more outstanding academic progress (Sheridan, 2018). Furthermore, the network between teachers and parents of students has prepared students to perform better at school and home. Connecting actions that build a network between teachers and parents of students have strengthened students' work habits and lived experiences about their school, increasing their grades. Students have benefited from strengthened connective experiences

directly between their teacher and parents by obtaining adequate social skills to communicate effectively with others with fewer behavior problems. More successful connective experiences between the teachers and parents of students as a network have enhanced connective experiences to allow both the ability to assist students with healthy learning and behaviors. The thriving environment that supports and cultivates a student's growth is engrained and affects their lifelong decisions.

The school's climate created by teachers determined the level of parent response in a reciprocal manner. Schools' encouragement and invitations for parents to be committed to school have affected their level of involvement in some cases (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). However, teachers have faced challenges in cultivating and continuing clear connective experiences with families while attending virtual school during the Covid-19 pandemic (Canle, 2020). Even so, parents are more likely devoted to participating consistently when teachers actively demonstrate they care about students' state of being, while including parents by communicating regularly. Therefore, the network between teachers and parents of students has required a foundation built on trust. Teachers must have trusting connections with parents while remaining reliable and confidential (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). Respect for each other's perspectives between the teachers' and parents' connections must be interchangeable, consequently building on lucid connections. Through compelling connective experiences between the teachers, students, and parents of students, academic content has been communicated to identify problems and solutions, implement successful plans to progress in learning, and gain new knowledge in the curriculum.

Students in some educational institutions receive less support and acknowledgment due to their diverse cultures and bilingual abilities; therefore, students are placed in inclusive

educational curricula in their schools to receive additional resources or curriculums (Kloetzer et al., 2021). A study exploring teachers teaching students in a virtual setting found that teachers prioritized equal academic learning that involved all students with unique abilities in their classes. Teachers of students in the virtual setting displayed that students exhibit social and learning challenges that affect their dispositions and parents' connection to their school. Parents of virtual children experience difficulties communicating their goals and experiences of education with their children's schools due to the barriers they face; therefore, the connective experiences between the teachers and parents of virtual students are critical to supporting the students' diverse needs (Akkerman & Bakker, 2019). Some research found that parents of students depend on teachers to clarify expectations with their student's academic learning on various platforms. Because of varying levels of parents' technological understanding, other connective experiences were essential to receive guidance on technical issues relating to submitting work and completing work, procedure clarification, and finding resources from many websites to help the students (Garbe et al., 2020). Connective experiences between teachers and parents are vital to educating students from various cultural, ethnic, and language backgrounds.

Connective Experiences in the Virtual Setting

When schools transferred from brick-and-mortar locations to virtual online settings, educators and professionals noticed that connections between teachers and parents were critical in supporting students academically. The amount of time spent with teachers and consistent, frequent meetings supported learners further and assisted them in becoming invested in their academic progress and educational endeavors (Kingsbury, 2021). In one study, students were academically successful when regular, positive connections were made, even when it was conducted through emails or phone calls (Curtis & Werth, 2015). For others, connections were

more than sending and responding to messages to ensure the student was learning (Garrison & Cleveland-Innes, 2005). Furthermore, during the Covid-19 pandemic, interactions with teachers, parents, and peers from various backgrounds helped the students' cognitive progressions (Duraku & Hoxha, 2020). Teachers and parents stated the significance of synchronous lessons that allowed conversations between teachers, students, peers, and parents for students in the virtual setting. Likewise, the quantity and quality of connective experiences between teachers and parents of students are significant in the online learning environment. Elementary students benefit from their virtual education being accessed often and for adequate time to ensure and understand the curriculum. Therefore, promptly responding to students' and parents' connective strategies is critical for students, while supporting their asynchronous and synchronous learning. Subsequently, the connective experiences between students, parents, and teachers are crucial in portraying the objectives and expectations of various types of work required to complete to allow students to achieve the highest levels of learning (Gaytan & McEwen, 2007). Without direct in-person instruction in the daily connections of teachers and students, the connective experience of all participants must be carefully organized and carried out. Although settings from face-to-face to virtual learning have changed, teachers' and parents' need to connect remains significant for students.

How Connective Experiences are Built

Technology was initially introduced into society as a vehicle to obtain information, identifying it as Information Technology (IT). IT has transformed into "Information and Communication Technology" due to the capability of expanding access to technology to include connections with others (Ratheeswari, 2018). According to Ratheeswari, in the mid-2010s, email, phone calls, and live video conferences were utilized for connections. Technology has advanced

through time, allowing people to explore creative, state-of-the-art modalities to conduct research, communicate, read, acquire educational materials from institutions or leisure, contain records, and have different uses to simplify people's lives. Technology modified the essence of people's lives by incorporating the internet, wireless networks, mobile or cell phones, and other methods of connectiveness (Ratheeswari, 2018). Rapid, advancing technology produced new, innovative ways to conduct the demands of living in society. Therefore, transformations of technology reprogrammed the lifestyles of every course of life.

Therefore, with the advanced developments of technology, virtual learning has also gained popularity through the years. Students can work from a setting outside the brick-and-mortar school because of the adjustments in settings and connective experiences developed with technological advancements. Virtual, or distance learning, was created previously to allow an academic expert to educate students with flexible locations and time frames and has been determined to be an effective, dominant model used in education presently (Saykili, 2018). Technology capabilities expanded, creating more opportunities for its uses. The increased popularity of social networking technologies utilized to communicate with others influenced educators to provide an educational opportunity that used technology to learn and converse about their specific content. Since approximately 3 out of 4 Americans utilize social media, students have an anomalous capacity to access resources on the internet, such as conversing with others in groups or individually (Moore, 2019). Distance education was designed to allow equal access to learning for students with multiple backgrounds and in various socioeconomic classes of society without the resources and capability to attend school on campus in an educational establishment (Saykili, 2018). Education delivered in the distance format was well-prepared, using accumulations of theories and frameworks developed for the education field (Yates et al., 2021).

Distance education was created before the Covid-19 pandemic; however, it provided a vehicle for education to continue when schools closed.

Nevertheless, distance education, or virtual learning, differs from the emergent virtual students, and their parents were forced to participate during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). Distance learning was cultivated before the pandemic to support open educational frameworks in various practices (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). Distance education is defined as learners and their resources accessed to their education by distance and space parameters. Consequently, education in the distance education platforms involves the students' developing needs and the modifications and tools applied to assist them while taking responsibility for their learning objectives. In contrast, remote education is characterized by space separating geographical locations. The emergent, remote education utilized during the pandemic was an obligation to participate in various strategies and approaches to continue obtaining an education in a short-term situation when the geographical location was the main difference that affected learning. Considering the knowledge acquired by educators, students, and parents of students during the pandemic, online education has become an educational experiment (Zimmerman, 2020). Educators have experimented with social, cognitive, and academic behaviors and have accommodated students' reactions with empathy and awareness of their abnormal circumstances.

The flexibility of a home or other environment provides the student access to learning at varying times and additional parental support more suitable for the student. Flexible times, duration of times, and locations create an ideal environment for students needing a more relaxed, personalized learning situation. Personalized learning consists of differentiating the student's strategy and individual learning pace while incorporating connections to their passion and

background knowledge (US Department of Education, 2017). Some well-organized educational programs include more dialogue opportunities for students to connect with an educator and peers to connect deeper to their learning content, which is an asset to gaining significant personal knowledge (Moore, 2019). With the continued growth of technological uses, the tendency to receive personalized learning is anticipated to increase. The brick-and-mortar classroom experience transforms into a virtual classroom when students become part of a technological network linked to the academic community with trained educators. Virtual learning meets students' learning needs efficiently using dialogue and individualizing their education.

Learning from home creates an atmosphere that allows parents to observe, participate, guide, and complement their child's education. Although parents in the past demonstrated different levels of participation, continuing from the early stages of childhood through adolescence, the level of parental support for children has transitioned according to students' educational needs (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017). After schools closed, and teachers and parents of students were forced to “conduct school at home,” connections through phone calls, meets, and texts were determined to be a significant factor in supporting the student's academic progress (Price et al., 2021, p. 103). The forced changes in education created difficult circumstances for all parties involved, including teachers, students, and parents of students. Education must be delivered in unimagined, cutting-edge technology that can be understandable and easy for students and their parents.

Decreased time with teachers at schools was replaced by more parents' interaction with the students, if they were available and could assist. Teachers from various grade levels expressed the significance of multiple roles involving parents in the virtual setting. Parents of younger students were needed to co-teach students to help students learn, while parents of older

students were required to be assistants. Assistants' roles were required to monitor times for class and submit classwork. The parents' assistant roles included understanding the connections and goals to accomplish in the grade level. Co-teachers' roles included assisting the teachers in teaching and reviewing content with students (Liao et al., 2021). The parent's co-teacher role consists of understanding the learning objectives of each lesson, which may require more connections to assist with assignments. The roles of elementary parents adjust according to the student's needs, the difficulty of each assignment, and the requirements needed for each lesson. Teachers and parents are connected to develop an understanding to help students in individual circumstances.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, some teachers and parents of students were striving to do their best work but were unsuccessful at finding the time to communicate adequately. Select parents in a study described needing more connective experiences with the teacher, especially parents of students with disabilities (Currie-Rubin & Smith, 2014). A study included the significance of understanding parents' perspectives on supporting students with disabilities to explore their lived experiences as a learning coach or at-home teacher and their interaction with their child's teacher. The study determined that parents of students with disabilities found connectiveness a critical element of acquiring education in a virtual environment. Families with exceptional circumstances or students with disabilities discovered additional obstacles that created difficulties in adequately obtaining an education and connection. For others, 50% of parents shared in a study that they were enthusiastic about participating in their children's learning for an elongated amount of time while incorporating life skills at home, such as cooking and sewing (Khan, 2022). Parents were allowed to work with students on skills they typically did not have time for.

Regarding students attending school during the pandemic in a virtual format, connective experiences were arranged differently in various situations, individualizing the best modalities with different teachers and parents. Both educators and parents were unsure of an adequate manner to access academic strategies and apply practical connective experiences in an online format. Schools and parents were not given sufficient notice before school doors were closed. Numerous teachers, students, and parents of students were ill-equipped for the unanticipated change facing new hardships, and parents became engaged with new encounters with virtual learning at various levels of education (Garbe et al., 2020).

However, in some cases, parents were expected to contact their teachers to discuss the student's successes and challenges (Currie-Rubin & Smith, 2014). Researchers have found it is more effective when parents seek help from their teachers when a problem arises or when they have a problem; however, teachers cannot solve problems if they are not made aware of any issues (Price et al., 2021). Teachers in other educational institutions initiated the connections and were available to assist students and their parents when necessary (Bubb & Jones, 2020). Some parents and students were pleased with the innovative, beneficial efforts to communicate with them to ensure they have the necessary learning resources. Adapting to a new way of learning and teaching in unprecedented times was challenging for everyone; however, the support of educators and parents of students made the efforts more manageable.

Advancements of Technology

Ultimately, technology is increasing daily and developing additional opportunities to perform tasks using various technologies designed to promote personalized learning independent of time and space. Rapid technological developments allow teachers, students, and parents of students to accomplish tasks that were not available previously. Technological devices have

allowed online learning and provided education for busy work and family obligations (Chipere, 2017) and emergent times due to crises or weather restrictions (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). It has become well-known that there is no uniform understanding of technology and its relation to education and no solution to create a remedy for the issue. Many constructs affect various age ranges, target populations, age brackets, technical configurations, and socioeconomic circumstances, influencing different approaches to supporting students and their parents.

Educators incorporate various devices to complete assignments, and students utilize multiple devices, such as computers, smartphones, and tablets (Elfirdoussi et al., 2020). Schools reported that various approaches to education were obtained by using technology to perform virtual frog dissections for biology class video chats, collaborate using Zoom, and perform dramatical performances using the camera positioned on the computer (Yates et al., 2021). Teachers used multiple technological platforms to provide learning and conduct formative and informative assessments. Well-known virtual learning and connecting media include Moodle, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google Meet, WhatsApp, Google Classroom, YouTube, and learning management systems, including Blackboard, Edmodo, Altissia, Canvas, and eCampus (Elfirdoussi et al., 2020). Other platforms include whole, small group, and individual instruction, including Classkick, Padlet, Pear Deck, and Desmos (Liao et al., 2021). Various platforms allow students and their parents to interact with learning content. Different software, apps, and web 2.0 options are available for elementary teachers and parents to utilize in building connective experiences. The research supported that information absorbed through the media, television, documentaries, and the internet provides more than the content obtained in a traditional classroom (Elfirdoussi et al., 2020). Students and their parents' perspectives of learning using the internet are more comfortable receiving direct connections with educators.

Connections between teachers and parents also occur at any site, providing more interaction opportunities. Interactions include support for students' education according to their needs and differences (Yan et al., 2021). Educators scaffold their instruction based on their students' abilities to assist students in becoming independent learners. Some educators have shifted from transmitting knowledge to facilitating learning and allowing the learning to be more personalized, collaborative, consistent, and without time limitations. Traditional approaches to connecting with parents of students through phone calls and in-person conferences are not adequate, efficient, or effective for home school networks (Zhang et al., 2018) in a community. Connecting through apps online does not replace face-to-face interactions; however, connections made virtually through various types of technology enhance connective experiences among teachers and parents of students. Based on previous knowledge and the history of implementing technology into daily life, technology has become a vehicle in providing a pathway accessible for various educational purposes. The role of technology offers multiple modalities to improve approaches to build connective experiences between teachers and parents of students connect by participating in discussions, sharing ideas or concerns, and corresponding ideas (Arrastia-Chisholm & Tackett, 2020). Parents of students and virtual teachers create a network in which diverse individuals are unified by connective media and develop a sense of trust and a bond through online interactions and connective experiences to provide successful progress for young children (Zhang et al., 2018). Maintaining rich connective experiences among the network of teachers, students, and parents of students create a healthy bond surrounding the intentions of adequate academic progress.

Technological Tools

Meeting face-to-face is an effective connective method for teachers to support the parents of students; however, the flexibility of virtual learning is to collaborate virtually by utilizing tools suitable for the teacher and families of a virtual class. Parents stated the importance of daily conferences in individual face-to-face meetings or phone calls in one unique school system to maintain effective connections (Duraku & Hoxha, 2020) without using technology. However, many tools are available for teachers, students, and parents of students with various cognitive levels and multiple difficulty levels for different abilities of technologically competent users. Additional tools, other than phone calls, may include an individual Facebook page for a class with a private setting to post pictures or messages among the remote private community (Zhang et al., 2018). Other tools may include Class News, a progress report system for teachers, students, and families, and online classroom space to share information with families, such as assignments, progress reports, events, and calendars. Therefore, specific resources used are as follows: new.schoolnotes.com; email; class blog; electronic newsletters delivered through applications such as Smore; apps such as Evite or Remind101; video conferencing such as Skype, FaceTime, Google Meet, Zoom, or Teams; video podcasts; live chats such as text messaging, skype texting, Google Voice Texting, Instant messaging, Microsoft Chat; and a portal to display grades, portfolios, events, and calendars for students and their families to view.

Purpose of the Applications of the Apps

Apps were created to serve numerous purposes for various communities or individuals. Traditional instruments, such as paper and notebooks, cameras, video recorders, and audio recordings, were used in the past to record, make notes, and communicate (Costa, 2019). The devices or instruments have transformed into new modern tools that rapidly change. At the time

of this study, students and parents possessed smartphones or other devices, making it more convenient and assessable to have apps to communicate quickly and more often. Select schools provide additional technological devices to access the schools' preferred learning management system, apps, email, and other supportive programs. The development of devices and applications has progressed in allowing technology to provide many uses for parents, students, and other professionals, impacting their daily lives (Boon et al., 2021). For older students, connections provided by teachers regarding assignments and tests have assisted the students and allowed questions to get answered quickly and easily (Bai, 2019).

The convenience of communicating more quickly has directly affected parents of younger students to support their education by getting answers and receiving critical information, reminders, and other correspondences. Many parents and students are currently considered digital natives, preferring speed, multitasking, and extensive exposure to various digital technologies of computers, online games and videos, and other technological media (Thompson, 2015). Therefore, extensive experience with technology has allowed professionals in education to collaborate and communicate with parents utilizing the methods parents know best. Various apps have been developed to provide accessibility for many uses and connective purposes.

Various Competencies of Users

Teachers, parents of students, and students participate in virtual learning and enter at various levels of competencies. Some have multiple levels of experience with operating technological devices, levels of education that advance technology use, and different cognitive levels that allow advancements to varying learning speeds to utilize new software, devices, or apps in authentic and innovative ways. Students and their parents are digitally aware of specific netiquette expectations and resilience (Martzoukou et al., 2020). Students experience and learn

netiquette and resilience from the examples in their home environment. Digital competencies develop over time with more experience in applying connective skills through technology as students increase their technological awareness. Depending on the age of the student and type of Learning Management System (LMS), additional technological tools may assist with connections, such as assistive technology for students or parents, LEAP Online, Moodle, Turnitin, mobile apps, various social media, and Microsoft Office Software (My digital literacy, 2020).

Lack of Teacher and Parent Connections

A lack of teacher and parent connections occurs in some situations, which hinders students' success in the virtual setting. The absence of connective experiences makes learning more difficult for students (Liao et al., 2021). In some situations, a lack of teacher and parent connections occurs for various reasons, while parents are unintentional and unaware. Some obstacles that prevent parents from connecting with teachers and supporting students involve the necessity of one or both parents to work, increased stress with the unpredicted closure of schools during the Covid-19 pandemic, managing other children, and the demands of the household, additional stress placed on families (Lase et al., 2021). Other obstacles include the lack of time, no or limited internet access, insufficient finances, and lack of understanding and awareness (Williams & Sánchez, 2013). Some families had no choice but to leave students at home unsupervised to complete school assignments and connect with teachers due to demands to continue to work (Apriyanti, 2020). Other challenges parents are presented with involve busy schedules with many priorities within the home, varying levels of parental education, and an awareness of the need to be involved in assisting students with learning. Elementary students' success in learning and obtaining self-confidence is affected when parents do not have

connective experiences with teachers or are uninvolved with education (Lase et al., 2021). Students' freedom at home while parents needed to work reflected a different quality of work that was submitted or led to unwanted behaviors (Apriyanti, 2020). More importantly, the lack of parental involvement with learning and connection is linked to some students who break the rules or become juvenile delinquents (Wardhani, 2020). Due to the various outcomes of students' academic progress and behaviors, the connections between teachers and parents are essential in assisting students to continue to make progress (Williams & Sánchez, 2013).

Understanding of Connections Continues to Develop

Due to teachers and students obtaining education in the virtual setting during the Covid 19 pandemic in 2020 (Eggleston & Fields, 2021), the understanding of how connective experiences between teachers and parents continue to develop. Research includes connections between elementary teachers and parents of students in the virtual setting; however, the literature is not as developed in expanding to how teachers and parents connect and how connective experiences affect students' academic progression. The pandemic encouraged an expansion of technology and opportunities for primary and secondary schools; however, best practices for implementing the technology remain unclear (Ewing & Cooper, 2021). Many studies have explored the experiences of virtual learning, the effects of students adjusting to a new setting, connections with others, and the multitude of technology available to assist elementary students. In contrast, other studies have explored the challenges that hinder connections between teachers and parents to help students. Data has been collected in varying stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, with new experiences contributing to research exponentially in a short amount of time. Consequently, data collected in 2022 would provide newer information from recent experiences than in 2020 (Sonnenschein et al., 2021). Additionally, data collected on the

development of virtual learning in 2022 impacted by technological, educational, and connective methods would provide more data on the continual academic and social outcomes, according to Sonnenschein et al.

Developing an understanding of how to build connections between teachers and parents is significant in assisting teachers in creating a network to make connections for students to expand their learning. Learning and connective preferences are not universal among all teachers, students, and parents (Curtis & Werth, 2015); therefore, exploring various communication methods would benefit teachers. Even so, elementary teachers and parents share similar goals with a desire for students' academic success. Connective experiences are significant in the virtual setting to serve elementary teachers and parents in various capacities, including instructions on technical situations, clarification of an assignment, current or future announcements, materials needed for specific classes, and the significance of learning content (Daum et al., 2021). However, additional new studies provide more data to help teachers understand how to build more connective experiences with parents that are easily operated and more convenient. Creating opportunities for teachers to connect with parents through technological methods would provide more opportunities for students to access their learning networks.

Literature Variation

Many articles are outdated, and their references are older than the original articles, not being about the current technological advances. Literature had proven that knowledge and information progress much quicker by months to years compared to over four years ago when knowledge and information progression was grouped into months or years (Siemens, 2017). Technology advancements are present each year, as new literature is released. Some articles include outdated literature involving some of the first technological devices available. Experts

commented on how useful they allowed students to learn academically, complete work, and communicate on outdated devices from the 2000s to the 2010s. Literature attempts to capture how students have progressively changed through the years in the traditional brick-and-mortar school, homeschool, and virtual learning programs. Literature advanced to include more modern technology available to assist students in providing their curriculum and interacting with teachers.

Supportive literature incorporates an assistive program for teachers to support parents to be more prepared to help their children. A partnership model that creates a network of teachers and parents of students incorporates a program that promotes family connections (Swap, 1993). Training for educators assists in developing more effective practices to support their network with parents, including parent and teacher connections, conferences, and various ways to support families. Educators acquire the knowledge to prepare and develop appropriate strategies to connect students and their parents to learn and collaborate. Current literature references the associations of teachers, students, and parents in the virtual learning environment and their connections to communicate on behalf of the students, their learning, and successful practices of acquiring an adequate education. Literature supports differences in distance education and emergency online learning that disturbed education during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

The pandemic of 2020 affected technological advancements and forced parents of students, including teachers, to conduct education in ways they had no previous training, which influenced current literature. Therefore, current literature describes that parents vary in their abilities to assist students in obtaining their education virtually, and some parents struggle intellectually in helping their children at their academic level. The literature describes various situations that have adjusted the lives of teachers, parents, and students, with varying effects on

learning from home and making connections. Parents' availability of time extends from full-time to little time due to work schedules, obligations with other children younger than school-age or in school with an equivalent number of needs, and other requirements placed on parents. In 2020, 63% of families consisted of both parents employed outside the home, creating the need for assistance with caring for the children at home and learning the new role of becoming educators for their children in their home (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Some parents worked remotely from home, at the workplace, or could not work due to the lack of childcare from the closure of schools. The uncertainty of time required to work and educate their children from home created stress, keeping their child's attention on schoolwork, ensuring the students were adequately learning the content, and incorporating time management skills (Garbe et al., 2020).

With adequate attention to the student's emotional, physical, and academic needs, parents must have a strategic plan, ample time, and the ability to assist with learning activities (Novianti & Garzia, 2020). The utilization of technology to achieve learning and teaching appeared to create a bridge between the teachers and parents of students in response to how education should be accessed for their families. The bridge built various emotions among people, including loving, embracing, hating, and objecting to using technology to participate in virtual learning. Teachers began by creating and sending homework packets to students to complete at home. Because of the extended time, packets of work became inadequate in providing proper instruction. Literature since the pandemic marries the concept of families that choose to achieve their education virtually for various reasons, including whether the pandemic scared them or contributed to a new awareness that allowed them to participate in a type of education other than brick-and-mortar. Furthermore, additional topics that affect the decisions to acquire education through virtual learning comprise the political views on subjects, topics included in a curriculum, or the

evolution of families providing education at home, similar to the way education was introduced into homes at the beginning of the educational history (Smith, 2020b).

Outdated literature would not help support the connectivism necessary for teachers and parents of students with current needs. Former literature does not portray Siemens' (2017) connectivism, which includes networks of computers, power sources, social, people, and groups connected to provide learning through an educational institution as a unit to expand learning for an individual student. Rapid education growth and technological development progress quickly, making some recent literature obsolete. Contemporary literature would be more useful, as factors that support students in learning and the opportunities for connections have progressed rapidly. An extensive amount of literature relates to various topics in education throughout history. More extensive literature focuses on the effects the Covid-19 pandemic had on education and how it affected all teachers, students, and parents of students across the world at multiple age levels. Literature gleaned from technology, and virtual education may be accurate at the time of publishing; however, the advancements in technology and education provide a reason to conduct new research. A common theme in the literature involves a universal agreement involving most studies conducted about virtual education. The connective experiences through networks cultivated among elementary teachers and parents of students in the virtual setting provide why and how meaningful connections support families and their students. Teachers' and parents' impact on students' academic endeavors is significant and affects students' current and future education (Mudzzielwana & Mulovhedzi, 2020). The network between teachers and parents of students is linked to increasing academic achievement, which is magnified by the power of families, preventing the need for remediation. An extensive amount of literature supports parents' effects on students when they are actively involved or engaged in their education. Educators of

younger students have difficulty establishing correspondence with inaccessible parents and find it challenging to connect to sustain their students' virtual academic learning (Laxton et al., 2021). Additional research is necessary to determine factors that assist elementary teachers and parents in connecting seamlessly as a network to improve students' success. Other connective methods were helpful in research to identify and provide additional conceptual material for teachers to utilize. Research should include modalities that support parents of students who are not tech-savvy, streamline connections to help all network members and technological models that simplify the connective efforts for all involved. Not all literature is helpful for the study to explore the factors that support teachers and parents of students as they address other topics of importance related to obtaining education virtually.

Connections Built Using Innovative Technology

The influx of technologies impacts the living and learning culture that people currently experience (Williams, 2021; Zhang et al., 2018). Technology has supported learning from various settings, various platforms to conduct education, and multiple media to communicate. Technology has advanced and allowed students and their parents to access education involving various modalities (Martzoukou et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2018). Teachers have been represented in different roles, such as teachers within an educational organization, parents who consult with teachers who conduct most of the teaching at home (Currie-Rubin & Smith, 2014), and other teachers are responsible for instructing through a virtual setting (Zhang et al., 2018). A topic that most literature appears to support is practical connective experiences between teachers and parents (Currie-Rubin & Smith, 2014; Price et al., 2021; Siemens, 2017; Visković & Višnjić Jevtić, 2017). Teachers and parents of students unify to create a network that works together to support their students in experiencing successful academic progress in the virtual setting (Currie-

Rubin & Smith, 2014; Downes et al., 2017; Price et al., 2021; Siemens, 2017). The collection of literature supports the learners in creating opportunities for the teachers, students, and parents of students to obtain similar goals to assist students.

Gaps in the Research

There are gaps in the literature regarding the connective experiences between elementary teachers and parents of students in the virtual setting, including determining how to build connections effectively to encourage more interactions to improve the success of the student's academic progress. Future research should be based on additional factors that support or hinder the parents' successful connections with the teacher. Particular current devices, apps, and interactive tools were explored, as well as the ability of the parents to become competent in utilizing additional software or devices. Even so, institutions do not provide teachers in their preparation courses with knowledge of effective connective strategies (Butcher, 2020). As online education continues to gain popularity and more research is conducted, additional studies will provide more information to support new and veteran elementary teachers in understanding how to connect with parents. Identifying the factors that support the teachers' connective experiences with their parents of students in a virtual setting will provide information to strengthen connectiveness between the school and families to help students expand on personal knowledge. Studies include connections between parents and students and teachers and students (Amirault, 2019b), but not an abundance containing elementary teachers and parents.

A gap in literature may be the factor that supports parents in being confident in communicating with the teacher. Some factors may include being optimistic in utilizing new software, applications, devices, or Learning Management Systems (LMS), conversing with a new adult about their child's needs or the parent's needs, and having previous experience in working

with a teacher to support their child's academic success in a virtual setting, or another area that assists in creating a healthy connective experience. Factors that may hinder the parents from connecting with the teacher successfully could be a busy schedule, not being confident in utilizing technology, applications they do not use daily, and an attitude that all the work rests on the teacher's role (Stefanski et al., 2016). Other factors that may impede parents of students from communicating with teachers may be additional special needs the students may have; a parent's disability or lower cognitive ability; disbelief in the importance of successful, solid learning for the student to advance to the next grade level; obstacles with operating technology or devices; or challenging material in the curriculum (Garbe et al., 2020).

Limited literature introduces the difference between parents being involved and parents being engaged in their children's education. When parents work parallel to educators and share equal responsibility in educating their children, parents are engaged in their child's education (Stefanski et al., 2016). When parents are engaged, the school system does not have total power over students' learning. When the schools have absolute power, and the parents assist students, the parents are considered involved in their child's education. Most literature uses the two terms interchangeably as synonyms and do not reflect the differences in meanings by definition. Additional research would assist educators and parents with understanding the position parents could take in the amount of support in which they want to be engrossed in their child's education.

Educators have extensive literature to support education's physical, social, cognitive, emotional, and psychological aspects throughout history. Literature includes the constant changing in education, technology, and how technology has evolved concerning education. An extensive amount of literature is available dating back to the worldwide closure of schools in March 2020. It incorporates the impact the pandemic had on teachers, students, and parents of

students. Additional and future research is necessary to assess the effects of virtual education after schools have developed their new normal during a post-pandemic time with students attending school in the brick-and-mortar or virtual school platform. Two years after the pandemic, students and their parents have had ample time to decide if attending virtual school is attainable and adequate for academic progress. Due to the increase in virtual learners each year, future literature would assist educators by obtaining research to guide virtual education in becoming more developed in meeting the needs of teachers, students, and parents (Garbe et al., 2020).

A continued issue of establishing connectiveness remains between teachers and parents that do not engage in their children's education (Cleary, 2021). Additional research would be appropriate to explore practical ways to connect with parents and determine their needs and wants. Parents of students have acquired various levels of understanding based on technology, education, raising children, and other life skills that impact their ability to support their children's academic progress. Future research and training would assist educators by supplying the knowledge of attaining access and connecting with parents of students to provide for the knowledge gap to support connections and students' experiences in the virtual classroom. Educators must understand parents who experience differing values, backgrounds, SES, levels of education, and goals to satisfy similar educational purposes for students.

Summary

Traditional education began as families instructed their children to read the Bible and learn what they needed to succeed (Smith, 2020b). Academic institutions advanced to creating brick-and-mortar schools which later changed to private schools, parochial schools, charter schools, and homeschooling. The shift in educational institutions has adjusted the roles of

parents from being the sole teacher for students, co-teaching from home, to assisting students depending on the educational organization and age or level of the student. As time progressed, technology began to advance quicker, within months or years rather than decades. Since the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, rapid growth in technological opportunities has made progress in allowing people to connect in new, innovative ways (Williams, 2021). Siemens' (2017) connectiveness theory has provided the foundation for teachers and parents of students to begin to cultivate networks (Downes et al., 2017) or a community (Cleary, 2021) that connects to support the students.

Virtual education was developed for students in higher education and transferred the concept to provide learning as early as Kindergarten. Virtual education has more opportunities for parents to connect with teachers and maintain the flexibility for students to learn in various settings, including at home, with the support of their family members. Different software, devices, Learning Management Systems (LMS), and connective methods support elementary parents and their students. Students and their families have varying support from educators and technological options to assist them in making progress in their learning needs. What factors help or hinder students and their families from connecting effectively with their teachers and completing assignments is unknown. Gaps in the existing literature fail to include a comparison between various devices, applications, and media that may be easier to utilize, be more accessible, or measure the amount of support the technological media or teacher provides. Other gaps in the literature do not compare and contrast the students' and parents' cognitive abilities or confidence in understanding the virtual environment. Limited research focuses solely on elementary students, while most literature includes middle school, secondary school, or higher education. Research is acceptable in all levels of education; however, elementary students

require more extensive interaction and connective experiences among the teachers and their parents than older students. Future research may include connective methods that simplify and understand the connective experiences built for teachers and parents.

Extensive research has been applied to the effects and changes education encountered when schools faced an emergent closure, and educators were forced to conduct all teaching through virtual schools. A necessity of current research formulated on virtual schools and the technological apps that have improved since the closure of schools in March 2020 would assist developments in future education. Since many students have returned to brick-and-mortar schools after the Covid-19 pandemic, newer research regarding connective methods for students and their parents that choose to remain in virtual schools would provide beneficial information for educators. Many researchers found that connective experiences to assist students in accomplishing their virtual education requirements are significant for their academic progress. This study explored factors that support best practices by understanding parents' lived, connective experiences working with elementary teachers in the virtual setting. This study aimed to understand successful factors that support teachers and parents of students to learn new ways to connect to improve the professional practice of education. With the influence of the connectiveness theory (Downes et al., 2017; Siemens, 2017), the connective experiences between teachers and parents of students are significant and enhance the academic experience for the students (Zhang et al., 2018).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how connective experiences are built between elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting at the K12 DEF Virtual School in the southeastern part of the United States. At this stage in the research, the connective experiences of the network between elementary teachers and parents were defined as the nucleus of knowledge flow supported and nurtured for the student. Chapter three described the transcendental phenomenological approach as the qualitative research design, followed by overarching research questions for the study related to educators' and parents' experiences with connections. The ABC (pseudonym) county setting was discussed, followed by the participants involved. The procedures obtained meaning from participant interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts on connective experiences. Subsequently, the study's methodology, qualitative design, and approach were discussed. This study's research methods for analysis involved interviews, focus groups, and journal entries. In conclusion, trustworthiness and analysis relating to educators' and parents' experiences with connections were discussed while incorporating triangulation, researcher bias, and ethical consideration, together with the researcher's role in the study involving trustworthiness in making decisions and ensuring the accuracy of the participants' responses transcribed by the researcher.

Research Design

This qualitative study explored and identified constructs that cannot be easily measured with a transcendental phenomenological design. Those values included particular technological methods for teachers and parents, with the teacher utilizing one method or differentiating between multiple methods for various parents. The purpose of this study was to report

exhaustively the meaning and nature of connective experiences involved in the virtual setting between elementary teachers and parents. This qualitative study was most appropriate for this topic because the data collection consisted of elementary teachers' and parents' experiences and opinions to understand connections.

According to Moustakas (1994), the empirical phenomenological approach was appropriate because the study gathered research to reflect on the experiences and provided an essence of the events. This study focused on the experiences of elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting and their stories. The themes identified in this qualitative research may assist in refining the teacher's approaches to connecting with parents. This study assisted in filling the gap in research on the teachers' experiences in building connections with parents to connect through the virtual setting. Phenomenology is used to discover meaning for the lived experiences of several individuals, ideas, phenomena, and how they relate to or speculate the nature and wonder of those experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This phenomenological approach was the best approach for this study because the constructs cannot be easily measured; the study explored teachers' lived experiences and the connective experiences of their student's parents in the virtual setting. Due to the explored lived experiences supporting constructs that cannot easily be measured, the qualitative phenomenology study design was most suitable over the quantitative design for cultivating and managing the connections between parents and teachers in the virtual setting. According to Moustakas (1994), the empirical phenomenological approach was appropriate because the study gathered research to reflect on the experiences and provided an essence of the events. Therefore, developing an extensive meaning and essence of the experiences of the elementary teachers and parents was crucial to understanding connections rather than gathering data on the use of connections made. The perspectives were based on lived

experiences in the past year and a half. The lived experiences of the past connectiveness through a network between parents and students were explored to examine how effective connections were built in a virtual setting. A transcendental approach was utilized extensively in sociology, psychology, and health sciences. Researchers focused on participants' first-hand experiences and excluded judgments based on bias or epoché. Connective experiences between the researcher and parents in the virtual setting were placed aside to explore connective experiences between other elementary teachers and parents. At this stage in the research, a transcendental phenomenology was utilized based on the connective experiences of the network between elementary teachers and parents, defined as the nucleus of knowledge flow supported and nurtured for the student.

The transcendental approach was the most appropriate format to understand elementary teachers' and parents' experiences to discover the nature of their perceptions and connectivity methods. The transcendental phenomenological (TPh) design was suitable for finding participants with similar lived experiences or phenomena and reducing them to describing the universal essences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). TPh was a methodology created by Husserl (1999) intending to develop an understanding of human experiences. The methodology was based on separating preconceived notions, or epoché, to cultivate the accurate meaning of the phenomena to appear (Moustakas, 1994). According to van Manen (1993), the typical characteristics of how things usually happen were investigated using the phenomenological framework to research lived experiences. This research design placed aside personal experiences with the connective experiences of students' parents in a virtual setting and separated prejudgments regarding the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher used imagination and was immersed in the data to create a thorough understanding of the perspectives and experiences of the participants. The

teacher participants' connectivity methods with students' parents were explored to determine the factors that cultivated and managed how connective experiences were built.

Research Questions

Research questions were developed to explore lived experiences teachers and parents observed in the virtual setting.

Central Research Question

What are the experiences elementary teachers have regarding the parent and teacher connections in the virtual setting?

Sub-Question One

How do connectivity methods improve connections between elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting?

Sub-Question Two

How do the virtual setting's connective experiences between elementary teachers and parents help the student?

Setting and Participants

Learning in the virtual setting from a full-time virtual school has occurred for over a decade in the state of the ABC school district in the southeastern part of the United States (Seaman et al., 2018). Due to the Covid pandemic, the school district created a virtual school for kindergarten through twelfth grade to offer an optional setting for students and families that found it more suitable to learn in a virtual setting rather than attending in a brick-and-mortar setting. The participants in the virtual setting have elected to learn in a flexible environment for various reasons, such as medical reasons, flexible scheduling, or flexible locations that allow the student to travel. Attendance shifted from the brick-and-mortar schools to the virtual portion of

the school district.

Setting

The setting was in the southeastern part of the United States in the ABC school district. In the 2021-2022 school year, the school was restructured to consist of administration and guidance counselors for elementary, middle, and high school, with a director coordinating the entire virtual school. Each grade level had multiple teachers with students assigned to classes. Elementary teachers provided instruction in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The connective experiences for teachers and parents to cultivate a network were significant to providing adequate support for students. Teachers taught lessons in the homes and settings where students ventured to create a purpose to cultivate and manage connective experiences.

Connective experiences with parents occurred differently in the virtual setting.

█ The virtual setting was an option in the ABC school district in the southeastern school district, consisting of 27 elementary schools in rural, suburban, and city areas. Students in the virtual school were combined into one virtual school with connections to their base school in the zone of their location in the school district. The K12 DEF Virtual School served approximately 15,000 students in the first half of the 2020-2021 school year and approximately 8,000 students in the second half of the school year in 2021 (*Horry county* █).

█ 2020-2021 school year, the virtual school consisted of one principal, one attendance principal, and a team of approximately ten curriculum specialists. The virtual school was restructured for the 2021-2022 school year, consisting of about 1,800 students enrolled in the K12 DEF Virtual School. The virtual students consisted of varying socioeconomic statuses, with 14 of the 27 schools identified as Title 1 schools █ (*HCS, 2022*).

Participants

The participants in this study were equipped with experience in participating in connections cultivated in a virtual setting. Some participants in this study were elementary school teachers of the K12 DEF Virtual School who taught the four core content areas with more than three years of experience. The remaining participants were the parents of elementary students who attended K12 DEF Virtual School. The participants varied in age, ethnicity, and gender. The participants were selected to gather adequate number of teachers, special education teachers, and parents and their lived experiences of varying teacher and parent connective experiences. The participants were identified as a heterogeneous group that has experienced a similar phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Teachers and special education teachers have varying needs, with differing curriculums, teaching procedures, documents, and assessments, which may reflect different connective experiences. Teachers experienced connections differently, as they received compliments or complaints from students' parents or may have a varying lens as they experienced the administrative side of parent connections.

I had no authority over the teachers I interviewed. The students of teachers were combined into classes from all over the ABC school district and were not students I have taught in the virtual setting. This study intended to inform elementary teachers about how connective experiences were built with parents in the virtual setting. Discoveries may have included positive connective experiences that supported students or determined solutions to support teachers in developing more enriched connections to create the most efficient learning environments for students.

Researcher Positionality

My professional career began as a teacher in brick-and-mortar schools with the opportunity to begin teaching in a virtual setting. I started teaching 25 years ago in a general education classroom with experience with general and special education students. As a virtual teacher of 4 years and a brick-and-mortar teacher for 24 years, I have experience cultivating and maintaining connections with parents. My role in the study consisted of a human instrument. As a researcher, I gathered and analyzed information. Qualitative researchers do not tend to gather data or other instruments created by other researchers (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

My relationship with participants was portrayed as a researcher, with no extenuating relationships with the participants other than working in the same school district where I am currently employed. The assumption I brought to the study was that connective experiences between elementary teachers and parents support students in the virtual setting. Their learning and connective experiences were built into more convenient technological methods.

A social constructivism approach allowed personal experiences with connective experiences with parents in a virtual setting to relate to the participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). I used my imagination and immersed myself in the data to understand the participants' experiences.

Interpretive Framework

As an educator, my educational theory was based on the belief that each educator and parent constructed their connective experience based on their experiences and backgrounds. The position through which I conducted my study was the conservative social constructivism framework (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Using a qualitative and subjective approach to understand better how elementary teachers and parents build connective experiences in the virtual setting

was a method to develop a meaning of the perspectives and experiences of these teachers and parents. A social constructivist paradigm was crucial in qualitative research because it was conducted to determine the meaning and understanding of a human's experience (Kim, 2014), in this case, the experience with connections. This study utilized the social-constructivism paradigm to explore the understanding of the teachers' lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) and their connective experiences with parents.

Philosophical Assumptions

My philosophical assumptions were derived from a biblical worldview. This study came from the message that God designed one body with many parts, but one part is ineffective without the rest of the body. Teachers are not as effective without the support of parents, and together with both "parts" working together, an effective network can work together to support the student. 1 Corinthians 12:20-25 says, "As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!' On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem weaker are indispensable, and we treat the features that we think are less honorable with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other" (*New International Version Bible*, 1984). My belief system was that parents should continue to participate in a significant role in their child's education to be accountable for their progression in education.

Ontological Assumption

Ontology is the study based on reality. A constructivist's view of reality is based on the lens created by a human's lived experiences and background. Relativists, people affected by reality, develop an understanding based on subjective and intersubjective social knowledge impacted by human understanding influenced by experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 2016). The reality gained through subjective experiences is built by multiple realities by different individuals (Boghossian, 2006). My views of connections between educators and parents were based on my experiences with my parents' connections with my teachers, at a minimum. My parents' connections consisted of going to parent and teacher conferences, sending notes to school, and signing papers from teachers. My experience as a teacher making connections with parents has helped me gain a new reality.

My ontological assumptions were based on the significance of communication between teachers and parents as essential to a student's academic progress. Students viewed their experiences differently than their parents, while placing the importance of learning at different levels in different areas. Parents can support students accordingly when they know their educational needs and expectations. Additionally, parents could not assume their students were acquiring an adequate education based on their needs when teachers were not communicating with parents. As a parent, I communicated with my child and sought to connect with her teachers to develop an understanding of how to support school learning. Taking professional development courses in making connections with parents to support students' behavior, academics, and involvement with the school has helped me take the initiative to make more connections. As a virtual teacher internationally and locally, I have found a better correlation between students' success in school to be parallel with more connections made with parents. Professional

development courses were required to learn to document connections made with parents and to become acquainted with more apps to make connections more successfully. Continuing education and research were crucial to maintaining educational growth and improving as an educator. I wanted to continue to improve in connecting with my students' parents and providing the easiest method of connecting that would not hinder parents from connecting with me. A majority of the parents of my students spoke languages different from English, and I wanted to implement connections they could use seamlessly.

Epistemological Assumption

Connecting with students' parents was essential to supporting students and their families in the southeastern United States virtual setting. From the professional standpoint, although many teachers believed connections with parents were critical, some factors contributed to the hindrances of connecting with parents, such as having limited time, resources, and training (Deslandes et al., 2015). From a parent's standpoint, feeling the need to connect with teachers was essential to work as a team to support students; however, it was hindered by limited time and knowledge of the lack of connective methods teachers preferred. Connections between teachers and parents were essential in providing adequate support to all students, regardless of their academic levels, to understand what was required to be successful. My motivation for selecting this topic was to discover an understanding of methods of connectivity that made communication quick, simple, and accommodating to the needs of my student's parents. I intended to develop an understanding of elementary teachers and parents and the use of connective methods by exploring a wide array of participants with backgrounds in the virtual setting that have lived in the virtual setting as they have walked and talked the language of education in the virtual setting.

Axiological Assumption

As a Christian educator and leader, I felt it was essential for teachers to understand the significance of building connections with parents in the virtual setting to support students and their families while continuing our process to be more like Christ and make progress toward our goals as Christians and being a shining example for God. Parents and students needed to feel supported and encouraged while understanding that they were not alone in educating their children, just as Christ never left His children alone. As a follower of Christ, I felt we should support parents and provide honest, positive feedback to demonstrate our dedication to ensuring parents that we supported them and desired to see their students succeed. When teachers offered encouragement and prayer, parents may have returned the action and responded by connecting more often. In Romans 15:5, Paul says, “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had” (*New International Version Bible*, 1984). We must have strived to connect with parents and reach out with love as Christ loves us.

Procedures

This section describes a detailed description of the procedures in a chronological, narrative, step-by-step format. The procedures include obtaining necessary permissions from the IRB (see IRB Approval Letter in Appendix C) and the ABC school district (see Approval Letter in Appendix B), the participant recruitment plan, data collection, and data analysis to strengthen the finding’s credibility. An ample amount of detail is included in this section to replicate this study.

Permissions

IRB written permission was submitted and secured before conducting research with other teachers and parents. Before notifying elementary teachers and parents, my school district

obtained written IRB permission. See Appendix A for IRB approval. The teachers and parents were interviewed to gather data to explore their experiences with connections in the virtual setting. I gathered consent forms from all participants before conducting their interviews, focus groups, and journal entries. Sample consent/assent forms are included in Appendix B.

Recruitment Plan

A minimum of six teachers and six parent participants were selected from the K12 DEF Virtual School in the ABC school district. Perspectives were gathered from an adequate sample from a heterogeneous sample of similar experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018), including regular education teachers, special education teachers, and parents' views based on their lived experiences. The participants were selected to gather adequate samples of teachers, special education teachers, and parents' perspectives and the lived experiences of varying types of teacher and parent connective experiences. The participants were identified as a heterogeneous group that had experienced a similar phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Teachers and special education teachers had varying needs, with differing curriculums, teaching procedures, documents, and assessments, which may reflect a different connective experience. A combination of snowball and criterion sampling methods was used. Criterion sampling identified participants who met the teaching criteria in the virtual setting by providing quality assurance. The snowball method identified candidates recommended by other candidates who believed in providing information-rich lived experiences by teaching in a virtual setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The sample was identified by collecting current or recent participants teaching in the virtual school. I selected candidates with whom I had no experience with their student's teachers and parents. The study was introduced to the sample by sending an e-mail to explain the study, its significance, and how their lived experiences would help me gain information to assist

teachers in exploring information to support their connective experiences with parents of students. Information about informed consent was included in Appendix A. Sample consent forms are included in Appendix B.

Data Collection Plan

Data collection was significant in gaining data from the study. The data were collected through individual interviews, focus groups with teachers and parents, and journal prompts. First, individual interviews were conducted to gather data based on their lived experiences. Second, additional data were gathered from teachers from journal prompts. Third, focus groups of teachers and parents were conducted to collect data from questions answered during a group discussion. The data were collected in this order to allow participants to add to their responses without stress and allow them time to think and reflect on their responses to obtain data saturation. Journal prompts were conducted to gather additional data the participants provided. A focus group enabled the participants to elaborate on their initial responses by discussing additional topics they had not considered in the first interview. A focus group with parents gained parents' perspectives on connecting with teachers in a virtual setting. Triangulation was created by using multiple data sources in this study by obtaining lived experiences from participants in various collection methods. It was crucial that the researcher focused on the participants' experiences and set aside their preconceived notions and biases to bracket the experiences provided by the participants.

Individual Interviews

It was significant to conduct interviews to collect data to explore how connective experiences were built between elementary teachers and students' parents in the virtual setting. Interviews began with a generic conversation to make the participant comfortable before

beginning the interview questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), so they could devote themselves to the interview questions on a deeper level. Open-ended questions were asked to understand teachers' shared experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interviews were recorded (van Manen, 1993) to ensure adequate information was gathered and body language could be observed while answering questions.

The interviews were based on the semi-structured model, which had questions and acknowledged the participant's perspectives, and discussed their comments as they were made throughout the interview. Participants were interviewed in person or through a virtual meeting. Interview questions were generated from the research questions while noting which question types (CRQ or SQ) were derived.

Individual Interview Questions

[Teachers]

1. Please describe your educational background and experience in your career through your position in the virtual setting. CRQ
2. Please describe your strengths in working with students' parents in the virtual setting. CRQ
3. Please describe connective experiences with a parent that connected often and about a parent that did not connect as often in the virtual setting. CRQ
4. Tell how your connections with both types of parents that connect often and not as much changed how you connected with them. CRQ
5. Describe whether you connect with parents more often or less often in the virtual setting and why you think so. SQ1

6. What professional development opportunities have you had to support you in connecting with parents in the virtual setting? CRQ
7. What factors contribute to conducting and maintaining the connective experiences between you and the parents in the virtual setting? SQ1
8. How frequently are connections conducted with parents, and should it be more or less often? CRQ
9. What do the connective experiences that strengthen the communication pertain to? CRQ
10. How do you connect with parents in the virtual setting (text, email, Facebook, connecting with parents in the background)? SQ1
11. How do your connections with parents help your students? SQ2
12. How do you explain how the correlation of differences in technological abilities among various parents relates to their connective abilities? SQ1
13. What information do you share when you connect with parents, and how does it help students? SQ2
14. How do you address situations where parents contact you outside of the school day about questions regarding virtual learning? SQ1, SQ2

[Parents]

1. Please tell me about an elementary teacher in the virtual setting and the most effective connective experiences you had. CQR
2. Please tell me about a connective experience you had in the virtual setting that was not effective. CRQ
3. What factors assist you in communicating with your teacher, and how often?
SQ1, SQ2

4. What factors prevent you from communicating with your teacher, and how often? SQ1, SQ2
5. How do connective experiences with your child's virtual teacher help your child? SQ2
6. What choices of connective methods do you have to connect with your child's teacher (email, text, Facebook, Zoom)? SQ1
7. Which methods do you prefer when connecting with your child's teacher in the virtual setting (email, text, Facebook, connecting with the parent during class)? SQ1
8. How often do you like to connect with your child's teacher each week in the virtual setting, and why? SQ1

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

An analysis of phenomenological data was conducted using a modification of the van Kaam methods of analysis (Moustakas, 1994). First, horizontalization was performed by listing wording or phrasing related to the experience. Second, removing terms unrelated to the theme, wording, or phrasing was reduced. Third, the wording and phrasing associated with the experiences were categorized by themes. Fourth, member checking allowed the participants to read and agree with their messages about their experiences in the transcription. Fifth, a description of each participant's experience as a co-researcher was created in a textual format from the interview transcription. Sixth, the experience was described as a textured and inventive modification. Seventh, a description of the meanings and essences of the participants' experiences included themes explained texturally and structurally.

It was essential to follow Moustakas' (1994) guidelines for transcendental phenomenology to analyze the data gathered from the interviews to practice epoché in the first step by setting aside, or bracketing, preconceived biases regarding knowledge of the practices of

the connective experiences of the teachers and student's parents in the virtual setting. According to Moustakas (1994), to gain new perspectives of experiences, it is essential to place biases or prejudices aside to obtain new perspectives of events.

After each interview, the phenomenon's essence was reported in written form (van Manen, 2014). While following the guidelines supported by Moustakas (1994), next I completed the Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction by incorporating a discovery of the nature of the phenomenon and experiences free from preconceived biases or prejudices with a fresh view. Member checking was performed by permitting the participants to read the transcriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018) to ensure the accuracy of their perspectives. The data gathered from the interviews were horizontalized, allowing each participant's statement to remain as valid as other statements (Moustakas, 1994). The participants' responses from the recorded interviews were analyzed, common themes based on connective experiences were identified, and categories of similar essences were placed into related groups. According to van Manen (2016), analyzing themes that emerged regarding a phenomenon was an intricate and innovative application of determining new knowledge. NVivo was used to transcribe dialogue for the researcher to determine the significant patterns across the participants. This process allowed the researcher to explore life experiences to determine if there were any patterns. I expected to find detailed information, discover surprising details, and learn interesting or unusual information from the participants while reading and Memoing Emergent Ideas (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I memoed ideas when reading sources, transcripts, and other texts while immersing in data. I memoed reflective thinking using phrases, short phrases, and significant ideas. I recapped notes pertaining to the field. Visualization was created to illustrate what happened and how the experience

occurred. A summary was conducted to depict the essence using a descriptive recap of what was experienced.

Focus Group

Two focus groups were organized to obtain further information, including a group of teachers and a group of parents. Journaling was maintained during group recordings. A focus group allowed multiple teachers and parent participants to share dialogue in their respective groups about their connective experiences from the virtual setting. The focus group of teachers and parents was recorded and downloaded to transcription in NVivo to obtain every statement by each participant. Information was gathered, as the various perspectives of the participants were shared among the group. Conducting a focus group allowed triangulation of sources of evidence between the interviews to collect additional data from the participants. The focus groups were selected to incorporate a wide range of experiences that may have related to the experiences of the other participants. The focus groups comprised approximately two groups of three to four participants, including teachers and parents. The teachers were a balance of primary, elementary, and special education teachers. Member checking was conducted by allowing the participants to read and ensure their perspective was correctly described in the written transcript.

Focus Group Questions

Focus group questions supported the data obtained from individual interviews by gathering additional information on lived experiences in a synchronous group setting of teachers and parents. Information was gathered by exploring a collaborative conversation and obtaining additional, complex information beginning with the research questions to obtain data saturation. Questions for focus groups were conducted the same manner as the interview questions to adhere to consistency and without repeating questions previously used during the interview. After the

individual interview data collection had been completed, the focus questions did not need to be modified to reflect the information obtained. The researcher accomplished member checking by allowing the participants to read the transcription acquired during the interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and allowed the participants to read the analysis to ensure the accuracy of their perspectives. The duration of focus groups lasted approximately forty-five minutes. The number of questions was limited to five, and participants were given two weeks to complete member checking.

[Teachers]

1. Describe your connective experiences with your students' parents. CRQ
2. What factors (technological or methods) enrich your connective experiences with your students' parents? SQ2
3. What technological methods that you may have used or not used are most convenient for connecting with parents? SQ1
4. Describe a time when parents contributed to your connective experiences in the virtual setting that may not have happened in a different setting. CRQ, SQ1, SQ2
5. How often do you feel connections should be made with parents? SQ1

[Parents]

1. How do connections with your child's virtual teacher help your child? SQ2
2. What factors (technological or methods) enrich your connective experiences with your child's teacher? SQ1
3. What technological methods that you have used or may not have used are most convenient for connecting with teachers? SQ1

4. Describe a time when your child's teacher contributed to your connective experiences in the virtual setting that may not have happened in a different setting. CRQ, SQ1, SQ2
5. How often do you feel connections should be made with teachers? SQ1

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

A semi-structured question format was utilized in the focus group to gain specific knowledge of the perspectives and allowed the conversation to incorporate additional data to support questions that may be added to the second interview. The modification of the van Kaam method of phenomenology analysis guided the data analysis. The guidelines Moustakas (1994) presented were followed to analyze the data obtained in the focus group. First, epoché was practiced while bracketing, or setting aside biases that may interfere with the data. With epoché, preconceived notions about experiences were placed aside to gain a new perspective. Each relevant statement related to the questions was recorded, and the statements were horizontalized by listing statements that do not overlap or repeat themselves. NVivo synthesized the statements into themes to describe experiences that emerged. A description of the structures of the researcher's experiences was constructed using an imaginative variation. The essence of the participants' experiences was maintained throughout the process.

Journal Prompts

Journal prompts complemented the participants' interviews and focus group data. The journal enriched the data with additional data the participants may have thought of outside the interview time constraint. The participants were given two weeks to complete, submitting two entries each to compare the statements from two separate times.

Journal prompts included additional data that assisted the study. Prompts consisted of examples such as:

1. Think of one student you feel has cultivated an enriched connective experience with their parent. What factors promote the connective experiences' success, and describe some conversations and how they were conducted? CRQ, SQ1
2. Think of one parent with whom you feel you have not cultivated a practical connective experience. Describe your interactions or lack of interactions with the parent and discuss your perspective on why the connective experiences have been managed in this way. How did this impact the academic progress of your student? CRQ, SQ1, SQ2
3. What do you plan to incorporate in your practice to encourage more support and interaction from all parents in the future? SQ1
4. When you could plan for your "back to school meeting" next year, what will you incorporate in your meeting with parents to express the importance of an effective parent and teacher connective experience to help students next year? SQ1, SQ2

Journal Prompts Data Analysis Plan

A modification of the van Kaam method of analysis (Moustakas, 1994) was used to analyze the phenomenological data. Epoché was used to bracket or use biases to compile the data. Each statement was treated with respect and recorded with relevant statements. The statements were horizontalized without repeating, overlapping other statements, and clustering statements into synthesized themes. An imaginative compilation utilized a description of my experiences' structures. The meanings and essences of the experiences were maintained using a textural, structural description.

Data Synthesis

Analyzing data must be discovered by utilizing epoché and bracketing the researcher's feelings by excluding preconceived beliefs. Adhering to horizontalization, which uses transcriptions to obtain each statement and belief based on the experience, was listed and grouped into categories (Moustakas, 1994). Next, beliefs collected from participants were identified and labeled to connect the themes to the additional data collected. Data were reduced into segments of meaningful information by coding the themes into categories and noting patterns among the connective experiences of patterned regularities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Collected data unrelated to the study was reduced and eliminated to focus on the essential information to assist the researcher in understanding. Then, themes were created after data had been placed into categories to identify how the clustered data supports the experiences and portions to build meaning and essence of the experiences. The essence of the experiences was portrayed in a detailed written report (Moustakas, 1994). The data were analyzed using different approaches while utilizing the guides for reflection to explore the meanings of the participants' lived experiences.

Ensuring validity occurs was essential while obtaining qualitative data or conducting data analysis. The methods the researcher used to perform data analysis in this study included phenomenological reduction, horizontalization, and clustering of themes into phrases. According to Moustakas (1994), researchers may place evidence aside to discover the perceptions, feelings, and thoughts of others based on their experiences.

First, phenomenological reduction included epoché or bracketing preconceived beliefs. Epoché involved the researcher understanding the participants' experiences without biases (Creswell & Poth, 2018). During the focus group, the researcher used phenomenological

reduction and analyzed the participants' responses based on their dialogue involving the lived experiences of connections in the virtual setting while using epoché.

Second, horizontalization was used by recording and transcribing each statement related to perceptions about connective experiences. A horizon was created when statements about the phenomenon of connective experiences in the virtual setting were presented to our conscious; therefore, the textural qualities assisted in developing an understanding (Moustakas, 1994). Acquiring each statement about connective experiences was treated equally (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Horizontalization was obtained by recording the interviews and focus groups and using NVivo, a resource used for transcriptions. The transcriptions were secured in a password-protected cloud location and the researcher's personal computer.

Third, identifying and synthesizing categories of themes and meanings assisted the researcher in placing clusters of the statements into components of themes or meanings. Removing overlapping or recurrent messages was essential for the researcher to obtain structural descriptions of connective experiences to develop an understanding of the entirety of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). As Moustakas explained, the researcher must immerse into the world of others to understand participants' experiences intensely by listening carefully and having empathy. Finding clusters or themes of significant knowledge acquired from the participants was essential to analyzing data. A visual thematic map was created to ensure the data emerged with accurate themes (Saldaña, 2021). Recoding the first visual thematic map ensured the themes were adequately organized by answering the research questions.

Trustworthiness

It is significant that the findings were portrayed utilizing trustworthiness to create the most accurate results to represent the truth. Conditions needed to be as truthful as possible to

assist educators in the future. Honest data helps educators understand factors that ensure connective experiences have been built between elementary teachers and parents in various virtual settings.

This study followed a qualitative study's four components of credibility: authenticity, transferability, dependability, and conformability, ensuring ethical validation and triangulation are used (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study utilized triangulation, and interviewing practice, eliminated researcher bias, and used member checking and feedback.

Credibility

Credibility was incorporated by determining the truth in the study's findings that accurately described reality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and triangulation among the interviews and focus groups. Triangulation involved using numerous sources, methods, and ideas to ensure confirming evidence was used to validate the fidelity of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Member checking was used among the participants to review the transcripts and ensure the information was correctly portrayed (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). A peer review was used to ensure a review of the connectivism phenomenon was explored in this study. Peer review ensured that credibility and trustworthiness were utilized to maintain the researcher's honesty and reliability. To remain honest, the researcher remained unbiased and receptive with no preconceived judgments. This process was significant in ensuring the accuracy of data interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study included the connectivism theory in determining results and perspectives with the ideas of connective experiences of teachers and parents for data.

Transferability

The findings demonstrated transferability by showing results related to other contexts

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985), by including extensive descriptions describing the study's results (Geertz, 2008). The findings of the results and content about teachers' and parents' connective experiences related to information in other educational areas during different time periods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by transferring details presented in the data analysis of the connective experiences of elementary teachers and parents. The themes placed into phrases illustrated the transferability to other settings. Results were relevant to various states, including secondary education, higher education, and continuing education. The researcher was the only one to relay the findings by incorporating a particular judgment.

Dependability

Dependability was utilized in gathering and portraying the findings that could be repeated if conducted by another researcher at another time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), with effective descriptions of the procedures that could be repeated for the study. An inquiry audit could be conducted with a thorough review of the process and the results by the dissertation committee. Since they are closely related, dependability was followed by confirmability. Triangulation was used to compare and crosscheck the information's consistency and reduce researcher bias.

Confirmability

Confirmability ensured that the study's findings were determined by the participants, rather than the researcher, by using an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An audit trail is utilized to develop a systematic organization of documenting the processes that show an understanding of information throughout the study. An audit trail was essential to maintain an organized system of memoing and journaling notes with dates to note the time. Triangulation was also utilized.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations or implications of the research were obtained pertaining to the site, participant access, and consent of the participants. The participants understood that participating in the study would be voluntary, and they could withdraw anytime. Confidentiality was maintained with all information and data obtained during the study.

I avoided deceiving participants who may accurately provide information about the parent and teacher connective experience. Incorrect information could impact the study with false information. The participants needed to become aware of the study and its purpose. I avoided siding with participants and disclosing any results. The study could have been insufficient with any false data. Various participants effectively provided data for the analysis without reporting only one opinion. Data was monitored by securely providing adequate protection in paper and electronic files. The participants were allowed to participate in the study without the added pressure to ensure the data provided was accurate.

Pseudonyms were maintained during the study to maintain the confidentiality of the name of the school district, school, and participants. The researcher maintained confidentiality and ensured that all data was stored safely and securely by placing them into a password-protected cloud on a personal password-protected computer. The data collection will be destroyed after three years.

Summary

A qualitative study was conducted to identify constructs that cannot be easily measured. This method choice was accurate for the study because the constructs cannot be easily measured. A transcendental phenomenological qualitative study was utilized to explore the experiences and gain knowledge of the teacher's connective experiences with parents in the virtual setting. This study aimed to understand the experiences of connections between elementary teachers and

parents in a virtual setting. The data collection consisted of interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts. Data analysis strategies included coding themes in determining the pattern, reading and memoing emergent ideas, recapping ideas, and portraying a trustworthy essence by describing participants' lived experiences. The significant amount of data collected created crucial meaning and ideas to advance the knowledge of connective experiences in the virtual setting.

Trustworthiness was followed, and procedures were maintained to allow accuracy and the study's ability to be duplicated. This study aimed to understand better the connectedness of elementary teachers' experiences with parents in the southeastern part of the U.S.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

Chapter four describes the findings of this qualitative phenomenological research which was conducted to describe elementary teachers' experiences in the virtual setting in connecting with parents in the southeastern part of the U.S. to understand how to improve connections with parents and how the connections help students. Connectiveness between teachers and their student's parents consistently involving frequent meetings is significant in supporting students' progress and education endeavors (Kingsbury, 2021). The parallel roles of teachers and students' parents that share equal responsibilities in educating students have been found to increase parents' engagement in their child's education endeavors (Stefanski et al., 2016). Opportunities to access the various modalities of education and maintain connections have increased due to the advancements in technology and ease of access (Martzoukou et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2018); however, research is limited on how connections are improved between teachers and parents with an adequate amount of frequency and how the connections help students become more successful academically. Therefore, this study aimed to establish an understanding of methods and tools utilized in the virtual setting to assist elementary teachers and parents in making frequent, consistent connections to help students become more independent and successful learners. The theory constructing this study was Siemens' (2017) connectiveness theory, where the network of teachers and parents is significant in assisting students to advance their education. The connectivism theory aligned with this study within these interactions due to the consistent connective experiences between teachers, parents, and students being essential to virtual learning to assist students in understanding expectations and receiving adequate connections to meet social needs (Daum et al., 2021). The connectivism theory and the work of Daum et al. formed

the basis of the research questions that guided this study and will be discussed in this chapter with the findings from the research. This study's data analysis and findings will be presented in this chapter, beginning with the descriptions of elementary teacher and parent participants from a current virtual school within the past three years, including the core subjects from various grades from kindergarten through fifth grade. This chapter includes the themes discovered from the data collection, which involve perceptions about understanding and the use of methods and tools to enrich connections between elementary teachers and parents, resulting in the effects of student success from learning, acquiring engagement, and becoming independent learners. Finally, data collection from interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts will be presented in response to the research questions. Findings from this study could contribute to a gap in research about how elementary teachers in the virtual setting could support parents with students who are not successful in becoming independent learners. Based on the evidence gathered from the connective experiences of elementary teachers, providing adequate academic and technological support to elementary parents in the virtual setting is challenging. Training needs to be incorporated for teachers and parents to support more connective experiences using adequate technology to strengthen their practices, which impact students' success. Understanding how connections enhance and help students become successful, independent learners could better teacher and parent training in the virtual setting to improve connective experiences and student academic outcomes more consistently and frequently.

Participants

Participants were purposefully recruited from the K12 DEF Virtual School, including elementary teachers, via email containing a link to a screening questionnaire utilizing criterion sampling. The screening questions included ensuring participants had taught in ABC County for

a minimum of three years and had taught the core subjects in the virtual school of ABC County. Initially, the email elicited responses from ten participants. After receiving a brief explanation of the study and journal prompts, one of the initial respondents replied that she would not have ample time to participate, and three did not respond to emails. Six of the ten teacher participants agreed to participate in the study (see Table 4-1). A “snowball” sampling method was utilized to identify parents of virtual students in ABC County to provide quality assurance. An email was sent to the teachers who agreed to participate with a link to a screening questionnaire to send to elementary parents who participated in the ABC County virtual school. Initially, the emails elicited responses from eight elementary parent participants. However, after receiving a brief explanation of the study, one initial respondent responded that she did not want to record a live interview due to an illness, one responded after the research was completed, and one did not respond. Five of the eight parent participants agreed to participate in the study. To protect their privacy and anonymity, these participants were given pseudonyms. A description of the participants is provided below in a table:

Table 4-1

Teacher Participants

Teacher Participant (Pseudonym)	Years Taught	Age Range/ Gender	Highest Degree Earned	Degree Area	Grade Level
Amelia	13	30-40/female	Masters	Children’s Literature	2nd – 4th
Christine	17	40-50/female	Masters	Literacy	Kindergarten/ 2nd
Corrine	14	30-40/female	Masters	Early Childhood Education	Kindergarten

Dorothy	15	30-40/female	Masters/ National Board Certified	Instructional Technology	1st/3rd/4th/ 5th
Jesse	15	40-50/female	Masters	Instructional Technology	1st/3rd/5th
Joyce	10	30-40/female	Masters	Instructional Technology	pre-K – 3 rd grade

Note. Table 4-1 reflects the demographics of the study participants.

Table 4-2.

Parent Participants

Parent Participant (Pseudonym)	Age Range/ Gender	Student of:	Current Grade Level
Katheryn	40-50/female	Amelia	4h
Mandy	30-40/female	Corrine	2nd
Marissa	30-40/female	Corrine	2nd
Melissa	40-50/female	Amelia	4th
Terri	40-50/female	Dorothy	4th

Note. Table 4-2 reflects the demographics of the study participants.

The participants' demographics included teachers of varying ages, years of experience, and areas of degrees concentrated in their Master's programs that work in the same virtual school. All participants had connective experiences between elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting. All parent participants were present and responsive to teachers' connections to ensure their students were successful socially and academically. Two of the six teachers received training offered by the ABC County virtual school related to making connections with parents to

learn how to make connections through the Learning Management System (LMS), including messaging and emailing to send notifications, reminders, weekly schedules, and announcements. Two teachers acquired information about making connections, including how often and the type of information to share during weekly meetings offered by their district. One teacher learned about making connections from her master's program and researching independently. One teacher had no recollection of training in making connections virtually. Katheryn explained that she "took a Google course to help her learn to make connections." Dorothy said she "learned about the basics of sending emails and sending messages through the LMS platform and received training to support math and reading instruction virtually through technology to help students." Jesse remarked in her interview that she "learned to make connections with parents through experience."

Amelia

Amelia had 13 years of experience teaching elementary students in grades 2-4 in private, public, and virtual schools. She was within the 30-40-year-old range and taught in 2 states in the southeastern part of the U.S., including virtually in an international program. One of Amelia's greatest joys was "encouraging parents and students to become successful learners in the comfy setting of their homes." She enjoyed doing science experiments and promoting a love of reading in her whole group, small group, and one-on-one virtual classes. She recalled that she connected with parents more often when she approached them in a non-judgmental way. Amelia stated that she was accountable and attempted to connect with all parents and, at some point, expected parents to respond depending on their needs.

Christine

Christine was a female teacher in the 40-50-year-old range that had been teaching for 17 years. She received her bachelor's degree in early childhood, Master's degree in Literacy, and Read-to-Succeed endorsement, and was dually certified to teach kindergarten through grade 6. She taught preschool special education and kindergarten. She stated she "feels that utilizing technology is one of her strengths since she took additional courses to learn how to utilize technology software and platforms, which helped her create lessons and make connections with parents effectively." Christine prided herself on the effective connections she made with parents due to the need to support parents in the virtual setting requires setting expectations, assisting parents with the curriculum, and communicating strengths and weaknesses to help the parents ensure their students are successful.

Corrine

Corrine was a female teacher in the 30-40-year-old range with 14 years of experience. Her master's degree was focused on Early Childhood Education, and all 14 years had been in kindergarten. She recalled that her strength was "communicating with parents as they usually become good friends." She shared that when she got married this past year, 15 former students and parents attended her wedding, while some participated in her wedding party. She stressed that "it is important to teach parents in the virtual setting so that they can teach their children." Kindergarten requires the parents to acquire a teaching role to team up with the teacher. She does not recall receiving any training to assist her with learning to make connections with her students' parents and relied on her strength.

Dorothy

Dorothy was a female in the 30-40-year-old range with 15 years of experience. She had her Masters in Instructional Technology and is National Board Certified. Her teaching

experience was in grades 1, 3, 4, and 5. She stated that she received professional development by sending emails and announcements to parents within the LMS from the ABC County Virtual School. She was relocated to a different school the year of this study; however, she met weekly with the grade level she taught with in the past since their connections were already based on solid communication and proficiently developed roles. She expressed that her strengths were expanding her duties and flexibility of time to become more creative with making herself available for parents who were challenging to respond to connections.

Jesse

Jesse was a female teacher within the 40-50-year-old range and taught for 15 years in the classroom in grade 1, as a reading intervention, and in grades 3 and 5 in virtual school. She was certified in Reading Recovery and had her Read-to-Succeed endorsement. She enjoyed helping students successfully overcome their challenges in learning to read. She enjoyed the relationships she built and maintained with her students' parents, as she recalled they worked as a team to ensure her students were successful in becoming independent learners. She did not recall any professional development based on learning to make connections with her students' parents. She said she learned from experience and acquired information in weekly meetings to support her connections.

Joyce

Joyce was a female in the 30-40-year-old range with ten years of experience in grades pre-K through 3. She obtained her master's degree in instruction technology, which supported her in gaining knowledge in connecting effectively with parents. She felt that "all relationships she cultivated with her students' parents in the virtual setting were all positive; however, some of them were more fluid based on their personality and level of need with assistance in helping their

child complete work.” She researched and watched videos to find new ways to connect with her parents. She enjoyed teaching in the virtual setting and extended her hours in the school day by being flexible in responding to parents as needed at various times of the day and evening.

Katheryn

Katheryn was a 40-50-year-old mother of a son in the virtual setting. Her son was in Amelia’s class. She stated that she “was comfortable using technology because she had some training to become a teacher and felt like daily connections were significant to the success of her and her son while navigating through the curriculum involved in the LMS.” She recalled that Amelia was highly organized and provided an adequate number of connections depending on the needs of them and other students.

Mandy

Mandy was a 30-40-year-old mother of a daughter in the virtual setting. Her daughter was in Corrine’s class. She stated that Corrine greatly impacted her and her daughter due to the effective connections she made daily inside and outside class. She appreciated her for cultivating an enriched bond with kindergarten students and their parents. She stated that Corrine “went above and beyond her expectations to include students and their parents to ensure they become successful in their first year of school.”

Marissa

Marissa was a 30-40-year-old mother of a daughter in the virtual setting. Her daughter was in Corrine’s kindergarten class, and Marissa became good friends with Corrine. Marissa was Corrine’s maid of honor, and her daughter was a flower girl at Corrine’s wedding. She appreciated that her daughter's first teacher was in the virtual setting and maintained and cultivated flexible, consistent connections with all parents. She recalled that her “daughter will

always be impacted by the connections between Corrine and her parents and students.” She said Corrine was always available to assist her in teaching her daughter so she could complete necessary assignments and learn the kindergarten curriculum successfully. Marissa stated that she and Corrine would continue to be friends due to the relationship cultivated in their daily connections.

Melissa

Melissa was a 40-50-year-old mother with a son in the virtual setting. Her son was a student in Amelia’s class. She stated she “needed reassurance in teaching her son, and the daily connections made with Amelia made her feel more confident in assisting her son.” She enjoyed the teacher, parent, and student connections that were made daily. She stressed that the flexibility of the program and schedule allowed more time for the connections to occur during the day between the teacher and student while she was present nearby at all times.

Terri

Terri was a 40-50-year-old mother of a daughter in the virtual setting. Her daughter was in Dorothy’s class. She expressed that her daughter was not confident in her reading ability, which affected all areas of learning and relating to people socially. She felt that the connections between Dorothy and her daughter had impacted the success of her daughter’s education, as her daughter “found her voice when she became more confident and surpassed her reading challenges and goals.” The daily connections assured her that her daughter received what she needed to become a successful learner in grade 3.

Results

The results of the data collected from semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts will be discussed in this section. Open coding was utilized for the interviews,

focus groups, and journal prompts to identify words that describe the attributes of each participant's responses. Epoché was practiced to gain new knowledge of the experiences of elementary teachers and parents. At the same time, predictions and predilections were set aside to view the events and experiences of other people and while coding to search for emerging themes (Moustakas, 1994).

Edits and revisions were not performed on the participants' syntax or grammar portions of their transcripts. Coded transcripts and notes were two of the three components of the audit trail. NVivo was used to transcribe, and coding was created, recorded, and analyzed (See Table 4-3 in Appendix O for initial coding themes using NVivo). According to Saldaña (2021), visual thematic mapping helps gain ownership of a particular grouping of words or phrases. Visual thematic mapping was conducted by recording repeated or redundant words onto color-coded sticky notes and placed into groups on giant-sized chart paper. The words were tallied for frequency of use by teacher and parent participants to search for patterns and similarities and discover categories, themes, and sub-themes as they emerged from the data. Journal prompts were sent electronically as an attachment created from a word document or responded directly to an email to the researcher. Data from the journal prompt was coded using open coding to discover how the responses were similar or different to the interviews while obtaining data saturation. Repeated or redundant words were placed on the Visual Thematic Mapping chart, and words were tallied.

During the interviews and focus groups, notes were taken as categories and themes emerged. Memoing was included while reviewing journal prompts, and themes from memos were coded. The visual thematic map was recoded using color-coded sticky notes for analysis and reanalysis to discover themes. Themes that emerged and trends in the data were coded in a

visual thematic map according to their relationship to the questions. They reflected its relationship to Siemens' (2017) connectivism theory (See Appendix P for Visual Thematic Mapping Tables 4-4 and 4-5). Themes contribute to phenomenology while the experiences are categorized (Saldaña, 2021) to develop a deeper understanding of the meaning of everyday experiences (van Manen, 1993). Themes are identified as the meanings demonstrate the use of *is* or *means* to capture the meanings and how categories emerged and were created (Saldaña, 2021). Trends were noted in a journal of meanings kept for themes and trends as they emerged. Trends were recorded and compared across all data sources to present the study's findings. Saldaña described that analytical reflections were conducted with a peer to gain an additional perspective while the researcher analyzed and discussed data analysis before progressing into the recoding phase.

Reliability was maintained throughout this study's data collection process by documenting, reviewing, and comparing coding and data to prevent errors. This study's trustworthiness was maintained throughout the triangulation and member-checking of the data from interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts. A saturation of detailed descriptions of the experiences of connective methods that improve connections and how they assist students are included in the data collection and discussed in the findings. The themes, codes, and data are presented in the form of tables, word clouds, and direct quotes from the participants.

Individual Interviews

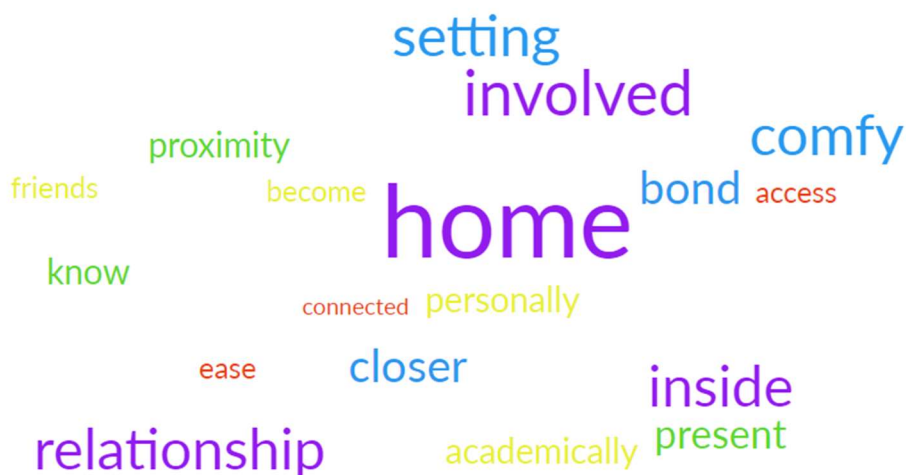
After identifying the teacher participants, the first data collection consisted of individual interviews. Interview questions were implemented to discover Siemens' (2017) connectivism theory and search for an understanding of how connectivism between elementary teachers and parents helps students become successful and independent in the elementary virtual setting.

Interviews were scheduled with teachers during planning, after school, and in the evening. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain flexibility for the participants and researcher. Questions were generated to gather data and answer the guiding research questions about how virtual elementary teachers described their experiences of maintaining and cultivating connections with parents in the virtual setting of the southeastern part of the U.S. to support student success and independence (See appendix J and K for a complete list of individual interview questions). There were 14 open-ended questions for teacher participants and eight open-ended questions for parent participants. Teacher participants selected planning times during the day, after school in their classroom, or from their homes in the evening. Parent participants selected times during the day while their children were occupied with school activities. The duration of each interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes. An added level of trust impacted interviews with three teacher participants due to previously established working relationships, which applied additional familiarity and context. The researcher kept transcribed interviews and interview notes to provide an audit trail. All interviews were visually and audibly recorded through Microsoft Teams, and the recordings were transcribed using NVivo transcription. Member-checking was performed by allowing the accuracy of transcriptions to be checked by each participant to ensure the meaning and intent were confirmed. In response to questions about successful connections cultivated and maintained between the teachers and parents, the word cloud portrays the words utilized most often by teacher and parent participants to describe connections. As shown in Figure 1, all teacher and parent participants shared that the virtual setting provided a comfortable location that allowed teachers and parents to obtain a connected bond through relationships built due to the proximity and ease of connections. Some participants

shared that teachers and parents have become friends because of the closeness of the daily connections within students' homes.

Figure 1

Word Cloud of the Power of Connections Between Teachers within the Household



Note: This word cloud represents the power derived from connections between teachers and parents in the home setting

Journal Prompts

After completing each individual interview with teacher participants, the teachers were sent four open-ended journal prompt questions electronically through email. The questions were generated to fill gaps, clarify, and confirm data gathered during initial interviews. Four of the six teacher participants responded within three days of their interview, taking approximately fifteen minutes to complete. (See Appendix L for a full list of journal prompt questions).

Focus Groups

Finally, at the conclusion of the individual interviews with teacher and parent participants, two focus groups were conducted with four teachers and four parents using

Microsoft Teams. Focus groups were conducted in a semi-structured format allowing for flexibility among the participants and researcher. Questions were developed to obtain data saturation, fill gaps, and clarify and confirm data gathered from the initial interviews and journal prompts. The focus group questions and format enriched the data, allowing the focus group members to add additional information or respond to one of the other participants. Additional information was included in more specific details to complement data gathered from interviews and to acquire data saturation. (See appendices M and N for a complete list of focus group questions).

Theme 1: Connected with the Household

This study aimed to determine how elementary teachers connect with parents to assist students in becoming independent learners in the virtual setting in the southeastern part of the US. According to Siemens (2017), connections between teachers and parents are essential to creating a network for students to become successful and independent learners. Connections between teachers and parents in the elementary setting are crucial since young students cannot become independent without parents yet (Bansak & Starr, 2021). Virtual teachers become an extension of each student's household, which answers sub-question one about how connectivity methods improve connections between elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting. Amelia recalled, "It was really easy to talk to each other (parents) because we were essentially in the same room." The theme of being connected with the household emerged numerous times in parent and teacher participants' interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts. Amelia described the virtual setting and stated, "but like the crazy, cool thing is that we were in each student's house with them, and so we were connected with them, not in their formal school setting, but in their comfy home setting." Joyce stressed that connections in a "virtual setting definitely was

more often (than the brick-and-mortar setting) because you are in their space, you are in their house every single day.” Christine explained, “with us being like Google mates, we have talked about so much of being in their houses, in their homes every day. We got to know everybody. We got to know any adult that was there helping with them, if it was a grandparent or aunt or whomever it was. And dogs and siblings, I think, you know, like so we got to know them more personally.” Making connections between teachers and parents in the household created a safe learning environment for elementary students to be comfortable with learning.

Subtheme 1: Inside Home and Comfy House Setting

The connection with the household theme contributes to how connections are made within the social aspect of the connectivism theory, with the subthemes “inside the home” and “comfy house setting” equally coded most often. Three teacher participants described their experiences within the homes in individual interviews, and three of the four teachers discussed the topic in the focus group. All parent participants described the proximity and consistency of the teacher inside the home daily.

Subtheme 2: Very Present

Jesse felt that the “parent was there, [while] some parents sat right beside of their child, and you could see them and talk to them daily.” The setting inside the home allowed parents that were home with their children already to be very present during school class time and small groups. Most teacher and parent participants stated that it was helpful for the presence of parents to help students to be more accountable with attending class and completing assignments.

Theme 2: Relationships

Teachers connect with students and their parents at various levels depending on the personalities and needs of students and parents. Relationships are cultivated to varying degrees

according to the student's age and the educational institution's structure. Elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting stated that relationships are built due to the proximity of virtual connections through various methods and technological tools. This theme supports sub-question one about how connectivity methods improve connections between elementary teachers and parents. Dorothy stated, "We were able to have those relationships, and I really do not think I could do that in the classroom. You know, it is just a different bond you have." During the teachers' focus group, the teachers discussed the relationships between teachers and students after Joyce stated, "Overall, my relationship with mostly all of the virtual parents was so much stronger than what you can build here in brick and mortar because you see them constantly." Four teachers and one parent described the necessity of building relationships between teachers and parents in the virtual setting.

Sub-theme 1: Involved

All six teacher participants and two parents used the word *involved* in their descriptions while explaining their experiences of connections with parents in the virtual setting. Corrine stated there was a "lot more actual parental involvement, in my opinion, because and also like they are listening to you teach." The setting of teacher teaching "inside homes" allowed parents to become involved in connections and lessons with the teacher with automaticity.

Sub-theme 2: Closer Bond

Most teacher participants shared their "closer bond" with parents in the virtual setting. A closer bond is more intimate than participating in a teacher/parent relationship. A closer bond is shared between people as they often connect and enjoy each other's company. Jesse described her experience with a "very involved parent. This relationship with Sally and her mom was a positive experience, and I felt as though Sally's mom considered me a 'friend/supporter' of her

and her daughter.” Corrine stated that “relationships are huge, and most of my parents become my friends” due to the closer bonds she cultivated with her parents. Connections are improved when teachers allow parents to feel their relationship is essential to supporting students in successful learning.

Theme 3: Parent and Teacher Team

In response to the experiences based on how the connection between elementary parents and teachers supported students in becoming successful, independent learners, the theme *Parent and Teacher Team* emerged. Being part of a team requires both parties to be accountable for their roles as teachers and parents. This theme supports sub-question two about how the virtual setting’s experiences between elementary teachers and parents help the student. Corrine stated, “It puts the parents on the same page as me, so it is like a mom-dad relationship got to be on the same page. Then, the child knows that.” Support from the teacher and parent network is essential for students to expand their academic and social abilities.

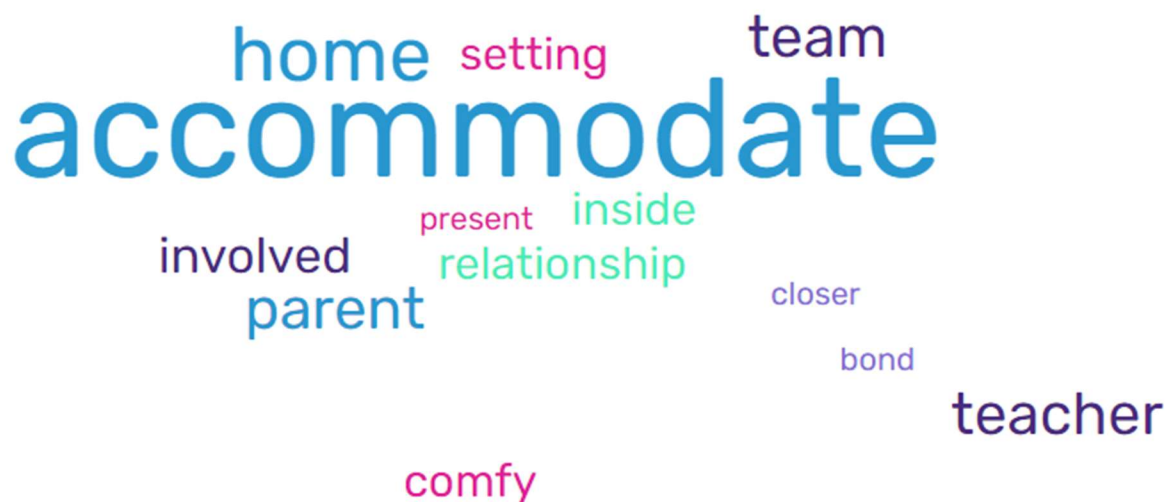
Sub-theme 1: Teacher Worked Harder to Accommodate

All teacher and parent participants described their experiences of teachers that worked harder to accommodate the students. Marissa explained, “that extra time and focus really helped to understand what was going on that she may not get in the bigger group setting.” Teachers want students to succeed, and parents are present in the virtual setting to experience how teachers work hard to help their students become successful. Katheryn recalled, “I have had a couple of times where my son has maybe struggled with the concept or whatever, and she has been able to say, OK, have him come on, and we will stay on, and she does additional instruction.” Students benefit from teachers who are willing to work harder than expected to ensure their students acquire learning.

Theme 3 has one sub-heading, as the other sub-headings are bridges to other layers that support the sub-themes. As shown in Figure 2, meanings emerged from the data that support connective experiences. In this study, connective experiences occurred because the teachers were willing to accommodate the needs of parents and students in the daily meetings within the home.

Figure 2

Word cloud of connective experiences codes



Outlier data: Students that are not Successful

Teacher participants shared that some students are not successful. Students were unsuccessful when a lack of connections was made, and students did not progress with work. Dorothy explained that it was difficult to connect and assist “below-grade level students.” Students could not receive teacher assistance when connective measures were not reciprocal. Amelia described that she experienced a student’s “Mom did not place much value on school.” Students received the message that school is insignificant when their parents emphasized it little. Students’ grades were not acceptable when work was incomplete.

Outlier Finding 1: Lack of Parent Support

School practices are unsuccessful in the virtual setting when elementary teachers and

parents cannot make connections. A lack of parental support occurs when parents do not appear involved or are unresponsive. Connections are essential to be made by both the teachers and parents to ensure students receive the help they need. Christine stated that she experienced parents “not checking their email or getting onto our app where we were told to conduct and log our communication.” Amelia stressed that she was frustrated when the parent “complained about her child, blamed her child, promised me they would get work done that remained undone, and asked to send me to work through channels that our school program did not permit.” Elementary students do not take full responsibility for incomplete work, as parents’ roles are to support their students when missing assignments are not submitted.

Outlier Finding 2: Technology

Families committed to learning in the virtual setting are faced with different uses of applying technology to acquire learning, submit assignments, and converse with teachers. The lack of technology experience and not feeling confident in navigating through technology devices, software, and LMS applications prohibit some families from interacting with learning in the virtual setting. Jesse said she “helped parents with technology by teaching them step-by-step because we were learning right along beside them.” Utilizing technology was complicated for many parents and grandparents, while some appeared to try to face the challenge and others hid from the challenge.

Research Question Responses

The purpose of the research questions was to develop an understanding of the connective experiences of elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting focusing on the aspects of the social network encompassed in Siemens’ (2017) connectivism theory. This section summarizes and includes the responses to the three guiding questions. Additionally, an

explanation of the experiences from the views of teachers and parents of students' ability to acquire independence and successful knowledge advancement is included.

Central Research Question

What are the experiences elementary teachers have regarding the parent and teacher connections in the virtual setting? All participants in this study had experiences with teacher and parent connections in brick-and-mortar and virtual settings and stated that connections in the virtual setting enhanced the connections due to having more opportunities to connect. The participants' perspectives collectively expressed that the structure of the virtual setting provides an environment for teachers and parents to make frequent, consistent connections to support and ensure students increase their academic knowledge and become independent learners. All participants expressed that the virtual setting was convenient and flexible while teachers were connected with households due to entering into class among students' homes. Therefore, teacher and parent participants described the benefits of the virtual setting. Parents reported being allowed increased involvement with their student's academic learning. They also felt like a member of the teacher-parent team. Teachers reported that the virtual setting allowed teachers to be more accountable in making connections. One interesting point is that all teachers and parents preferred the relationships built in the virtual setting as it made supporting students as a team effortless. At the same time, they were comfortable connecting as often as needed for technological and curriculum support.

Sub-Question One

How do connectivity methods improve connections between elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting? Connectivity between teachers and parents in the virtual setting was improved by the teachers working "inside the home" and building relationships due to the

consistent, frequent connections produced in the virtual school institution. Teachers had the flexibility to structure their connections into the daily opportunities of virtual school while determining which tools to utilize and the types of connections used for each tool. Parent participants reported that daily interactions with teachers inside the home alleviated unnecessary tension between teachers and parents, making asking for and receiving support more comfortable. The relationships cultivated between the teacher-parent team created opportunities for teachers to know students personally and academically and become friends in an academic setting. Teacher participants expressed that the structure of virtual connections made them expand past their comfort zone to connect with parents often and discover new ways to connect with unresponsive parents. The participants reported that frequent, accessible virtual connections allowed the teacher to encourage parent participants to support students by sharing their academic progress, strengths, and needs.

Sub-Question Two

How do the virtual setting's connective experiences between elementary teachers and parents help the student? The teacher and parents reported that the virtual setting allowed an organized network to structure connections that support students to progress academically, socially, and independently. An organized network consisted of technological tools, a curriculum, and a teacher-parent team connecting consistently and flexibly. Teachers' and parents' responses determined that becoming a team to support their students, it was evident that teachers worked harder to accommodate parents and students because they wanted students to succeed. All participants reported that parents received support from teachers, including shared expectations, student progress, encouragement, technological and academic support, and additional tutoring. The parent participants discussed that their experiences with the connections

in the virtual setting were nurturing; therefore, their students felt loved, and they mattered to their teacher. The nurtured environment supported students to become independent learners by becoming more comfortable, confident, open, and engaged. Because social and emotional issues were addressed in the virtual setting, students developed social and academic independence.

Summary

This transcendental phenomenological qualitative study discovered the findings from the research to determine the essence of the experiences of elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting in the southeastern part of the US. The sample of participants was selected purposefully and represented various backgrounds, grade levels, years of experience, and educational focuses. Both teachers and parents had knowledge of connecting as a team to support students' academic achievement but were presented with navigating through technology to become successful; therefore, this study was unique and exciting while implementing connections into a virtual setting. This study was encompassed by Siemens' (2017) connectivism theory, and the three guiding questions involved the connections between teachers and parents in the virtual setting, how methods improve connections, and how the connections help students. The themes that emerged from the individual interviews, journal prompts, and focus groups included connections within the household supporting relationships built to produce teacher/parent teams. The participants were ecstatic to share their experiences about the virtual setting, and their information was beneficial in filling in the gap in the research on the topic of the connective experiences between elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting. These findings will be discussed further in Chapter Five, in the significance and limitations of this study, implications, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this study was to discover how connective experiences are improved in the virtual setting between elementary teachers and students and how connectiveness helps students become independent academically and socially. Chapter Five explores the study's findings related to the literature on connections made between teachers and parents, the interpretation of the finding, the implications for policy and practice, the theoretical and methodological implications, the limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research that may be necessary. This chapter will start by summarizing the purpose, methodology, and findings from the teacher and parent participants with connections in the virtual setting. Subsequently, the significance of the study relating to the connective experiences, literature, and limitations are discussed. Finally, the conclusion of this chapter will explore how this study may impact policy and practice for using connective methods and tools between teachers and parents to connect and how more training would prepare teachers to organize and plan connective methods within the institution they currently teach. Further discussion may be warranted.

This study's conclusions support recent research and literature review of the benefits of connections cultivated between teachers and parents. This study is unique as it applies connective experiences to the virtual setting. It incorporates the views of teachers and parents of elementary students who work diligently to ensure students successfully use various tools to make connections. This study found that teachers use various tools to connect using different methods of connections, and parent participants adjusted to each teacher's method. The focus of this study was to develop an understanding of how teachers improve connections with parents

and how they help students; the findings supported the idea that it is essential to cultivate a safe environment and build relationships first before students should be expected to learn. Parents' and students' social and emotional well-being needs to develop in the virtual setting to improve the ability to become independent and comfortable socially. All educators had various experiences that developed their view of the consistency and varying levels of connections from their teaching practices in brick-and-mortar and virtual settings. However, all teachers in this study conceded that it is crucial to building relationships with parents so that they will ensure their students succeed academically. Ensuring that all virtual teachers understand the impact of making connections with parents in virtual and brick-and-mortar settings, and its impact on students' academic success with increasing independence, is the conclusion of this research and study.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore elementary virtual teachers' and parents' experiences of making connections and how they help students in the southeastern part of the US. Initially, developing an understanding of educators' methods and tools used to make connections was the driving force to determine how to improve connections and how they help students. However, as the data collection process developed, it was discovered that the relationships cultivated because teachers entered homes virtually daily impacted parents and students more. The methods and tools were vehicles to help teachers make connections. However, the relationships between teachers and parents in becoming a team and becoming accountable in their roles impacted meeting the needs of parents and students. According to Garbe et al. (2020), educating parents about responding to teachers' connections in the virtual setting is essential to promote students' learning. This study supported the claim to prepare and

educate parents. While there were previous understandings of the types and frequency of connections cultivated between teachers and parents, there is a lack of research incorporating connections cultivated in the virtual setting that do not relate to the COVID-19 epidemic. Understanding virtual elementary teachers' connective experiences lead to an approach to assist other virtual teachers in sharing expectations and procedures, guidance in utilizing the aspects of the LMS, or correctly using websites for classwork submissions (Garbe et al., 2020). I have found that teachers develop their understanding of connecting with parents through experience. In contrast, collaboration and training in building and implementing awareness of additional connections through various methods and tools and building teacher and parent teams will improve all students' education, equity, and success. Connective experiences in the virtual setting between elementary teachers and parents were the focus of this study and were supported by all participants' individual interviews, journal prompts, and focus groups.

The study began with an extensive literature review on the history of practices, processes, and theory of connections between teachers and parents to answer the three guiding questions. The first question was, what are the experiences elementary teachers have regarding the parent and teacher connections in the virtual setting? During the literature review, many articles and books were found describing the connections between teachers and parents in the brick-and-mortar setting or during the Covid-19 pandemic. The themes identified in this study described how the connective experiences between elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting were derived from consistent, flexible connections from teachers that ensured parents were aware of attempted connections. Various connective methods were discovered in response to the experiences and use of connections applied in various ways, including the most frequently mentioned Google Meet, text messages, and emails.

The second research question for this study was how connectivity methods improve connections between elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting. The responses to this question were similar for each teacher and parent participant, with the overarching theme being to build relationships, since teachers are inside homes every day. I found that the relationships built between teachers and parents are integral to organizing structures and setting expectations for parents to be involved in the workings of a virtual academic institution.

Finally, research question three addressed how the virtual settings' connective experiences between elementary teachers and parents help the student. The central theme that was identified related to the accountability between teachers and parents while they became a team. The team shared responsibilities as parents taught their elementary students, and teachers taught both parents and students. All participants discussed that teachers and students received support since teachers worked harder to accommodate parents and students. Teachers provided adequate support at the beginning of the school year and as parents needed additional support with technology issues or curriculum concerns. Providing support for technicalities provided a path to facilitate independence from students. Students began to gain independence as nurturing connections were maintained with their teachers. Students were more engaged, comfortable, confident, and open due to feeling like they mattered to the teacher and were loved by the teacher. The nurturing connections provided social-emotional development, which involves initiating and maintaining trusting relationships with peers and adults (Egan et al., 2021) and encourage independence. It was concluded that the overall effects of students becoming independent resulted in students becoming successful academically and socially.

Siemens' (2017) connectivism theory guided the research questions and acted as the theoretical framework for this study, emphasizing the significance of the social network

cultivated between the teacher and parent in the virtual academic institution to increase the student's knowledge. This qualitative phenomenological study was designed to describe elementary teachers' and parents' experiences to understand the participants' lived experiences in their virtual setting in the southeastern part of the US. Some interesting themes were related to the literature review, while others were new and exciting findings that may help enrich connective experiences for teachers and parents in future virtual and brick-and-mortar classrooms.

Interpretation of Findings

The thematic findings in this study included cultivating relationships built because teachers were inside homes daily in the virtual setting, which allowed teachers and parents to become a bonded team to support students' success in gaining knowledge and independence. It was my belief that the tools and methods were a significant part of the process of cultivating and maintaining connections. However, the bond created among the team was more crucial, and the data and literature support the findings. Data collected showed that the lived experiences of teachers and parents in the virtual setting were impacted by the results of the social-emotional aspects of the connective features incorporated into the experiences of virtual school. Literature supports the idea that connections are crucial to be cultivated and maintained between teachers and parents. However, there is a lack of research based on the procedures of how connections are made, the consistency, and number of occurrences for various grades and ages arranged by Siemens' (2017) connectiveness theory necessary to cultivate networks (Downes et al., 2017) or a community (Cleary, 2021) to support the students. Current literature is based on the lived experiences of teachers and parents impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, while learning in person was not an option (Reimers, 2022). The impact of learning in a virtual setting during the

pandemic allowed educators to gain new knowledge and transfer the knowledge to the capabilities of connecting with parents in a new, consistent way. Parents were impacted by new knowledge gained by an increased engagement in their child's education with increased time with their students and taking ownership in their child's learning.

In contrast, teachers gained considerable knowledge about connecting with parents in their student's home environments (Reimers, 2022). This discovery has caused a shift in how teachers and parents connect in all academic settings. The findings may encourage teachers to make consistent, frequent connections with parents regardless of the setting. The quality of connections conducted depends on the teacher's training and practices that will find a place in teachers' continuous learning. Effective connections will depend on teachers' knowledge and implementation of methods and tools to support cultivating relationships built with parents to become a bonded team.

Summary of Thematic Findings

Connections are improved. Virtual teachers were in the home every day was a theme that both teacher and parent participants mentioned. Connections between elementary teachers and parents are improved because consistency and flexibility allow teachers to enter all the students' homes and provide an available method of making connections quickly and easily. While teachers were present in the homes daily, relationships were cultivated between teachers and parents. Daily interactions allowed teachers and parents to become familiar with each other, and teachers were permitted to get to know students better personally and academically. A gap in research calls for more research on improving connections between elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting separate from the data derived from the Covid-19 pandemic. More emphasis should be placed on training teachers to expand their knowledge of connective

methods and tools, to explore the effects connections have on relationships, and so that they can connect to be aware of concerns (Mohamad et al., 2022).

Accountability. Accountability is crucial to the structure of the virtual setting so that teachers and parents can determine their roles in their educational situations. Parents become co-teachers to teachers and are forced to venture into new territory to support their students (Mohamad et al., 2022). As teachers and parents cultivate their relationships, they become a team bonded together for educational purposes with the bonus of connecting personally. The roles complement each other, with teachers supporting parents and students, while parents connect with teachers based on their needs. The sub-theme with the most coding from teacher and parent participants encompassed the idea that teachers worked harder to accommodate the needs of parents and students. The support teachers provided to parents included support with technology, curriculum, celebrations of success, or encouragement for parents regarding students' progression.

Independence. Siemens' (2017) connectivism theory aims for the student to have success in gaining knowledge with support within the social network to promote students' independence. This study found that parents became independent because of the support provided by the teacher relating to technology, curriculum, or suggestions on how to teach students. Initially, parents obtained independence; students could develop independence because of the relationships cultivated as a teacher and parent team. Independence was created when students felt safe in their learning environment, encompassed around the foundation cultivated between their teachers and parents. All parent participants discussed that teachers addressed the social-emotional aspect within the classes by delivering nurturing connections with parents and

students. In return, students were more comfortable, confident, engaged, and openly felt they mattered to the teacher and felt that the teacher loved them.

Implications for Policy or Practice

The significance of understanding connections between elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting relating to policy and practice begins with the teachers' knowledge of cultivating connections. The methods and tools teachers utilize to support parents significantly impact the students' progress toward becoming independent learners. Creating independent students capable of increasing knowledge dramatically impacted the future of the virtual setting for students, academic institutions, and the school district, according to the participants in this study. The most appropriate way to improve students' successes and independence is to improve teachers' training by exploring new, nurturing connective practices that could be incorporated into their virtual settings in the future. Although research has addressed connections between teachers and parents at various ages, there is little research based on the connections cultivated in the virtual study. Recommendations for various stakeholders, policymakers, administrators, teachers, and parents are addressed in implications for policy and implications for practice.

Implications for Policy

Although connections between teachers and parents and their effects on student achievement have been discussed for decades as a practice within brick-and-mortar schools, there is a variability of methods and tools used by teachers. In a study conducted to explore teachers' experiences in their training, 100% of participants said they could incorporate technological devices in their instructional methods, and 74% said it is necessary to use digital tools. In comparison, 31% felt they were adequately trained in their educational institutions (Shurygin et al., 2022). The policy may not change to require teachers to obtain teacher training

to qualify to teach students in the virtual setting; however, school districts and state policies could change to require an increase in training. Without time and training in technological methods and tools, teachers are forced to acquire their own training or learn by experience in the virtual setting. Expanding their knowledge of current technological devices and tools prepares teachers to offer a variety of connective measures to the various needs and capabilities of parents. The quality of connective experiences depends on the capability of teachers to provide the flexibility of incorporating various methods and tools into their practice. Increasing expertise about connective experiences between teachers and parents among teachers, administrators, virtual schools, and educational training institutions would prepare teachers to become more confident in connecting in new, innovative ways supported by new technological developments. Some of the teacher participants in this study expressed the need to learn the technological teaching methods in the virtual school and parents, making their practices more challenging. The department of education in the state of South Carolina offers coursework to enhance teachers' online knowledge of teaching in the virtual environment (SC Department of Education, 2023). Teachers are not required to obtain an endorsement to teach in all virtual schools. An additional policy could improve connections cultivated by teachers with parents in the virtual setting by incorporating the requirement for teachers to acquire additional training in utilizing technological methods and tools. The policy could also be changed to require all teachers with additional coursework in technology so that all teachers from various settings could use technology to connect with parents. The quality and quantity of training could be decided by the district or state, as well as the type of training, such as professional development or college credit classes.

Implications for Practice

Within the educational institution that serves elementary students, parents should be required to take a simple, short course or continuing courses to learn how to access the curriculum and make or respond to connections with teachers. Gaining knowledge before the academic learning of the school year will alleviate confusion about the functions of the technological portions of the school. Parents would benefit from exposure to the academic institution they are enrolled in so that they can learn how their particular school functions. Parents should have a required number of connections made each month or week, depending on the grade level and class. With little knowledge, parents begin navigating the schools' platforms, classes, and connections with the experience they have already obtained through technology (Borup et al., 2019). With the increase in learning in the virtual setting, it is essential that parents should develop a better understanding of how to connect with teachers to acquire knowledge of how to help their students (Mohamad et al., 2022). Virtual schools should ensure that parents are willing to take responsibility and be accountable for their responsibilities before and after registration (Borup et al., 2019). Elementary teachers in the virtual setting in a particular academic institution should be required to use a minimum of three types of connective tools to give flexibility to parents for responding according to their technological abilities. With appropriate expectations shared, teachers and parents can connect to share concerns, receive support, or participate in positive connections (Mohamad et al., 2022) to help students. These practices could benefit connections between all teachers and parents in various settings.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

This section examines the theoretical and empirical implications of the findings. The theoretical implications were explored from the perspective of Siemens' (2017) connectivism

theory. More specifically, this study considered the interpretation of the findings through the networks required for students to connect with to gain personal and academic knowledge. The empirical implications were explored through the knowledge derived from the lived experiences of the elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting, including the shifting of teacher and parental roles throughout the years in education.

Theoretical Implications

Siemens' (2017) explanation of the network created to support students' success and gain of independence involves the social network cultivated between teachers and parents and the technological network and power grids to provide learning. Siemens' connectivism theory appropriately focuses on the networks involving a complete organization of networks that support students to obtain learning to increase knowledge and gain independence in learning, including the social network provided between teachers and parents. Elementary students are young and require connections between teachers and parents to support them, since they cannot independently navigate the virtual setting as proficiently as older students. Students become more independent with the assistance of teachers, parents, and experiences over time.

The teacher participants in this study had been teaching for years and offered support of connections cultivated with parents to achieve this goal. The themes found in this study support the networks described by Siemens' (2017) connectivism theory, including social networks and computer networks. This study supports the critical connective entities built among people, groups, and social systems in an academic organization that support and provide learning and assist students to gain personal knowledge. Themes found in this study include teachers connected with households, allowing relationships to be cultivated due to daily connections inside the home, and cultivating teacher-parent teams. The connections of teacher-parent teams

support elementary students to acquire learning from within a collection of the social and technological network, since it is not attainable independently at younger ages. Additional themes include the accountability created in the social network to allow students to develop social and academic independence because of social and emotional aspects that are supported. This study extended the research already conducted about connective experiences with parents and recognized the need to encourage more training for teachers and parents before committing to enrolling in educating elementary students in the virtual setting.

Empirical Implications

The empirical implications of this study supported the connections cultivated between teachers and parents of elementary students in all settings to increase the success of academics and independence. Education has evolved throughout history to meet the needs of students while adjusting the roles of parents and teachers (Smith, 2020b). This study's findings complement the literature by expanding on the shift of roles of the teacher-parent team cultivated in the virtual setting, with teachers and parents working together in an organized network. Virtual teachers are also motivated and successful at connecting with parents based on their knowledge acquired from experience, technological experience, and teacher training. According to Zhang et al. (2018), virtual teachers and parents cultivated a network based on trust and connectedness, which was supported by this study. In this study, trust and connectedness allowed teachers to form relationships with parents, allowing students to develop social and emotional skills to progress their academic learning. There was a gap in literature extending teacher and parent connections into the virtual setting aside from the experiences impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to students being affected by the worldwide shift to virtual learning in the 2019-2020 school year (Kingsbury, 2021), opportunities were expanded to allow students to learn in

other ways (Dron, 2019). This study examined learning experiences in the virtual setting since 2020, which affected teachers and parents in exploring new ways to obtain an education.

Previous research explored teacher and parent connections in various grade levels and age ranges surrounding the brick-and-mortar setting. A lack of research explores how parents should engage in their student's virtual learning (Borup, 2016). This study extended research by focusing on connections in the virtual setting in the elementary area, where students are young and need more teacher and parent connections to help them be successful. Virtual learning obtained through academic institutions from a distance often relies on parents' support, while it is challenging for young students (Borup et al., 2019) to navigate learning independently. According to Liao et al. (2021), elementary students benefitted more from their parent's involvement in their virtual learning. Younger elementary students need assistance setting up and organizing virtual school connections (Bansak & Starr, 2021). Parents benefit from assisting their children to access their education virtually, as it allows them to understand better how their child learns content from the curriculum (Novianti & Garzia, 2020). This study's findings support parents' involvement, as students need the teacher-parent team to be cultivated to obtain support to make academic progress. Furthermore, connective experiences are critical for students with other classmates and teachers when a lack of social interactions occur (Kundu & Bej, 2021). Therefore, the findings from this study suggest that the social network created among teachers, parents, and peers has developed a connection with others in a similar environment to access learning.

This study placed the emergency of the Covid-19 pandemic aside and focused on teachers and parents that desired to enroll in a virtual school after students that attended virtual school out of the necessity of the school shut-downs had returned to the brick-and-mortar schools. Parents

were considered to be the initial educators of students; therefore, the network formed between students and their teachers and parents has become a formal extension of the family (Mudzielwana & Mulovhedzi, 2020). In contrast, this study found that parents need support to understand the curriculum and technological requirements. This study's novel contribution to the field included virtual connections created electronically that support fluent, consistent, flexible connections that meet the needs of parents and students. The use of the method and design in exploring the experiences of elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting was the social-emotional impacts teachers had on students, extending their ability to learn, connect, and participate in social connections. This theme emerged by exhibiting the loyalty qualities parents and students displayed by being more involved in the parent and teacher team due to the relationships cultivated from connections. According to the experiences shared by teacher and parent participants, teachers in this study offered ample time to connect with parents. They used various methods and tools to provide opportunities for parents to connect in ways they were comfortable and confident in using. Therefore, policy should provide teacher training to connect with elementary parents virtually. This study supported the previous research completed by Borup et al. (2019), who supported the significance of connections between teachers and parents in the virtual setting. Current research supports methods to acquire in preparing teachers and parents to navigate connections using technology to support the success of students (Borup, 2016; Borup et al., 2019; Mohamad et al., 2022).

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations recognized in this study included size, location, gender, ethnic background, age, and concentration of education. Data was collected from a school district in the southeastern US, with a small sample size of elementary teachers and parents who have experienced

connections in the virtual setting. Some teacher participants did not complete all three elements, some parent participants did not complete the two elements of the study, and some initial participants did not participate due to time or other factors. The data gathered in this study may not reflect the experiences of other teachers in other school districts or virtual schools and may not reflect teachers and parents with no training in connective experiences. Some limitations may include gender and ethnicity, while most teachers in the elementary grades of ABC County virtual school are females and Caucasian. Teachers were required to have a minimum of 3 years of experience teaching and have taught the four basic content courses in the elementary grades of virtual school. This study limited the ages to greater than the 30-year-old range and excluded any concentration other than general education due to the requirement of teaching all four content areas. Without a larger sample size from various school districts or virtual schools with various demographics, the results may only apply to similar sites and educators that teach elementary students in the virtual setting. Although the results are promising and can add to the knowledge of the connective experiences, additional data must be collected to attribute to other districts and groups of educators to see how they help students.

Another limitation was related to selecting transcendental phenomenology over hermeneutic phenomenology to explore the experiences of other teachers and parents to understand the essence of their connective experiences. The researcher obtained prior knowledge of connective experiences since the researcher had a dual role in teaching and parenting elementary students in the virtual setting. However, the researcher set aside prior knowledge through written notes, conducted member checks, triangulated data, and did not include her students' parents as participants in the study.

An additional significant limitation was related to the parent participants. The parent participants in this study were more than willing to participate in the study. According to the parent and teacher participants, they were also devoted to the teacher and parent team by responding to connections, developing relationships with teachers, and being accountable. Unresponsive parents in the ABC County virtual school that did not support students were not invited to participate in the study and were not recommended by teacher participants. Teacher participants did not refer parents from other cultural backgrounds that speak languages other than English.

Due to the development of virtual technologies, another limitation may include that most interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams and were virtual rather than face-to-face. Utilizing Microsoft Teams accommodated the participants' time, schedules, and obligations. This format incorporated convenience and flexibility to conduct individual interviews and focus groups without interfering with the participants' schedules, allowing for data collection.

Delimitations involved using qualitative transcendental phenomenological rather than quantitative or mixed methods to describe the experiences of elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting, how their connective experiences were improved, and how they helped students. Another delimitation was the researcher's influence on the study, including previous knowledge of connective experiences as a teacher and parent in the virtual setting and training from a Master's program for using technology in teaching and connective practices. Therefore, the researcher was reflective through written researcher notes, conducted member checks, and triangulated data. Information from this study can be used to apply meaning to their setting and purposes.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should focus on increasing connectivity between teachers and parents for all students, especially in the elementary age range. Using technology to support connective experiences between teachers and parents in all settings due to its convenience and flexibility should be reviewed. Exploring teachers' needs to utilize more connective methods and tools in their connections with parents to inform higher education and professional development could enhance decisions for teacher training. Other studies should focus on ways to engage parents who were not responsive to decrease the possibility of students becoming unsuccessful in the elementary grades of virtual schools. A mixed study reviewing the impact of connective experiences between teachers and parents relating to the effects of students' increased reading ability or measurable student data in school would help understand how connectiveness supports students' success in becoming independent learners. Additional studies may include analyzing how much of the work is completed by the students independently, without parents' help, or how much is completed solely by parents.

Due to the limitations of the demographics, it is recommended that this study could be replicated with elementary teachers and parents to gain an understanding of connective experiences. Finally, additional studies should explore teachers' connective experiences with and without teacher training or professional development, with varying ages, years of experience, geographical locations across the US, genders, ethnic backgrounds, general education, as well as special education, experiences with students and parents with varying languages and age ranges, including primary, elementary, middle, and secondary levels.

Conclusion

According to the examination of data, it can be concluded that the student's social-emotional well-being developed from nurturing connections made by the teachers after

consistent, flexible connections between elementary teachers and parents impact success and independence in students in the virtual setting. Daily interactions include virtual teachers entering the home through technology to create relationships and cultivating a teacher and parent team to help students acquire what they need to be successful, independent learners. The data collected from this study explained the elementary teachers' experiences in cultivating and maintaining connections with parents in the virtual setting through various methods and tools that were convenient and flexible for teachers and parents. The data add to the existing knowledge encompassing the connections between teachers and parents created for decades and how they affect the successes of academics and behaviors of students. The current methods and tools of conducting connections have been impacted by the experiences of the emergency of education to conduct education through virtual schools during the Covid-19 pandemic. The current post-secondary or professional development training is inequitable and does not reflect the impact of teachers' experiences with technology and its various methods and tools to decrease a gap in connective experiences with parents. Methods and tools utilized by teachers, and the consistency of use, are not equitable among virtual teachers and their practices; however, the consistency of methods and tools for various parents may vary based on their technological needs and intellectual capabilities. If virtual schools want to succeed in helping students learn, they need to shift to training teachers and parents to gain knowledge and prepare to make consistent connections to build teacher and parent relationships within a team to support the academic success of students progressing to be independent.

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Appendix A

Appendices

Appendix A includes the email requesting site permission with its contingencies allowing access to contact participants and collect data.

February 21, 2022

Dr. Superintendent of ABC School District
Superintendent
ABC School District
Anywhere address
Southeastern, USA

Dear Dr. Superintendent of ABC School District,

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research to better understand the lived experiences in the connective experiences between parents of students and teachers in the virtual setting. Learning from the connective experiences cultivated and maintained in the virtual setting will provide information to assist connective experiences developed between parents of students and teachers in the brick-and-mortar setting. The title of my research project is The impacts of connective experiences between Teachers and Parents In a Virtual Setting: A Transcendental Phenomenological Study, and the purpose of my research is to understand the lived experiences towards the factors that assist in connective experiences between teachers and parents in the virtual setting at the ABC school district in the southeastern part of the United States.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research in ABC School District by contacting teachers and administration to invite them to participate in my research study.

Participants will be asked to contact me to schedule an interview and participate in a focus group. Four journal entries are included to gather additional information based on connective experiences with parents. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. Please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval if you choose to grant permission. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

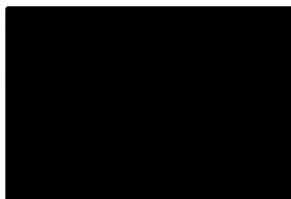
Amy Truett

Teacher of ABC School District


Appendix B

Trustworthiness Section Example

Appendix B includes the site permission letter with its contingencies allowing access to contact participants and collect data.




March 15, 2022

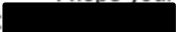

Ms. Amy Truett

Dear Ms. Truett:

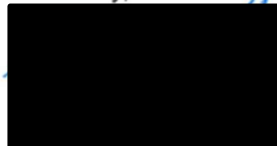
The purpose of this letter is to inform you that your request to conduct research on the experiences between parents of students and teachers in the virtual setting is approved subject to the following conditions:

1. You must comply with the conditions set forth in the District policy, "Research Involving Students," and §1232h, "Protection of Pupil Rights," of the U.S. Code;
2. You are not to release, present, or publish any personally identifiable information concerning students, their parents, or District staff members;
3. You are not to identify  or any school in our District in any publication, presentation, or release of information associated with your research without written permission;
4. The records and raw data associated with your study are to be destroyed when they are no longer needed for the purposes set forth in your request; and
5. You are to provide a copy of your completed research report to me at the District Office.

It is important to note that participation in your research is voluntary. Also, please make sure your research does not interfere with the fulfillment of our employees' duties and responsibilities.

I hope your research goes well. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at .

Sincerely,



Appendix C

IRB Approval

Date: 1-21-2023

IRB #: IRB-FY22-23-368

Title: A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF CONNECTIVE EXPERIENCES BETWEEN

ELEMENTARY TEACHERS AND PARENTS IN A VIRTUAL SETTING Creation Date: 9-30-2022 End

Date:

Status: Approved

Principal Investigator: Amy

Truett Review Board:

Research Ethics Office

Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type Initial

Review Type Limited

Decision Exempt - Limited IRB

Key Study Contacts

Member Amy Truett

Role Principal Investigator

Contact [REDACTED]

Member Amy Truett

Role Primary Contact

Contact [REDACTED]

Member Patricia Ferrin

Role Co-Principal Investigator

Contact [REDACTED]

Appendix D

Email to Teachers in the Virtual Setting

December 3, 2022

Teacher or Parent

Dear Parent or Teacher:

As a doctoral student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research to better understand connective experiences between elementary teachers and parents in the virtual setting. The purpose of my research is to determine the experiences regarding the connections in the virtual setting, how connective methods improve connections, and do the connections help students, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be certified teachers with at least three years of experience, including providing instruction as an elementary teacher in the [REDACTED] or parents of elementary students in the [REDACTED]. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in individual interviews (thirty minutes), a focus group with teachers or parents (thirty minutes), and journal prompts (teachers only) (fifteen minutes). Member checking will be performed by permitting the participants to read the transcriptions to ensure the accuracy of their perspectives. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please click here <https://forms.gle/XATPyKMKwxCGpzz46> and complete the survey. You can also contact me at [REDACTED] or email me at [REDACTED] for more information.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview. After you have read the consent form, please click the link to proceed to the survey.

Participants will receive a \$10 Chick-fil-A gift card.

Sincerely,

Amy Truett
Teacher

[REDACTED]

Appendix E
Follow-up Email to Teachers in the Virtual Setting

December 12, 2022

Teacher or Parent
[REDACTED]

Dear Teacher or Parent:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. Last week, an email was sent to you inviting you to participate in a research study. This follow-up email is being sent to remind you to respond to the survey if you would like to participate and have not already done so. The deadline for participation is [Date].

Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview (approximately thirty minutes), a focus group with teachers or parents (thirty minutes), and journal prompts (teachers only) (fifteen minutes). Member checking will be performed by permitting the participants to read the transcriptions to ensure the accuracy of their perspectives. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please click here <https://forms.gle/4iDzWq2YVh7U1NS77> and complete the survey. You can also contact me at [REDACTED] or email me at [REDACTED] for more information.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview. After you have read the consent form, please click the to proceed to the survey.

Participants will receive a \$10 Chick-fil-A gift card.

Sincerely,

Amy Truett
Teacher

Appendix F
Teacher Screening Form

Research participants from the virtual setting - teacher

Please complete this form to notify me if you are willing to participate in my research study.

*** Required**

What is your name? *

1. Did you participate in teaching a student in the virtual setting in the HCS [redacted] school?

Mark only one oval.

- I taught elementary students in the [redacted]
- I taught elementary students with an IEP in the [redacted]
- None of the above

2. Did you teach the four content areas and have a minimum of three years of teaching experience?

Check all that apply.

- Yes
- No

3. If you are willing to participate, what is your preferred method of communication * (phone or email). Please provide your information.

Appendix G
Parent Screening Form

Research participants from the virtual setting - parent

Please complete this form to notify me if you are willing to participate in my research study.

* Required

1. What is your name? *

2. Did you participate in parenting a student in the virtual setting in the [REDACTED] School?

Mark only one oval.

- I was a parent of an elementary student in the [REDACTED].
- I was a parent of an elementary student with an IEP in the [REDACTED].
- [REDACTED]
- None of the above

3. If you are willing to participate, what is your preferred method of communication * (phone or email). Please provide your information.

Appendix H
Teacher Consent Form

Consent

Title of the Project: A Transcendental Phenomenological Study of Connective Experiences Between Elementary Teachers and Parents in a Virtual Setting

Principal Investigator: Amy Truett, School of Education, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a teacher that has taught for a minimum of three years and an elementary teacher that taught in the [REDACTED]. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

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

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

The purpose of the study is to determine the experiences regarding the connections in the virtual setting, how connective methods improve connections, and if the connections help students.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

1. Participate in a one-on-one interview for approximately 30 minutes in a video-recorded session through Microsoft Teams.
2. Participate in a focus group with other similar teachers for approximately thirty minutes in a video-recorded session through Microsoft Teams.
3. Answer journal prompts for approximately fifteen minutes.

Member checking will be performed by permitting the participants to read the transcriptions to ensure the accuracy of their perspectives. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include assisting new and veteran elementary educators with knowledge of the benefits of connecting with parents.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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

How will personal information be protected?

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

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

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will receive a \$10 Chick-fil-a gift card for participating in this study.

Is the researcher in a position of authority over participants, or does the researcher have a financial conflict of interest?

The researcher serves as a teacher at [REDACTED]. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate or not participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

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

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

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

included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

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

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

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

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

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

Your Consent

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

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

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

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix I
Parent Consent Form

Consent

Title of the Project: A Transcendental Phenomenological Study of Connective Experiences Between Elementary Teachers and Parents in a Virtual Setting

Principal Investigator: Amy Truett, School of Education, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a parent of a student that attended the [REDACTED]. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

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

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

The purpose of the study is to determine the experiences regarding the connections in the virtual setting, how connective methods improve connections, and if the connections help students.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

1. Participate in a one-on-one interview for approximately 30 minutes in a video-recorded session through Microsoft Teams.
2. Participate in a focus group with other similar parents for approximately thirty minutes in a video-recorded session through Microsoft Teams.

Member checking will be performed by permitting the participants to read the transcriptions to ensure the accuracy of their perspectives. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include assisting new and veteran elementary educators with knowledge of the benefits of connecting with parents.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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

How will personal information be protected?

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

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

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will receive a \$10 Chick-fil-A gift card for participating in this study.

Is the researcher in a position of authority over participants, or does the researcher have a financial conflict of interest?

The researcher serves as a teacher at [REDACTED]. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate or not participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

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

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

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

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

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

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

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

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

Your Consent

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

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

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

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix J
Individual Interview Questions

[Teachers]

1. Please describe your educational background and experience in your career through your position in the virtual setting.
2. Please describe your strengths in working with students' parents in the virtual setting.
3. Please describe connective experiences with a parent that connected often and about a parent that did not connect as often in the virtual setting.
4. Tell how your connections with both types of parents that connect often and not as much changed how you connected with them.
5. Describe whether you connect with parents more often or less often in the virtual setting and why do you think so?
6. What professional development opportunities have you had to support you in connecting with parents in the virtual setting?
7. What factors contribute to conducting and maintaining the connective experiences between you and the parents in the virtual setting?
8. How frequently are connections conducted with parents, and should it be more or less often?
9. What do the connective experiences that strengthen the communication pertain to?
10. How do you connect with parents in the virtual setting (text, email, Facebook, connecting with parents in the background)?
11. How do your connections with parents help your students?
12. How do you explain how the correlation of differences in technological abilities among various parents relates to their connective abilities?
13. What information do you share when you connect with parents, and how does it help

students?

14. How do you address situations where parents contact you outside of the school day about questions regarding virtual learning?

Appendix K
Individual Interview Questions

[Parents]

1. Please tell me about an elementary teacher in the virtual setting and the most effective connective experiences you had.
2. Please tell me about a connective experience you had in the virtual setting that was not effective.
3. What factors assist you in communicating with your teacher, and how often?
4. What factors prevent you from communicating with your teacher, and how often?
5. How do connective experiences with your child's virtual teacher help your child?
6. What choices of connective methods do you have to connect with your child's teacher (email, text, Facebook, Zoom)?
7. Which methods do you prefer when connecting with your child's teacher in the virtual setting (email, text, Facebook, connecting with the parent during class)?
8. How often do you like to connect with your child's teacher each week in the virtual setting, and why?

Appendix L

Journal Prompt Questions

1. Think of one student you feel has cultivated an enriched connective experience with their parent. What factors promote the connective experiences' success, and describe some conversations and how they were conducted?
2. Think of one parent with whom you feel you have not cultivated a practical connective experience. Describe your interactions or lack of interactions with the parent and discuss your perspective on why the connective experiences have been managed in this way. How did this impact the academic progress of your student?
3. What do you plan to incorporate in your practice to encourage more support and interaction from all parents in the future?
4. When you could plan for your "back to school meeting" next year, what will you incorporate in your meeting with parents to express the importance of an effective parent and teacher connective experience to help students next year?

Appendix M
Focus Group Questions

[Teachers]

1. Describe your connective experiences with your students' parents.
2. What factors (technological or methods) enrich your connective experiences with your students' parents?
3. What technological methods that you may have used or not used are most convenient for connecting with parents?
4. Describe a time when parents contributed to your connective experiences in the virtual setting that may not have happened in a different setting.
5. How often do you feel connections should be made with parents?

Appendix N
Focus Group Questions

[Parents}

1. How do connections with your child's virtual teacher help your child?
2. What factors (technological or methods) enrich your connective experiences with your child's teacher?
3. What technological methods that you have used or may not have used are most convenient for connecting with teachers?
4. Describe a time when your child's teacher contributed to your connective experiences in the virtual setting that may not have happened in a different setting.
5. How often do you feel connections should be made with teachers?

Appendix O

Categorization of Data

Table 4-3.

Initial Categorization of Data

⊕^ Name	↔ Files	References
○ Commication with parents negative	6	18
○ communication with parents positive	14	69
○ app	3	6
○ flexible	15	38
○ Helped student	16	67
○ consistent connections & relationshi	15	56
○ Inside homes	4	15
○ teachers' expected occurances of	1	3
○ Contact information	1	2
○ methods of communication	4	4
○ email	12	30
○ Facebook Class Page	1	1
○ Feedback on work	4	4
⊕ ○ Google Meet	15	54
○ Google Site	1	1
○ IEP meeting	3	3
○ LMS	5	10
○ mail	1	2
○ phone call	10	18
○ Progress report	4	4
○ Remind 101	3	4
○ screencast	1	2
○ text	13	31
○ weekly newsletters	5	12
○ Preferred Method of Communicatio	6	9
○ teacher training	4	11

Note. Table 4-3 excerpts words or phrases coded in NVivo.

Appendix P
Codes Emerged Using Visual Thematic Mapping

Table 4-4.

Codes in Visual Thematic Mapping

Primary Theme	Sub-theme	Sub-Theme Support	Tools
Connected with household Relationships	<i>Connections</i>		
	Inside home	Know personally and academically	Email
	Comfy home setting	Consistency	LMS
	Very present	Openness	Google Meet
	Proximity	Understand	Text (phone)
	Ease of access	Relate	Text (Google Voice)
	Involved	Nonjudgemental attitude	Class app
	Become friends	Tools	Remind 101
	Closer bond structure		
	Parent/Teacher team	<i>Help students</i>	
Teacher Worked Harder to accommodate		Accountability	
Teacher Worked Harder to accommodate	Harder to Accommodate	Student progress	
	Received support	Expectations	
	Loyalty	Nurturing connections	
		More comfortable	
	Sub-theme	Sub-Theme Support	
Primary Theme			

Connected- organized network	More confident More open More engaged Felt like they mattered Felt loved and cared for
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Note: Table 4-4. Data that supported the research questions.

Table 4-5.

Outlier Data: Students that are not Successful

Outlier Data	Outlier Finding	Finding Support
Not successful	Work not completed	Not present
	Lack of Parent Support	Not involved Not accountable Not responsive Misleading Not available Lack of experience
	Technology	Not confident Lack of resources Lack of decent internet

Note: Table 4-5. Outlier data that did not support the research questions.