

In Two Places at Once: Understanding Simultaneous Online and Face-to-Face Teaching in K-12 During COVID-19

Daniella G. Varela, EdD

Assistant Professor

Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling
Texas A&M University-Kingsville
Kingsville, Texas

LaVonne Fedynich, EdD

Professor

Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling
Texas A&M University-Kingsville
Kingsville, Texas

Abstract

This study used qualitative survey research to understand the experiences and strategies of Pre-K-12 schoolteachers teaching online students via remote instruction and in-person students simultaneously during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data analysis revealed six emergent themes to describe the experiences of teachers (difficulty, loss, and resilience) and the strategies that made simultaneous online and in-person teaching work (engagement/relationships, community/communication, and resources). Summary findings reveal that teachers were generally frustrated with the experience, but also exposed truth in that the ability to persist through the challenges as a result of teachers' resilience in sense of purpose, teachable moments, and collaboration. Implications for practice are discussed.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a wave of challenges to many aspects of life. In the spring of 2020, mitigation efforts resulted in widespread school closures effectively crippling the education system as we knew it. School administrators, teachers and students were thrust into the world of online teaching and learning, many without training and with very little guidance as no precedent was established to that point. The teaching profession is not new to challenges however. In fact, teachers regularly must think on their feet to meet various daily and constantly changing tasks under their charge in order to best serve students.

“To understand the dimensions of the teaching art, complex and inexhaustible though it be, is an equally endless commitment and one which needs constant renewal” (Hawkins, 1973, p. 7). Almost 50 years later, the COVID-19 pandemic breathes new life into those words. In the absence of proper training and preparation, teachers found need to be creative, imaginative, resourceful and innovative during the COVID 19 pandemic. In the rapid shift from the traditional classroom setting to the world of virtual teaching much of what teachers knew about teaching was changed.

Now over one year into the global pandemic, certain challenges still exist in the education system. As of this writing, students will have completed 1.5 years of learning in a pandemic. That means the system has seen immediate and abrupt school closures, online teaching and learning only, a gradual reintroduction of students into the physical classroom, and in some instances, online teaching and learning and in-person teaching and learning at the same time.

The latter is the focus of this research study, where teachers were asked to be in two places at one time with providing their students with instruction via online and in-person platforms. This study used qualitative survey research to understand the experiences and strategies of Pre-K-12 schoolteachers teaching online students via remote instruction and in-person students simultaneously during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the experiences of Pre-K-12 schoolteachers teaching online students via remote instruction and in-person students simultaneously during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ2: What strategies are Pre-K-12 schoolteachers using to make teaching online students via remote instruction and in-person students simultaneously during the COVID-19 pandemic work?

Theoretical Framework

The numerous responsibilities of teachers function as the root of various teacher frustrations evidenced in research and substantiate the disconnect between teacher preparation and the realities of practice in the teaching profession (Barrett-Kutcy & Schulz, 2006; Melnick & Meister, 2008; Panesar, 2010). Teachers are caught between the demands of school curriculum, state and federal regulations, parent concerns, and the multiple diverse needs of their students.

Gu and Day (2007) acknowledged these challenges of the profession but went further to acknowledge that despite those challenges, teachers remain committed to their work, their students, and their profession. They refer to these commitments as teacher resiliency. Teacher resilience stems from resilience theory developed by Norman Garmezy (Neenan, 2009; Shean, 2015). Resilience theory posits that individuals overcome adversities in order to persist toward their goals. As an extension of that theory, teacher resilience is seen as a dynamic quality that equips teachers with the tenacity to overcome the trials of their professional context (Gu, 2014). Gu and Day (2007) noted that teacher resilience is a result of strength and conviction and the capacity to maintain equilibrium and agency.

Drew and Sosnowski (2019) proposed that teacher resilience is the result of (1) a persistent sense of purpose, (2) a commitment to embrace uncertainty and failure as learning experiences, and (3) a reliance on relationships and collaboration (p. 493). To a certain extent, context matters: teacher resilience is relative not only to personal dispositions but also to the professional culture (Flores, 2018). Ainsworth and Oldfield (2019) noted that professional factors like administrative support, workload, and well-being also contribute to teacher resilience. Given the massive challenges brought upon the teaching profession during the COVID-19 pandemic, teacher resiliency serves as the theoretical framework for this study in an

attempt to understand teachers' experiences of teaching under unprecedented circumstances, and how they persisted.

Literature Review

Traditionally, distance education is used to meet the needs students as a point of convenience. According to Appana (2008), distance education is a “formal learning activity conducted when students and teachers are separated by distance and supported by communication technologies” (p. 5). Using a number of technological tools to facilitate the online learning experience, distance education aims to reach students that for any number of reasons are unable to be physically present in a learning space (Triyason et al., 2020). Distance education is meticulously designed often over a period of several months with focus on purposive and high quality instructional strategies to maximize the online learning experience (König et al., 2020).

Remote teaching on the other hand is an emergency option intended to temporarily deliver instruction when a physical space to do so is not available. The COVID-19 pandemic initiated widespread school closures that effectively forced PreK-12 teachers and administrators to shift rapidly to a form of distance education as the only means through which learning could continue. The rapid shift meant that with little training or preparation, teachers and students alike were thrust into a learning environment that would demand of them digital literacy, creativity, innovation, and a new self-discipline (Santi et al., 2020). These expectations were complicated by the social and psychological impacts of the pandemic (anxiety, stress, depression, low motivation, etc.), some a result of fear and isolation as a result of requirements for physical distancing.

Ames et al. (2021) found that teachers appreciated technology during remote teaching, recognizing it as the primary tool with which they could create and build upon relationships with the students and families. Technology also proved to be useful for teachers needing to differentiate or create interactive lessons and enabled continued collaboration with their peers under circumstances that would not have allowed such otherwise. Their findings also revealed however that teachers believed they lacked proficiency to use technology effectively.

The most telling concern was that teachers felt largely underprepared for remote teaching and resorted to periods of trial and error to learn and do what they had never really been trained to know or do (Rehn et al., 2018). Teachers have reported feeling challenged with adequately understanding which technologies are age and content appropriate for their students, having access to those resources, and having the technological proficiency required to provide support to students and students' families (Moser et al., 2021; Santi et al., 2020). Varela and Fedynich (2020) found that although school leaders had high confidence in teachers' ability to continue providing high-quality instruction via remote teaching, schools were inadequately equipped with sufficient technology, and administrators lacked the resources needed to provide relevant and immediate training teachers needed.

The alternative however was predicted to be far worse. Without remote learning, school closures would otherwise mean *no* learning. Research has determined that even during intermittent school closures, like summer and holiday breaks, learning loss occurs in the areas of math and literacy, and even greater are the achievement gaps between high and low socioeconomic students (Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020). Thus, remote learning was necessary. Although technology does facilitate the potential of building and maintaining strong connections

when the physical space does not allow so, Cardullo et al. (2021) reported that teachers were challenged by a persistent lack of student engagement, stress, and as a result, decreases in perceptions of self-efficacy to perform during remote learning. Teachers also struggled with the pressures of added accountability in what quickly was becoming a new world of teaching (Ames et al., 2021).

The experience for students and those in the personal living spaces were just as complex. Research has already determined that during remote learning, teachers struggled to meet the conflicting demands of students and their guardians which ranged from requests for more rigorously aligned work to requests for less work and more sympathy (Gerwertz, 2020). Teachers are now working harder for longer hours of the day, challenged with a multitude of existing but magnified student inequities and now new inequities too, and concerned about learning loss, regression, and student health and well-being (Kaden, 2020; Middleton, 2020; Varela & Fedynich, 2020).

Scholarly literature pertinent to the challenges and experiences of in-classroom teaching is abundant. More recently, research that explores the experiences of K-12 teachers teaching online as a result of the pandemic is growing. A gap in the literature exists however related to experiences of teachers who have entered into yet another new era of classroom teaching: teaching students online and in-person at the same time. This study aims to understand the experiences and strategies of Pre-K-12 schoolteachers in two places at once: teaching online students via remote instruction and in-person students simultaneously during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Method

This study used qualitative survey research to understand the experiences and strategies of Pre-K-12 schoolteachers teaching online students via remote instruction and in-person students simultaneously during the COVID-19 pandemic. A survey method provides researchers with a flexible approach to collect data for descriptive studies which seek to understand “relationships between variables occurring in particular real-life contexts” (Muijs, 2004, p. 36).

Sample

The population of focus are schoolteachers teaching online students via remote instruction and in-person students simultaneously during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a global phenomenon, the reach of this study and its related findings may be equally global. Still, as universal as teaching may be, the researchers recognize the exceptionality that may be specific to local levels.

The researchers sought to obtain a large sample of participants for this study given that a large majority of schools are still conducting some level of remote instruction. In an effort to attract teachers as participants, and recognizing their limited amount of time, the survey was designed to take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete, administered online, and open for a period of two months beginning mid-December, at the start of the usual holiday break for most schools.

Using a convenience sampling approach, a total of 135 teachers across the United States were invited to participate in this study. The convenience sampling approach means the researcher(s) have access to potential participants either with whom they have worked before or

with whom they otherwise have a similar connection (Muijs, 2004). Central to the purpose of this qualitative study, the researchers requested participation from teachers who were linked as alumni of the research institution's teacher preparation program, employed at local school districts, and/or close relation. During the study period, participants offered recommendations of additional participants, thus a snowball sampling method was also employed. At the conclusion of the data collection period, 17 participants consented to participation. Although still a solid number for valuable data collection based on the feedback from those who rejected the invitation to participate, the researchers concluded that the nature of the study was an expressively difficult topic for exploration.

Feedback from those who declined invitations to participate cited feeling overworked and stressed, and thus communicated finding it difficult to want to participate in a study that would give them space to talk about this experience. This revelation aided in the researcher's efforts toward triangulation of the emergent data.

Instrumentation

The online survey was comprised of a total of 19 questions, 13 of which were open-ended questions designed to encourage personal reflection of current teaching experiences. These questions focused on respondents' perceptions of the benefits and challenges of teaching online and in-person students simultaneously, the strategies utilized to build and maintain positive student relationships, differentiate instruction, implement culturally responsive teaching, manage behavior, etc. The survey also included a series of questions designed to collect descriptive information pertinent not only to the respondent such as years of experience in teaching, grade levels taught, etc., but also pertinent to the school setting in which the respondent currently teaches (type of district, percent of special education students, etc.).

Data Collection

Participants for this qualitative study were recruited via email and social media. The researchers created an invitation to participate with details as to the focus of the study and participation eligibility requirements. Potential participants who met the established criteria and who were interested in participating were encouraged to contact the researchers via email for additional details and instructions. Established criteria for participation indicated that participants must be a current teacher in Pre-K-12 setting and must be teaching students online and in person at the same time. The researchers provided all interested participants with additional details about the study (number of questions, content, estimated time for completion, purpose, etc.) and a copy of the consent form. Only after consent for participation was confirmed were participants permitted to move on to the next stage of the study. Participants were assured that the survey was anonymous, and emphasized no penalty should they choose not to participate. After 14 days, the researchers sent a follow-up email as a reminder of the survey. At the end of 30 days, a second and final email was sent thanking those who participated and requesting that those who had not yet participated complete the survey.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), a dependability audit is an effort to establishing reliability in qualitative research. A dependability audit requires that researchers examine the research process including an assessment of how the data was collected, how the data was kept, and the accuracy of the data. Upon consent to participate in the survey study, participants were

directed to an online survey data collection site to enter their responses to each question. Online administration of the survey allowed for direct, accurate, and secure storage of the data collected. Participants entered responses directly onto the online survey database thus all data collected was the most accurate personal participant account. Because respondents were not required to provide identifying information on the survey, responses remained anonymous. Data was kept on the secure online survey database accessible only to the researchers until downloaded and externally secured to allow for evaluation and analysis.

Data Analysis

This study used qualitative survey research to understand the experiences and strategies of Pre-K-12 schoolteachers teaching online students via remote instruction and in-person students simultaneously during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data collected were analyzed to determine emergent themes in responses. In qualitative inquiry, coding is the researcher's process of identifying words or phrases which capture the essence of the data in summative and/or salient form (Saldaña, 2021).

As a means of establishing internal validity of the data analysis, the researchers repeatedly engaged in a process of peer debriefing to eliminate bias and to test the emergent design. Once participant responses were examined and coded, the researchers exchanged data analysis summaries and identified emergent themes. The exchange allowed for what Lincoln and Guba (1985) described as an opportunity for catharsis of any potential of clouded judgment in the data analysis process. Peer debriefing encourages a review of the analyzed data from a disinvested viewpoint aiming for trustworthiness and credibility of the findings. Once the researchers reached a point of agreement of the emergent themes the study continued.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The results of the survey data collected reflect descriptive statistics of the 17 teacher respondents and a discussion of the data analysis and coded themes as emergent data. Initially launched in December 2020, survey distribution and the data collection period ran for a total of about 8 weeks with a majority of the responses (88%) submitted in the first 4 weeks of the study period. Survey database information concluded that the average time for completion of the open-ended survey was about 19 minutes with all respondents completing all questions on the survey.

Over half the respondents were employed as elementary teachers (grades 1-5) with 13-20% in each of the other grade levels (early childhood, middle school, and high school). A majority of the respondents (34%) have been in their current teaching assignment for 10 years or more and 70% of the respondents have been in the teaching profession for 10 years or more. Most of the respondents (42%) were employed by a rural school district, and 88% of participants indicated their employing school districts is classified as a public school. Table 1 illustrates this data.

Table 1*Participant Data-Descriptive Statistics*

	Number	Percent of Total Respondents
Current Grade Level		
Early Childhood	3	18%
Elementary School	8	47%
Middle School	4	24%
High School	2	12%
Years in Current Assignment		
0-3 Years	4	24%
4-6 Years	4	24%
7-9 Years	3	18%
10 Years or More	6	34%
Total Years Teaching		
0-3 Years	2	12%
4-6 Years	1	6%
7-9 Years	2	12%
10 Years or More	12	70%
School District Location		
Rural	7	42%
Urban	5	29%
Suburban	5	29%
School District Type		
Public	15	88%
Private	2	12%
Charter	0	---

Data was also collected from participants about the students they teach. In order to understand the work of teachers teaching online students via remote instruction and in-person students simultaneously during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to also understand the students they serve. Table 2 illustrates the results of those survey questions. The data revealed that for 12 teacher respondents, about 75%-100% of the students served were classified as economically disadvantaged. One question on the survey asked teacher respondents to report the number of students under their charge who are on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) because they have disabilities or are special education students. The number in response varied anywhere from 0 students to 40 students. That is for instance, one individual teacher reported that a total of 40 of his/her students were on an IEP. Another question on the survey asked teacher respondents to report the number of students of limited English Proficiency or classified as English Language Learners (ELL). Responses also varied here with a little less than half of teacher respondents (47%) reporting no ELL students.

Table 2*Participant Data- Student Demographics*

	Number	Percent of Total Respondents
% Economically Disadvantaged		
About 25%	3	18%
About 50%	2	12%
About 75%	7	42%
About 100% (most all)	5	29%
# IEP (Special Education)		
None	3	18%
1-10	8	47%
11-20	3	18%
21 or More	3	18%
# Limited English/ELL		
None	8	47%
1-10	8	47%
11-20	1	6%
21 or More	0	---

Emergent Themes

Data collected from the online survey allowed for extensive analysis resulting in a series of themes as emergent data to address each of the two research questions guiding the study.

RQ1: What are the experiences of Pre-K -12 schoolteachers teaching online students via remote instruction and in-person students simultaneously during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Difficulty

Overwhelmingly, teacher respondents indicated that the experience of teaching online students via remote instruction and in-person students simultaneously during the COVID-19 pandemic is difficult. In summation of the experience overall, one teacher simply wrote, “This has been the most challenging year!” and another commented with concern that “teaching them at the same time is not going to give students the learning they deserve.” Specific examples in the data spoke to the complication of the technical work of teaching, describing the process of simply getting the lesson done and delivered as hectic, often impossible. As one teacher respondent noted, “The work day for the teacher became ridiculously long and difficult to catch up on all the work and specialized instruction needed for all students.” Another participant said, “It is hard to manage in person students while facing a screen and teaching via zoom. I am not even making eye contact.” Another teacher admitted that teaching simultaneously means it is:

hard to find a balance between both groups. I really feel it is hard for both groups to learn

and retain information. It is hard to give your full attention to both. Sometimes I feel like I leave one group out a little. I try to go back and forth, but it is hard.

For teachers trying to be in two places at once (online and in-person), the data revealed that balance proved to be one of the most prevalent contributors to the difficulty of the experience. One respondent noted that trying to keep online students and in-person students engaged at the same level at the same time is the biggest personal struggle. Teachers find themselves battling a multitude of distractors not normally present during a traditional school day when teaching students online at the same time: “We are competing with the TV, Among Us, texting, laying in bed, food...you have to grab the attention and hold on to it.” In agreement, one teacher said, “The cat and mouse game of engaging the ones who don't want to be online, while also teaching and monitoring, engaging, and teaching students in person is exhaustive.” Another respondent noted that because “students at home barely know what is going on,” and because doing both requires that “you are taking time away from students who are actually face-to-face,” it is nearly impossible to make either one work effectively without sacrificing the quality of the other. In similar tone, another teacher respondent noted that “It is exceptionally difficult and I wish we could just split the classes up so that I could have my in-person students one period and the virtual students another period.”

Another aspect that makes it difficult to teach online students and in-person students simultaneously is the lack of resources. One participant emphasized that it was hard to see any benefit primarily because it has not been a positive experience. The participant noted, “There is not enough of me or time. We don't have enough tools or equipment for students.” Another participant worried about equity for students expressing concern that “creating /locating activities that encompass the skill being taught that all the students in my groups can work on” was one of the biggest challenges. The teacher continued, “I do not want to divide the activity into ‘for the virtual students’ and ‘in person’ lessons. The skill and lesson needs to be the same.”

Loss

Data collected from teacher survey responses revealed another common theme about the experiences of teaching online students via remote instruction and in-person students simultaneously during the COVID-19 pandemic: loss. The feeling of loss was expressed on multiple levels. Teachers reported feeling a sense of hopelessness in the experience of teaching online students and in-person students simultaneously, stating that:

There are no benefits. It's difficult and both types of learners are affected. I believe online students are at a disadvantage over face to face students. Online learning has too many factors that hinder the learner.

Teachers also expressed concern about the loss they are experiencing as it pertains to student-teacher and parent relationships and overall engagement. To that end, one respondent noted that:

The most difficult part of synchronous teaching is getting our online students to actively participate. Even though we require that they turn their camera on, wear their uniform like the other students, they still find ways to hide.

The data indicated that teachers felt frustrated that they are unable to build and maintain positive student relationships, a key component for student achievement. “The interacting between teacher and students is missing and that is an important part of building a relationship with the students.” Teachers also recognized that the fact that students are learning in two different places, via two different modes, is also impacting peer relationships. One teacher said, “Students have less quality peer interactions. Mostly students are just absent--either physically or mentally. Engagement is way, way down.”

One defining characteristic of the COVID-19 pandemic was social distancing, which required that individuals stay 6 feet apart, limit or avoid gatherings, and refrain from physical touch or closeness. As one of the primary causes for school closures, social distancing (or physical distancing) impacted collegial relationships in the teacher workforce, too. Teacher respondents reported a sense of loss in that their experiences teaching online and in-person students simultaneously served as a reminder of what they no longer have in the workplace and in their professional and personal lives. Specifically, one teacher respondent noted that there is no longer a “connection with [my] students this year. Not with the parents. Even with my co-workers- new employees mostly. They do not feel like part of our family.”

Resilience

In positive contrast to the first two themes, another theme that emerged from the data was resilience. As is characteristic of the teaching profession, teachers found the silver lining in the difficulty and loss experienced while teaching online students and in-person students simultaneously. Above all, teachers appreciated that although simultaneously teaching online students and in-person students was difficult, and although they feel tremendous loss compared to the ‘normal’ teaching experience, as one respondent said, “The biggest benefit is that teaching and learning are still happening. I am able to teach students in an unusual way, but it is happening.”

The impact of the pandemic had far reaching consequences that will likely permeate the education system for years to come. Still, one teacher recognized that even in these uncertain and nontraditional circumstances, “students are given the opportunity to learn and parents have the option of how they want their student to receive that instruction.” Another teacher noted that despite the challenges, and the intensifying workload, “online teaching is important since it allows students to attend school in a situation where they would otherwise be unable to.” For another teacher respondent of this survey, that meant recognition that “My attitude really plays a big role in all of this.” Almost as though in reflective tone of the experience overall, one early childhood teacher noted:

This is the first formal school experience, they do not possess the “remember the good old days of 2019 when we didn't wear masks or teach from a distance?” memories. The manner in which I present and deliver my lessons is what is important.

Still, teacher respondents noted that it is important not to mistake resilience for universal success. In fact, one respondent noted, “This is extremely hard...,” and encouraged the educational community to “check on your teacher friends, because I bet they are all struggling and need a break.” As another teacher noted, the fact of the matter is that “most educators are doing their best while trying to build this crazy plane and fly it at the same time.” And even

though there is a commitment to do what they can with what they have and in spite of the challenges they face, teachers know that “Together, we will get through this!”

RQ2: What strategies are Pre-K -12 schoolteachers using to make teaching online students via remote instruction and in-person students simultaneously during the COVID-19 pandemic work?

Recognizing and validating the experiences of teachers, the researchers also sought to understand what strategies Pre-K-12 schoolteachers are using to make teaching online students via remote instruction and in-person students simultaneously during the COVID-19 pandemic work. Results of the data analysis revealed 3 themes as strategies for making this difficult work as manageable and effective as possible: engagement/relationships, community/communication, and resources.

Engagement/Relationships

Respondents made several mentions about the importance of student engagement and positive student relationships as central to student achievement. Part of the challenge of teaching students remotely and in-person at the same time then requires creativity to keep all students (and now their families, too) engaged in the content and discussion, and how to build and maintain positive student relationship from a distance. Thus, this emerged as a primary focus in the data collected.

Some school districts began the school year completely online then later transitioned to offering both models. One teacher in such a school district said:

This year our district began the year with all students in a virtual environment, so all students met each other virtually. When students began coming to campus, I maintained the same greeting time we had as when we were online.

That effort for consistency, the teacher said, kept students interested and connected, and allowed for a smooth transition into an environment the students already felt they knew well. For this teacher, it also meant that students and teachers were:

able to maintain a school family atmosphere and bond with each other which is very important to us. When a child transitions from virtual to in person or vice versa it is a smooth transition and the students already know each other. It is the first year I didn't have students crying for weeks when starting Pre-K because we had been Zooming and they knew who I was and who their friends were.

All teachers who participated in this study attributed a focus on engagement and relationships as vital to the success of simultaneously teaching two groups of students. Just as they would under normal circumstances, one teacher said it is important that:

students are given time before the bell rings to socialize and connect with each other. All students log in to Zoom for our classes, even those who are in person. I also project my screen to the in person students so everyone can hear one another. Since all of us sit

behind plexiglass in the classroom, this method seems to help us all feel connected.

For school children, social interaction is a big part of the school day and integral to their development. Teacher respondents mentioned a number of ways through which they worked to create a positive social environment conducive for engagement and relationship-building for their students whether in person or online. One teacher said “I keep the Zoom meeting and class iPad fired up so the kids at home can socialize and eat lunch with the kids in class.” In an effort to bring the online kids into the physical classroom, another teacher said:

We need to be able to see one another so I carry an iPad on a tripod so students who are at home get to experience other parts of our classroom such as the letter wall, writing area, and easel areas for lesson interaction.

Respondents also noted that they work hard to make sure that students feel valued, seen, and like they belong regardless of the learning mode. One teachers said:

All gains are celebrated with bell ringing, virtual high fives, etc. and when someone is absent, we wish them well using Becky Bailey’s ‘we wish you well’ lesson model and many other conscious discipline lessons and models.

Data collected indicated that teachers valued attempts to emulate the traditional classroom teaching experience with all students participating together at the same time over asynchronous learning. One teacher stated, “I do not pre-record my lessons or record in person lessons for my virtual students.” In order to preserve that classroom feeling, and the experience of learning with and alongside one another, the teacher continued, “We all participate together as a class.”

One strategy toward increased engagement that came through in the data analysis was a focus on the concept of the student-led class. Teacher respondents noticed that students were “more authentic/productive” when opportunities were provided for students to choose their own groups, engage with their peers, etc. The researchers concluded this may be a potential result of students’ desire to socially engage at a time when interactions were, for the most part, discouraged and prohibited due to the pandemic. Data collected from the surveys told of teachers’ recognition that students “want to interact and look forward to our Zoom sessions, so we work on Google Slides together since virtual students have access to manipulate when sharing a screen via Zoom.” One teacher noted that “providing students with ‘choice and voice’ options on both summative and formative assessments allows students to respond based upon their interest and readiness.”

Community/Communication

A teacher’s work is reliant on a large community of people: parents, administrators, students, colleagues, etc. The work of teaching in the middle in a global pandemic means that teachers look to that community for support to continue the work the best way they know how. As one participated stated, “Supportive parents and administrators who are willing to assist with enforcing our expectations for both online and distance learners is essential.” Another respondent noted that this reliance, this interdependence, “builds community and helps remote students feel

connected to the students who are in person. Parents also get a glimpse of classroom management and teaching style.”

For teachers of students who are learning remotely, that sense of community must be strong and built on good communication. “Communication between teachers-parents is more important than ever.” One teacher said, “I utilize my at home caregivers. They are a tremendous help to me. I involve them in the lesson and always remind them that they are my instructional assistants.” Another teacher agreed, stating “Communication with parents and at home caregivers is key to the success of this year. Teaching online and in person at the same time takes a lot of planning, preparation and parent support.”

Resources

In addition to a reliance on help from parents and administrators, the data collected also revealed that teachers are incredibly reliant on a number of resources to make teaching online students via remote instruction and in-person students simultaneously during the COVID-19 pandemic work. One of those resources is routine. One respondent said, “At first it was very difficult but over time we have started a routine, which has helped a lot.” Even in the most trying circumstances with students learning remotely and in-person at the same time, one teacher noted that “Making sure my routine is consistent is key” to the success of the day’s work.

Teachers also admitted that even in this unique setting, rules are necessary. One teacher noted just as would be the case in a traditional classroom experience, classroom management is paramount. The teacher said it is important to “have ground rules about online students being able to unmute their mic. They also know not to message in the chat unless it is an emergency.” In the absence of finding that classroom management balance however, one teacher said, “Managing behavior online has been a challenge. My face to face students are very good. They know the daily routines and expectations. Online, we have problems.”

The data collected also revealed a long list of tools that teachers are using while teaching remotely and in-person at the same time. Some of the tools cited were mandated use in compliance with school district policy. Other tools were a result of teacher collaboration, referrals, and in some case, student recommendations. The data did reveal that teachers of younger students (early childhood and elementary teachers) appeared to have a much more comprehensive set-up in order to facilitate all that is necessary in the delivery of the content. One early childhood teacher described the process in great detail:

I use my Elmo document camera for sharing manipulative, handwriting, fine motor, and some read aloud activities. The iPad and tripod are used for mobility and for when details are needed to be seen. I also set it up facing the classroom so online students can feel like they are right there with us. Headphones with a microphone also make it easier for at home students to hear me and for me to hear them. When teaching from home, I have also made use of my OSMO mirror and software. Mirroring 360 has also helped me stay mobile and model Seesaw lessons. I am also considering purchasing a webcam and light so students can see me more clearly since the laptop camera is not always the best. I do use Screencastify for screen recording and short instructional videos, Bitmoji scenes and Google slides with SlideMania designs for lessons and communication with parents via Seesaw. Our district utilizes Schoology as our LMS. Zoom makes all of our sessions possible. My mobile phone is also important for communicating with parents for sending

links during a tech issue during our lesson or for sending links, photos, and documents, pertaining to our lessons.

In contrast, teachers of students in higher grade levels (middle, junior, and high school) only briefly listed the most frequently used resources: Google Suites (Google Slides, Google Meets, Google Classroom, etc.), Jamboard, Padlets, Kami, YouTube, Remind 101, Zoom, etc. One teacher expanded on this to give credit to the experience of needing to teach students online and in-person at the same time as this provided an opportunity to see what technology can do for students. As a teacher of 8th grade students, the respondent said,

These kiddos (like my own 8th grader at home) cut their teeth on iPads and gaming. The more I can stay up on my tech/gaming strategies, the happier and more engaged my students are. The in-person learners love it because all they really need for class is their iPad. The online learners are still able to follow along, participate, and submit work, just like all of the other students who are physically present in the actual classroom. Using technology to leverage my instructional practices works quite well with all of my learners.

Discussion

Given the massive challenges brought upon the teaching profession during the COVID-19 pandemic, teacher resiliency served as the theoretical framework for this study in an attempt to understand teachers' experiences of teaching under unprecedented circumstances, and how they persisted. Where resilience theory posits that individuals overcome adversities in order to persist toward their goals, teacher resilience is a teacher's ability to overcome the trials of their professional context (Gu, 2014). The theory also suggests that there are realities of the professional context (administrative support, work culture, workload, etc.) that are imperative to a teacher's capacity to be resilient (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019). Accordingly, the results of this study found truth in that the ability to persist through the challenges of teaching online students and in-person students at the same time during the COVID-19 pandemic was attributed to teachers' resilience in sense of purpose, teachable moments, and collaboration (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019).

Teachers reported that the experience of teaching students online and in-person at the same time was difficult. They found it hard to balance the work of properly supporting students learning in two different formats at the same time. The task of keeping students engaged in the lesson proved to be of great concern. Teachers also expressed concern at the sense of loss- loss of student connections, collegial collaboration opportunities, and a loss of what made them feel like their work was effective and impactful. Still, the fact that one theme that emerged from the data was 'resilience' is a testament of teacher resilience theory.

Drew and Sosnowski (2019) proposed that teacher resilience is the result of (1) a persistent sense of purpose, (2) a commitment to embrace uncertainty and failure as learning experiences, and (3) a reliance on relationships and collaboration (p. 493). The findings of this study validate that proposal and define how teachers teaching online students and in-person students simultaneously found within themselves the ability to persist. The participants in this study referenced acknowledgement of their duty to students and a persistent sense of their purpose to teach no matter what. Though with expressed frustration and feelings of defeat,

participants accepted that they lacked training, preparation, and resources and stuck it out through trial and error, success and failure, and in the process found productive ways to reach their students and deliver their lessons.

Participants also frequently noted their need to engage, to maintain positive relationships with students, with each other, with parents, and to build a strong sense of community/family as a key approach to making things work. That reliance on relationships and collaboration was seen in their efforts to overcome what obstacles presented themselves in this teaching scenario; to persevere for the benefit of preserving that sense of duty to the learning experience.

Teacher resilience theory also points to the importance of professional culture conducive to encouraging and promoting teacher resilience. In what could have otherwise been a tumultuous professional work environment, the findings of this study reveal that although the workload was new and demanding, a positive environment of support was paramount. Teachers pointed to positive support from their administrators, from their leadership teams, from parents and from the community. As one participant stated, teachers felt as though they were “all in this together.”

Implications

Summary findings of this study reveal that teachers were generally frustrated with the experience of teaching online students and in-person students at the same time. Teachers were overburdened, even more so than usual. Noting the impossibility of making one work without the risk of sacrificing the quality of the other, the reality proved to be too much for one teacher teaching online and in-person at the same time. Nevertheless, they persisted. In doing so, there are lessons to be learned.

Teachers need more training in instructional technologies, especially if online learning is to remain in the PreK-12 education system in any capacity. With that, schools and students need appropriate resources to keep on par with what learning may look like in this new era. Teachers found new games, tools, learning management systems, and devices to make teaching and learning work for a variety of learners. To dismiss those discoveries as irrelevant to the future of education would be irresponsible and detrimental to the future of the student learning experience.

It was also incredibly evident that teacher value collaboration, teamwork, and supportive professional relationships. Engagement was a primary concern for teachers: teacher-student engagement, peer engagement, and parental engagement all were of primary focus as a strategy to positively influence the success of this uniquely challenging teaching and learning experience. At the height of the pandemic, social/physical distancing restricted interactions that would have provided for healthy collaboration and engagement opportunities. Research suggests that these restrictions, which emulate isolation, may manifest themselves in a variety of mental health concerns such as anxiety and depression (Venkatesh & Edirappuli, 2020). As restrictions are gradually lifted and social/physical distancing guidelines loosened, schools and school leaders must place focus on building and maintaining social and mental health for students and teachers alike. Teachers may need additional training and support to help students reintegrate to the face-to-face setting.

Conclusion

The focus of this study was to understand the experiences of teachers teaching online

students and in-person students at the same time during the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal of the researchers was to understand what worked, what didn't, and what was learned from the experience. Through this study, it was revealed that teachers found the experience difficult, felt a sense of loss, but persisted with resilience. Teachers relied on engagement/relationships, community/communication, and resources to make their challenging work as successful as possible during this trying time. Although efforts are already in place for a return to normal, the work to lead students forward is far from over. The value of this research does not and cannot stop here. In many ways, the education system will need to be flexibly prepared to address and repair the damage caused as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Daniel, 2020) including learning loss, academic achievement, etc. Going forward, teachers will require even more training, heightened support, stronger relationships and ample resources to continue to be resilient.

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