Spring 5-18-2024

Learning Disrupted: The Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Student Teacher/Supervising Practitioner Relationship

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Recommended Citation

Learning Disrupted:

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Relationship

A Dissertation

by

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Submitted to the Graduate School of Education

Lesley University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2024

Adult Learning and Development Specialization

Learning Disrupted:
The Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Student Teacher/Supervising Practitioner
Relationship

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Ph.D. Educational Studies
Adult Learning and Development Specialization

Approvals
In the judgment of the following signatories, this Dissertation meets the academic standards that have been established for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated, first and foremost, to the loving memory of my mother, Anne Tremblay,

who never turned down an opportunity to remind me how much she loved me and how proud she

was of me.

I did it, Mom, just like you knew I would.

And also, to my son, Killian Price, for the daily reminders that silliness and snuggles (and sticks

and skid steers) are the things that matter most of all. Killian, you are my why in everything I do.

To my husband, Jeff Price, who is my encouragement in the darkest moments, always pushing

me forward, and reminding me that there is only one way to eat an elephant.

To my father, Steve Tremblay, thank you for giving me your tenacity, for always believing in

me, and for inspiring me daily to be the very best version of myself.

I am so lucky to have three incredible men constantly in my corner.

I love you all so, so much.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, thank you to my family, especially Leila Connolly, Eilanna Price, Patrick Price, and Jill Price. Without your love, support, and encouragement, none of the last 10 years would have been possible.

To my best and dearest friends, Rebecca Karos, Erin Munley, Natalie Dorsch, and Karma Wood, I love you! Distance is nothing when you have women like these cheering you on from all corners of the Earth. Thank you for inspiring me daily and making me a better person.

To my senior advisor, Marcia Bromfield, and my committee members Barbara Govendo and Marya Levenson, thank you for sticking around this long and believing in this project.

For me, the greatest takeaway from this work is the importance of holding space with a community of supportive educators. In my 12 years in the classroom, I have been supremely privileged to work alongside some of the best educators in the business. Especially Danielle Lyons, Michelle McCann, Jackie Fleming, Marielle Berardi, Dan Hausermann, Eric Fries, Paul Neenan, Sarah D'Abbraccio, Carolyn Regan, Brian Knodler, and Katerina Kelly, thank you for laughing with me, crying with me, and holding me up when things were tough.

To my ALD cohort, especially Nykia Coleman, John Patro, Tyra Lopes Mendes, Mary Moore, and Kristin Ruiz—this work can be lonely, thank you for always "getting it" and, therefore, getting me.

To the educators who lent their stories to this research, thank you for your tireless efforts before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. None of the work we do is easy, but it is so, so important. Always remember that. Thank you.

Abstract

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the lives of educators across Massachusetts when schools closed their doors to in-person learning for the school year. Online teaching and learning became the norm as teachers quickly adapted their lessons for virtual classrooms. Student teachers were among these educators, finding themselves quarantined for the final months of their teacher education programs. Literature suggests that the student teaching semester and the relationships formed within it are integral to teacher education. How would these relationships fare through this interruption to the field experience? This qualitative case study examined the relationships between student teachers and supervising practitioners and specifically explored the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on these relationships. The case study tells the stories of seventeen individuals, selected using convenience sampling, participating in a student teaching practicum at a private university in Massachusetts. Through semi-structured interviews, the eight supervising practitioners, eight student teachers, and one university field placement coordinator discussed the importance of communication, trust, and hands-on experiences in the practicum. They identified the qualities of successful field placement relationships and shared personal perceptions about the impact of the pandemic on the teacher candidates' overall readiness to teach. Examined through the lenses of Self-Efficacy and Cognitive Apprenticeship Theories, three important themes emerged from the data—the impact of professional resilience, the importance of communication, and the positive effects of community and collaboration. The study's participants shared the ways that the pandemic disrupted the practicum experience overall, while still providing valuable lessons for both student teachers and veteran educators to use well beyond the practicum.

Keywords: student teaching, practicum, field experience, career readiness, supervising practitioner, mentoring, communication, success, self-efficacy theory, cognitive apprenticeship theory, COVID-19, K-12 education, teacher education, teacher preparation

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

On March 12, 2020, time stood still. While teaching my last 7th grade class of the day in a public school district in the Boston suburbs, my co-teacher and I were interrupted by an afternoon announcement. All after school activities were canceled, including homework help, which brought on panicked commentary from students who needed to stay after with teachers to make up assessments at the close of the marking period.

"I'm sure your teachers will work with you, just go home for today, everyone understands," my co-teacher and I explained.

I packed for the day as I would any other Thursday, bringing home my laptop and a few final assignments to grade before the end of the marking period. I chatted with my colleagues as we walked out to our cars. We discussed our increasing concerns surrounding the novel coronavirus outbreak that brought China and parts of Europe to a screeching halt. In recent weeks, we extolled the virtues of handwashing to our students and refrained from shaking hands in parent meetings. Disinfecting wipes and hand sanitizer were present in classrooms more than ever before, and innocent coughing raised unprecedented concerns amongst students and faculty alike.

Still, I planned to be in the building on Friday. My students would finish their poetry project presentations, and we would wrap up the second marking period of the year. I was creating a mental list of students to email to remind to stay after school to make up assessments and other missing assignments.

Around 5:00 that evening, my phone rang. It was announced that my school district would be closed until at least March 20, with the possibility of an extended closure to be announced later on. That evening and the following Friday, other districts in the state also made

plans to close their doors. In response to the rapidly growing list of school closures, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker announced that all schools in the state would be closed through at least April 6.

With the governor's announcement, my district told families that regular learning activities would be suspended for about two weeks. District officials promised to develop a plan for distance learning in the coming days. While families waited for the next steps, behind the scenes, my colleagues and I went into overdrive, attending training and workshops to help us optimize our classrooms for distance learning, meeting with our Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and teams, and getting familiar with Google Meet. My colleagues and I exchanged frantic emails and text messages expressing our frustration and concern. We also joked, with some of us celebrating a temporary end to the early morning commute and our new work "uniforms" of sweatpants and a nice shirt, which would become a familiar pop culture reference for employees in many different industries. None of us fully grasped the magnitude of the disruptions that were yet to come.

When our online learning finally began, it was a relief to see my students, albeit digitally, in our new virtual classroom. We laughed over some of the glitches with this new style of learning. Pets, siblings, and other family members sometimes interrupted and we shared the different and creative ways we were filling time while our favorite restaurants, parks, and other businesses closed their doors. My students had so many questions, most of which I couldn't answer. Some were concerned about family members and friends who may be in danger of contracting COVID-19. Together, we mourned the loss or postponement of anticipated vacations and major family celebrations, like Bar Mitzvahs. It was challenging to be asked unanswerable

questions, and difficult to offer any reassurances about all of the changes that were so rapidly

presenting themselves to all of us.

Outside of the classroom that I set up in my living room, the world continued to change.

Gatherings initially limited to 25 people were reduced to 10. Gyms, beauty parlors, and tattoo

shops closed their doors. Parks officials covered playgrounds in caution tape and reduced

parking at popular trailheads for hikers. Grocery stores worked tirelessly to keep shelves stocked

with essentials, and people attempted to limit their trips to pick up food and household goods.

Easter church services were streaming live on Facebook and families organized Passover Seders

over Zoom. People with sewing machines got to work crafting to provide masks for their family

members, and for those still working in grocery stores, pharmacies, and restaurants. By the end

of March, Massachusetts Governor, Charlie Baker announced that schools would be closed until

May 4. At the end of April, teachers across the commonwealth would learn that they would not

return to their classrooms in the 2019-2020 school year.

As I prepared my lessons to meet the distance learning standards set by the state and my

district, I joined a Facebook group called "Teaching During COVID-19." In this virtual space,

educators from all over the world were sharing resources and ideas, and giving insight into what

different schools were doing to make up for this unprecedented time out of school. While

scrolling through one afternoon, I noticed a post inquiring if any teachers in the group currently

had student teachers. Intrigued, I clicked on the post to read the comments. The comments were

varied. Some supervising practitioners in the group shared that their student teachers were still

working with them, while others were still unsure. A few student teachers in the group chimed

in. Some shared that they were going to have enough hours and observations to complete their

field experiences, others were waiting on state and university guidance, and some suspected they

would need to make up the time in the fall.

I thought about my current challenges. In addition to the challenges of teaching in a

completely new platform, my PLC and team of teachers were missing our opportunities to

connect while in the building. These connections, which had frequently occurred informally in

the school building, now had to be scheduled around time with students and personal family

time. I had already expressed to friends that it sometimes felt as though I was a new teacher

again, struggling to find the best ways to engage and work with students. I was craving the daily

collaboration I normally experienced with my colleagues and my students. I couldn't imagine

how this disruption was affecting student teachers without any prior teaching experience to act as

a comparison.

In an attempt to put myself in these student teachers' shoes, I thought of my own student

teaching experience. I fondly recalled how much I enjoyed going to the school and not only

teaching in my supervising practitioner's classroom but also spending time with him during his

planning period. I valued our time together, and treasured our many great discussions about

teaching ideas for upcoming units, the advice he so willingly offered, and hearing his feedback

on my ideas and knowledge from my methods courses. Our daily communication was crucial for

me as I developed my teaching style in his classroom. Even when he stepped out of the room and

left me alone with the students, he made sure that we would connect later on to reflect on the

lesson. We spent many afternoons, after students left, having discussions about pedagogy,

classroom management, and the classes that I observed while he taught. I was grateful for this

constant feedback loop. When I was hired at the same school, my supervising practitioner

became my new teacher mentor, and we continued this relationship. We would meet during

lunch or our planning time, and I would ask him questions or seek his help if something didn't

go as I expected it would. I have always sought out this sort of open communication with my

coworkers. Teaching, in my opinion, is best accomplished with a village of support. I couldn't

imagine a student teaching experience without daily, face-to-face, relationships.

When Massachusetts closed schools for the remaining days of the 2019-2020 school year,

distance learning quickly transformed from an education buzzword to a way of life. Across the

United States, distance learning was the reality for K-12 teachers. Teachers navigated video chat

software to check in with students and families, created weekly packets to be mailed out to

students or picked up by family members, recorded lessons and shared digital resources, and

otherwise used as many avenues as possible to connect with and engage students. In

Massachusetts, state testing was canceled, and teachers focused on a small handful of standards

and skills to keep students involved in learning. Going into the summer of 2020, teachers and

other education professionals had many questions as COVID-19 continued to impact all levels of

society. How long will we be asked to stay at home? What will happen when schools do open in

the fall? When will this challenging time end? How do we meet the diverse needs of our students

through a computer, from our living room tables?

It was these questions and more that led me to think more about the plight of the spring

2020 class of student teachers and, potentially, the student teachers who would follow their lead

in the fall of the same year. It was not only K-12 students who experienced learning disruptions

during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the Boston area, colleges and universities also began making

the difficult decision to close their doors and move instruction online around the middle of

March 2020, requiring students who lived in campus housing to be moved out by the start or end

of the university spring break week. As higher education and public education institutions began

to close their doors and move online, student teachers were put into a difficult position as both their university coursework and their work in the K-12 classroom were put on hold. This study explored the experiences of a small subset of these student teachers who, along with supervising practitioners, faced a thick cloud of uncertainty as universities and public schools alike grappled with unprecedented challenges.

Since completing my student teaching in the fall of 2011, I have remained interested in the student teaching experience. Much of my interest is specific to the relationships that develop between student teachers and their supervising practitioners. In my case, I was treated as more of a colleague than a student. I developed a close, personal relationship with my supervising practitioner, a relationship that continues to this day. When I hosted a student teacher in the spring of 2023, I reflected on my own experience and used it as a model. I involved her in all of my teaching and learning decisions from day one and included her in as many aspects of the workday as I could. I recognize, however, that not all student teaching placements are like mine and that this style of collaboration may not work for everyone. I have friends and colleagues who have had overwhelmingly positive experiences without identifying as co-teachers with their supervising practitioners. I also have friends and colleagues who didn't enjoy their student teaching experience, and who felt as though they were substitute teachers rather than student teachers. For these colleagues, they often felt that they were expected to follow their supervising practitioner's lessons in a lockstep fashion, and did not get a chance to introduce their own teaching styles and ideas to the classroom.

Student teaching, however variable, is important to the development of future educators. There is a large body of research dedicated to the importance of classroom experience in teacher education. Preservice teachers can use field placement experiences to put education theory to

practice, build self-confidence and self-efficacy about teaching, gain a better understanding of the teaching profession as a whole, and learn about different populations of students (Raymond-West & Snodgrass Rangel, 2020; Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012; Singh, 2017). A major disruption to the learning experience for both students and teachers, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, cannot be ignored when examining the student teaching experience.

This study sought to shed light on the experiences of novice and experienced educators during an unprecedented time. It explored the impacts, positive and negative, that the pandemic-related school closures had on the relationships between student teachers and supervising practitioners. While much is still unknown about the overall impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and society as a whole, this study aimed to uncover some of the ways supervising practitioners and their student teachers worked around the challenges as they navigated several months of mandatory school closures.

Statement of the Problem

It is widely recognized that the field placement experience is an essential component of the teacher education process. It is through field placement experiences that preservice teachers can learn about school communities, form a deeper understanding of students and their backgrounds, develop a stronger understanding of curriculum and pedagogy, and practice behavior management (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Raymond-West & Snodgrass Rangel, 2020; Salerno & Henry, 2016). Additional research about field placement experiences suggests that the supervising practitioner has the most powerful influence on preservice teacher development (Dever et al., 2003; Lafferty, 2018; Portelance et al., 2017). Despite these claims, there is fewer bodies of research to identify specifically how to improve the relationship to foster the greatest possible development in the preservice teacher's practice.

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced additional challenges specific to relationship-building between student teachers and supervising practitioners. As disruptions to the learning environment continued through the spring of 2020, educators were faced with the challenge of teaching their classes online or providing other opportunities for students to continue their learning at home. For student teachers, these sudden school closures meant they were unable to work side-by-side with their supervising practitioners and students in the physical classroom. Supervising practitioners were navigating the challenges of pandemic teaching, and student teachers were facing uncertain futures. Suddenly, very significant stressors were placed on the shoulders of supervising practitioners and student teachers, impacting the relationship between the two.

Research suggests that the relationships established during field placement experiences are essential to teacher development. The partnerships formed between preservice teachers, supervising practitioners, and university faculty and staff involved in the relationship should be collegial, established with intention, and trusting (Abramo & Campbell, 2019; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Hennissen et al., 2011). Some conditions may be helpful for these relationships to flourish. Field experiences help preservice teachers grow when the supervising practitioner in the field can provide opportunities that provide hands-on experience for the preservice teacher in a safe environment (Abramo & Campbell, 2019; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Palmer, 2018). If a collegial relationship is, indeed, an indicator of preservice teacher success (Portelance et al., 2017), then it should be the goal of teacher educators to make sure that this relationship is as strong as possible. This includes the ability to give thoughtful and collegial feedback. Thus, it may be beneficial for supervising practitioners to receive training in giving feedback (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

If the relationship between the supervising practitioner and preservice teacher is essential to the field placement, then the relationship should be built in such a way that fosters success for both the preservice teacher and supervising practitioner. This study examined the ways how these important relationships were affected by the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to being placed in a challenging teaching situation, virtually all communication changed between student teachers and supervising practitioners, as well as between student teachers and the university. This study examined the ways a sudden switch to digital communication may have affected the relationships, in terms of communication and feedback, between student teachers and supervising practitioners. In addition, the study examined education during the COVID-19 pandemic—a unique moment in our shared history. This study aimed to determine some of the ways one university, that university's student teachers, and supervising practitioners worked to overcome the challenges faced by a major disruption to the learning environment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships between preservice teachers and supervising practitioners, explore ways in which these relationships foster feelings of success for the preservice teacher, and examine the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the field placement relationship. Participants were asked if they believed the relationship was successful and encouraged to explain why. In part, this study has defined a successful relationship using the descriptions provided by the participants. Additionally, participants were asked to reflect on their teaching and pedagogical practices, as well as the non-teaching factors that contributed to the development of a relationship with either their preservice teachers or supervising practitioners. Communication, setting expectations, team building, the sharing of responsibilities, classroom

routines, and other factors which, according to teacher education literature, build strong

relationships were examined.

The definition of a successful field placement experience was determined based on the

student teachers' and supervising practitioners' perceptions of the student teaching semester

overall. Student teachers reflected on their perceived readiness to teach based on their

accomplishments during the field placement experience. Supervising practitioners were also

asked to share their perceptions of their student teachers' readiness to teach. Since all student

teaching relationships are different, there is not an official list of specific factors that identify

success. Field placement relationships either function or do not function for a variety of different

reasons. Success for one relationship may look quite different from another, so instead of

prescribing success, the individual relationships have been examined using participants'

perceptions of what may have worked or not worked within the relationship both before schools

closed and after.

In addition to exploring student teachers' relationships with supervising practitioners, the

study examined how major disruptions and uncertainty, such as those that took place due to the

United States' response to the COVID-19 pandemic, may have affected the field placement

experience. Student teachers and supervising practitioners were asked to reflect on the changes

that took place in the spring of 2020 as schools transitioned into distance learning plans. Student

teachers were encouraged to share their experiences communicating and collaborating with their

supervising practitioners before schools closed, how they transitioned to working together during

the school closures, and how they felt this impacted a perceived readiness to teach by the end of

the field experience.

Supervising practitioners were also invited to contribute their reflections on the experience. They were asked to reflect on what they were able to accomplish with their student teacher before the school closures, and reflect on what they were able to accomplish after schools closed. During the COVID-19 school closures, information and guidelines changed rapidly. Supervising practitioners were given the opportunity to reflect on the experience of guiding not just themselves, but a student teacher, through these constant changes. The supervising practitioners' perspective was especially crucial to determining what, if any, important lessons about teaching and learning may have been missing during the school closures. Supervising practitioners shared their thoughts on how the relationship was affected by COVID-19, and reflected on how they worked through the challenges presented by COVID-19.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, not all relationships between preservice teachers and supervising practitioners are created equal. Therefore, this study also sought to identify and understand the challenges that may occur during the field placement experience that deter from building a successful relationship. As in the case of defining a successful relationship, this study will not necessarily identify or label specific actions or activities within the relationship as negative or positive but rather look for trends in relationships and determine if there are factors that contribute to the perception of an unsuccessful relationship. In addition to identifying factors that may detract from the perceived success of the relationship, this study identifies ways in which supervising practitioners and preservice teachers worked through personal and professional challenges during the field placement experience.

To more clearly understand the student teaching experience and the university's response to the COVID-19 crisis, the study has included the perspective of one individual who was involved with the student teaching experience at the university level. The study has considered

guidelines from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Department of

Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) about distance learning, student teaching, and

teacher licensure and combines that with the lived experiences of those professionals working in

the university setting. Understanding the changes that took place at the university level adds to

an understanding of the student teachers' and supervising practitioners' experiences.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals in a number of different professions found

themselves seeking ways to function as normally as possible in abnormal circumstances. The

education field was no exception. The study aims to use the participants'' reflection to contribute

to the field of teacher education. By informing future teacher educators and supervising

practitioners of the supports that student teachers may have received or needed during COVID-

19, the study intends to highlight how stakeholders in teacher education can navigate student

teachers and supervising practitioners through times of uncertainty. This study, which was

mostly reflective in nature, will capture this unique moment in societal history and hopes to add

to a growing body of literature on how to support future educators in our ever-changing world.

<p style="text-align:center">Guiding Research Questions</p>

The following questions will be used to guide this study:

- What factors contribute to and detract from the development of successful relationships

  between preservice teachers and their supervising practitioners?

- In what ways is the student teacher/supervising practitioner relationship impacted by

  times of uncertainty?

- In what ways does the practice of mentoring over virtual platforms affect the relationship

  between supervising practitioners and student teachers?

- In what ways can supervising practitioners support student teachers through times of crisis? In what ways can student teachers support supervising practitioners?

- What impact does a sudden interruption of the field placement experience have on student teachers' confidence and perceptions of their own readiness to teach?

Positionality and Sociocultural Perspective

Closing schools caused educators to raise several questions. Some questions were logistical in nature while others were related to meeting all needs of students, both social and academic. Educators were already well aware of the socioeconomic divides amongst students and moving to a virtual model made this divide greater. Initially, school districts worked to set up programs to ensure access to breakfast and lunch pickups for students who may need them. As schools remained closed, the question of access to distance learning materials was also an issue. Districts wanted teachers to be able to continue instruction in some form, but did not want to leave students behind due to gaps in technology or material access.

I teach in a predominately white, middle class, public school district in the suburbs of Boston. We have a one-to-one technology program that provides Chromebooks to students beginning in seventh grade. I did not have to worry about whether or not my seventh-grade students would have a device at home to access my online lessons, but I knew that there were a few who may not have consistent access to the Internet or the support at home to follow the district's distance learning schedule. I worried about the students who may not be able to access the materials as easily as others due to socioeconomic factors, but I was also fortunate to be in a district with fewer equity gaps—we had a great deal of support from my school to ensure that we connected with all students and their families. With the help of guidance counselors, translators,

ELL, and special education teachers, my team was able to reach all of our 85 students throughout the school closure.

It is important to note that my colleagues and I received guidance from state and district administrators regarding our curriculum for remote teaching that included careful consideration of the equity gaps in Massachusetts. In an attempt to address equity of access, it was impressed upon us that teachers were not to attempt to completely replicate what we would have been teaching in the classroom during our weeks of teaching from our homes. Massachusetts was attempting to keep students on the same page, regardless of their district and ability to access technology and learning materials, as we did not want to leave students behind.

I recognize that during this time, I was more fortunate than teachers in other school districts in Massachusetts and across the country. Unlike some of my colleagues in urban and underserved areas, I did not face the challenge of making my classwork accessible both online and in hardcopy packets. Due to our one-to-one Chromebook program, the majority of my curriculum materials were already on Google Classroom and other district-provided digital resources. I also had the support of special educators, paraprofessionals, and ELL teachers, and together we worked to make sure that our ELLs and our students with special needs were also able to access modified versions of the content we were presenting. My district was clear in their expectations and encouraged open communication with district-level administration if we felt that something wasn't working.

The COVID-19 pandemic tested and highlighted educators' challenges which stem from significant gaps in access to technology and other resources. As low-income school districts closed their doors, teachers found themselves unable to connect with their students, some districts reporting that fewer than half of the students were participating on a regular basis

(Goldstein et al., 2020). While some students faced accessibility challenges based on access to

Internet services or devices, other students were unable to check in with teachers because they

had family members working in healthcare and other essential industries on the front lines of the

COVID-19 fight or, worse, family members fighting the virus itself (Goldstein et al., 2020). As

educators were tested, so were their student teachers who were also navigating students'

challenges in accessing the appropriate technology and support, a changing set of expectations

and guidelines, and new methods of communicating with supervising practitioners and students,

all while also still learning to teach.

To provide context for this research, it is important to note that I am an experienced

teacher. I earned my Master of Arts in Teaching from a traditional program and have taught at

both the middle and high school levels. I have worked in three schools, two of which fit the

profile of a suburban, middle class school system and one urban charter school. In each of these

schools, I participated in new teacher training for the first year of my employment, requiring me

to work directly with a mentor. As a middle class, white female, I represent the majority in

public schools. I typically work with others who identify similarly. Furthermore, I have not

worked with cooperating or mentor teachers who represent a socioeconomic or racial group other

than the majority. As a preservice teacher, my supervising practitioners were both white and

middle class, and my high school supervising practitioner was male, while my middle school

supervising practitioner was female. In mentoring situations, I worked with a white, middle class

male who was also my supervising practitioner, and another middle class, white female.

While much of this study focused on the challenges faced by student teachers developing

a relationship with supervising practitioners during the COVID-19 pandemic, I recognize that

this may not be the only challenge facing the building of these relationships. Even in the face of

a global pandemic all relationships, both professional and personal, can be affected by differences in age, culture, gender, socioeconomic status, and race. While the majority of the study participants were also white, female, and working with middle class white students, the additional challenges related to culture and socioeconomic status of some participants have been taken into consideration and included in the findings and discussion. These stories are important in order to gain a broader understanding of the human experience

Due to the limited diversity in my participant pool, the current literature reviewed and other aspects of this study have attempted to recognize and explore the challenges experienced by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of color) teachers and students, as well as teachers and student teachers teaching in and from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. In exploring this additional literature, it is my hope to address and acknowledge the many different barriers and challenges that impacted teachers, student teachers, and students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Significance of the Study

As an educator, the impact of this study has a deep, personal significance. Identifying ways to fill classrooms with confident and competent teachers has been one of my interests since the beginning of my teaching career. I fondly recall memories from my student teaching semester and still value the experiences provided by working with students and developing a strong working relationship with a supervising practitioner. The student teaching experience is a crucial time in a novice educator's career.

When schools began to close at the start of the pandemic, I thought of the student teachers who would not get to complete this experience with the students in their classrooms and with their supervising practitioners. How would these student teachers view teaching after this

experience? How did they work with supervising practitioners to navigate a time filled with so much uncertainty? Would they be confident to enter a classroom after completing their field placement experiences? Student teaching provides crucial hands on learning experiences that cannot be gained through reading educational theories or classroom case studies. As seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, the student teaching semester is not immune to the disruptions and challenges of everyday life. This study explored how the relationships between student teachers and supervising practitioners fared through a major disruption to the field placement experience. The study's purpose is two-fold—to identify factors of a successful relationship between student teachers and supervising practitioners and to examine how those in these relationships can navigate a crisis or similar disruption to the field placement experience.

Following is a list of other stakeholders in teacher education, however who may also benefit from this study's findings:

Teacher preparation programs/university supervisors/field placement administrators: Any identified factors contributing to supervising practitioner and preservice teacher success within the field placement may help programs to understand how to build stronger relationships between preservice teachers and supervising practitioners. Findings from this study may provide teacher education programs with deeper understanding of the field placement experience by asking preservice teachers and student teachers to identify positive aspects and challenges they encounter.

The COVID-19 pandemic was uncharted territory for both K-12 and higher education. Insights gleaned from conversations with student teachers who worked through these turbulent times may help teacher education programs better prepare for crisis situations in the future. The study seeks to determine what skills or resources student teachers felt may have been beneficial

to have in their "toolbox" to better navigate the challenges faced during this time. In learning

more about how student teachers worked with supervising practitioners to navigate the crisis,

teacher education programs may benefit from deeper knowledge about the relationships between

preservice teachers and supervising practitioners and how to foster relationships which can

sustain themselves in a crisis situation.

In a world that, since the earliest says of the pandemic, has relied more and more heavily

on virtual communication, this study will also benefit teacher preparation programs by providing

a way to understand how the student teaching experience was affected by the use of virtual

communication. Teacher education programs may find ways to improve how they communicate

and work with students over digital platforms and also find ways to use digital platforms for

future student teaching experiences, even in "normal" times.

K-12 schools and administrators*:* This study will help K-12 schools to identify areas in

which they can better support student teachers and the supervising practitioners who work with

them. When schools and administrators have a better understanding of the nuances of the

relationships established between preservice teachers and supervising practitioners, they may be

better equipped to support these important relationships. In addition, K-12 schools and

administrators can also benefit from well-established relationships with teacher education

programs and a firm understanding of a student teacher's expectations while in the field. This

study can help K-12 schools and teacher education programs to make these important

connections.

Field placements are essential to the teacher preparation process. K-12 administrators can

benefit from the establishment of successful relationships between supervising practitioners and

preservice teachers by having a pool of strong new teachers to hire each school year. While

support from administrators is essential during what would be considered typical teaching

scenarios, administration support is crucial in times of major changes, such as during the

COVID-19 pandemic. Using the proposed study to look into the experience of educators during

the pandemic may help administrators to better support staff who are working with student

teachers in their schools.

      Supervising practitioners: The study aims to help supervising practitioners work more

effectively with preservice teachers through examining supports provided by the K-12 school

and the teacher preparation program. Supervising practitioners will be able to gain an

understanding of the perceptions that preservice teachers have about their relationship.

Additionally, the study provides a better understanding of the importance of establishing a

positive relationship with preservice teachers and to identifies ways to do this.

      Supervising practitioners are required not only to provide feedback to preservice

teachers; working with a preservice teacher requires reflection on the supervising practitioners'

own teaching practice. In this way, the relationship can become beneficial for both parties with

preservice teachers bringing in new ideas from their education courses and the supervising

practitioners seeing these ideas in their classroom. This reflective work may act as professional

development for the supervising practitioner.

      Just as deeper knowledge about how student teachers perceived the support from

supervising practitioners during the COVID-19 pandemic will help school administrators, so will

this knowledge inform supervising practitioners. Supervising practitioners will benefit from the

student teachers' shared perceptions of how the challenges presented by COVID-19 were

handled and develop a better understanding of how to support student teachers should a crisis

arise during the field placement experience. Since digital technology and communication was

utilized so frequently during COVID-19, the study will also help future supervising practitioners

to better understand the impact of digital communication for feedback, teaching, and other

aspects of the student teaching experience, providing insight into what parts of the digital

relationship worked well and what parts may have been able to have been improved upon.

  Preservice teachers*:* Preservice teachers are one of the major focus points of the study.

The study aims to help preservice teachers work with supervising practitioners in a way that will

help them identify areas of strength and areas of challenge that may influence their practice as

educators. Preservice teachers have been given opportunities to share their personal perceptions

of the field placement experience, and reflect on the challenges they faced during the COVID-19

pandemic.

  This information, in combination with the literature reviewed, aims to provide teacher

education programs with more insight into the relationship developed between preservice

teachers and supervising practitioners. Future preservice teachers can benefit from this study not

only from working with teacher education programs that are more well-informed about these

relationships, but also by potentially being prepared for the field experience itself. They may be

given the opportunity to learn from the successes and challenges of preservice teachers who

worked in the field before them in order to get the most out of their own field placement

experiences.

  Teacher education is a popular area of research. Research in the field of teacher education

suggests that supervising practitioners have a significant impact on preservice teachers with

whom they work and can become mentors to the preservice teacher when they are also able to

provide emotional support and encouragement through a typically stressful time for a novice

educator (Dever et al., 2003; Hobson et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2016). If the strength of the

relationship does result in a better field experience for the preservice teacher and the supervising

practitioner, then it is crucial to teacher education to share any factors that work to strengthen

this relationship.

Should this study uncover some ways to promote successful relationships which will

build upon preservice teachers' confidence, then it will have fulfilled its purpose. At a crucial

time, when education systems and employees are frequently in the news, it is critical to continue

to fill the field with confident and competent teachers who are ready to continue the good work

already being done in classrooms across the country.

Definitions of Terms

- *Candidate Assessment of Performance (CAP)*: Massachusetts uses the Candidate

  Assessment of Performance (CAP) to assess and evaluate teacher readiness. The

  assessment uses specific criteria, which align with the state's teacher evaluation system,

  to determine a student teacher's readiness to become a teacher of record upon completion

  of the student teaching experience. During the assessment cycle, student teachers set

  goals and create a plan to accomplish the goals. In addition, the supervising practitioner

  and program supervisors contribute data collected during formal and informal

  observations of the student teacher to formative and summative assessments

  (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019).

- *COVID-19/Coronavirus/Novel Coronavirus*: The World Health Organization (WHO)

  officially announced in February 2020 that COVID-19 would be the name used to refer to

  the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 corona virus. COVID-19 stands for the full name

  of the disease which is coronavirus disease 2019. The virus is spread from person-to-

  person through respiratory droplets. The community spread of the virus is one of the

particular concerns surrounding the pandemic, as many individuals could not cite

specifically where they may have contracted the virus. Side effects of the virus include

fever, cough, and difficulty breathing (CDC, 2020). COVID-19 will be the primary term

used throughout the study to refer to the disease and the worldwide pandemic, but the

terms coronavirus and novel coronavirus may also be utilized in its place.

- *Field Experience/Field Placement*: Experiences which take place at a K-12 school site

  organized through the teacher preparation program. These include but are not limited to,

  classroom observations, student teaching, internships, and residency programs. Field

  experiences typically operate under the supervision of a supervising practitioner

  employed by the K-12 school (Slick, 1995). In this study, the final field experience or

  student teaching semester for students in a teacher education program will be the focus.

- *Mentor:* A relationship in which one experienced individual is supporting the

  development of a less experienced individual. In the case of teacher education, a mentor

  may be someone in the teaching field, with more experience than the preservice teacher,

  who acts as a guide during the teacher education process as well as during the first years

  of teaching. A mentor, ideally, should not be a teacher's or preservice teacher's evaluator

  (American Institutes for Research, 2015).

- *Preservice teacher:* While a student teacher is specifically one who is enrolled in a final

  field placement experience, a preservice teacher is any student enrolled in a teacher

  education program at any point of study. Preservice teachers are enrolled in courses and

  field experiences that help them develop the foundation for their teaching knowledge

  (Montecinos et al., 2010). In this study, preservice teacher is used as an all-inclusive term

  to identify all of the participants currently enrolled in a teacher education program.

- *Preservice Teacher Success*: For the purpose of this study, preservice teacher success is

  defined as the building of confidence and competence throughout the field placement

  experience. This term will be defined more specifically based on data collected through

  interviews with teacher education faculty, university supervisors, field placement

  coordinators, supervising practitioners, and preservice teachers. In this study, this

  definition will be limited to success during the field placement, not after graduation.

- *Remote learning/distance learning:* The study focuses on distance and/or remote learning

  in Massachusetts schools. In a letter to families on March 30, 2020, the Massachusetts

  Commissioner of Education, Jeffrey Riley, defined remote learning as assignments

  shared with students by schools to provide age-appropriate learning opportunities, while

  not directly replacing in-person classroom instruction. According to the standards

  suggested by DESE, remote learning can take place online using school district-approved

  technology to communicate with students and families through phone or video chats,

  email, and other online learning platforms, but could also include work packets, reading

  lists, and encourage students to use materials found in their home or backyards to engage

  in learning projects. Schools were asked to focus on reinforcing skills already learned

  over the course of the year and, should new information be taught, for schools to consider

  equity in access to the new materials when creating distance learning plans (Riley, 2020).

- *Social distancing*: During COVID-19 outbreaks, the Center for Disease Control (CDC)

  recommended social distancing as a means of preventing the spread of the coronavirus.

  The CDC defines social distancing as staying at least six feet away from others, not

  gathering in large groups, and avoiding mass gatherings (CDC, 2020). During the

  COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing was enforced through stay-at-home orders or, in

the case of Massachusetts, stay-at-home advisories, suggesting that individuals only leave

their homes for essential materials, such as groceries or medications. Social distancing

guidelines from the CDC encouraged nonessential individuals to work from home, utilize

mail-order or delivery services as much as possible, and wear cloth masks or face

coverings when out in public to reduce the spread of COVID-19 (CDC, 2020). These

guidelines fueled decisions made by states to close schools and nonessential businesses.

- *Student Teacher*: A student in a teacher education program who is working with a

   supervising practitioner during a defined period of supervised teaching as the final step of

   their certification program. During the student teaching experience, student teachers

   apply what they have learned through coursework or other field experiences to plan and

   teach lessons, work with large and small groups of students, practice classroom

   management, work with parents, and complete other duties as asked by the school or

   teacher education program (Greenberg et al., 2012). The study uses this definition and

   vocabulary provided by the participating teacher education program to identify these

   individuals.

- *Student Teaching:* The specifics of student teaching or practicum experiences differ

   based on the type of teacher education program and the location. The Massachusetts

   Department of Elementary and Secondary Education uses the term "practicum" to

   describe the student teaching experience (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and

   Secondary Education, 2023). The university described in this study defines this

   experience as a full-time, semester long, supervised teaching experience. These

   experiences take place at the end of a teacher education program. Student teachers may

   take a seminar, be evaluated by university supervisors or other faculty, and also receive

evaluative feedback from the supervising practitioner (Lesley University Graduate

School of Education, 2019).

- *Supervising practitioner:* Individuals assigned to work with preservice teachers during a

  field placement experience. These individuals are veteran educators at the school where

  the preservice teacher has been placed. In the state of Massachusetts, specifically, the

  supervising practitioner is an individual with a minimum of three full years of teaching

  experience under an initial or professional teaching license who directly supervises the

  student teacher (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education,

  2023). They open their classrooms and guide preservice teachers through the field

  placement experience at the K-12 school, providing feedback and opportunities for

  reflection throughout the process (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). This study uses the vocabulary

  of the program studied to define these individuals. Supervising practitioner is a term

  specific to Massachusetts teacher education programs, and these individuals are

  sometimes referred to as cooperating teachers.

- *Teacher Education Program:* For the purpose of this study, the teacher education

  program will be defined as a program taking place in a university setting with the goal

  being post-baccalaureate, initial teaching certification. The teacher education program is

  the series of coursework and required field placement experiences in which the preservice

  teacher is enrolled (U.S. Department of Education, 2004)

- *University Program Supervisor*: A role defined specifically through interviews with those

  representing the participating university. This individual may act as a liaison between the

  K-12 school site and the preservice teacher, an evaluator of preservice teachers, a

mediator for problems which occur in the field, and observer of the preservice teachers'

in-field teaching (Steadman & Brown, 2011).

Chapter Outline

This dissertation consists of five chapters, organized as follows:

- *Chapter 1:* Introduction: The introduction includes an overview of the researcher's

  interest in the topic, as well as the topic itself, research questions, the purpose of the

  study, the significance of the study, important definitions, and other general information

  regarding the study.

- *Chapter 2:* Review of the Literature: The literature review focuses on topics related to

  mentoring, field placement experience, distance and virtual learning, virtual mentoring,

  student teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how humans cope with crises,

  such as the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the literature review explores two

  theoretical frameworks—self efficacy and cognitive apprenticeship theory—to inform the

  research.

- *Chapter 3:* Methods: The methods section of the dissertation will provide an overview of

  the data collection methods of the case study. First, the section briefly discusses the

  significance of using the case study method, followed by a description of the research

  site, and details about participant selection and participants. The section continues with

  an explanation of both a timeline of Massachusetts' response to the COVID-19 pandemic

  and the study itself, more information about the limitations of using participant

  perceptions for research, and an explanation of the data collection process. A description

  of data analysis, including coding terms and themes will be discussed in this chapter.

Finally, sections explaining confidentiality and anonymity, researcher bias, and delimitations and limitations of the study conclude this chapter.

- *Chapter 4:* Findings: This section analyses the data and reports the finding of the study. The findings section is organized by research question. After exploring each context separately, conclusions will be provided.

- *Chapter 5:* Discussion: This section will discuss the overall findings, organized by each research question. Following a discussion of the data by question, three major themes— the importance of communication, professional resilience, and the positive effects of community and collaboration—will be discussed. Following the discussion of the findings will be the stakeholder implications, limitations and future research, and a final, personal reflection from the researcher.

Summary

As the world adapted to what many called a "new normal" by wearing masks, social distancing, and gathering professionally and socially over virtual platforms, teachers were given a seemingly impossible task—to do all of this while also educating students. The student teachers and supervising practitioners who worked side-by-side during the spring of 2020 could not have anticipated the challenges they were forced to navigate. The participants in this study overcame a number of obstacles and the stories they shared tell a tales of resiliency, frustration, success, and disappointment. In an ever-changing world these tales hope to encourage and inspire future educators to tackle the uncertain challenges of the future.

Educators are constantly adapting and shifting. While the COVID-19 pandemic was no exception to the flexibility typically required of educators, it was the sudden need to shift, learn, and implement new strategies that challenged educators in the spring of 2020. This study

highlights how student teachers and supervising practitioners worked together to quickly adapt

and provides guidance on how future educators can work together to support one another through

uncertainty in the future.

In the next chapter, literature crucial to building the foundation of the study are explored.

The literature review will provide insight into mentoring relationships, the field placement

experience, virtual learning and mentoring, the human response to crisis situations. Discussions

of self-efficacy and cognitive apprenticeship theory will introduce the theoretical framework that

informs this study.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This case study examines the relationships between student teachers and supervising practitioners at a private university in Massachusetts, specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic. The student teachers participating in the study were all involved in a final student teaching experience at the university, and were working in classrooms under the guidance of a supervising practitioner when schools transitioned to virtual learning in March 2020. Student teachers and supervising practitioners experienced unprecedented and multifaceted challenges due to the gravity of a large-scale interruption. The topics explored in this literature review help to build a broader understanding of the student teaching experience as a whole.

The first section of the literature review focuses on the act of mentoring, specifically as it relates to the field of education. The impact and importance of strong mentoring relationships between student teachers and supervising practitioners is explored. In addition to a discussion about traditional mentoring programs, literature about mentoring across virtual platforms is also included, due to the sudden shift to virtual learning and communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. A final exploration of the sociocultural factors which can impact mentoring relationships is included, due to the homogeneous sample of participants in this case study.

Field placement experiences are explored in the second section of the literature review. Since this case study explores only one example of a final field placement experience, the literature in this section provides a more broad and general understanding of the overall impact of field placement experiences, as well as the typical expectations of student teachers and supervising practitioners.

The third section explores distance and virtual learning. The COVID-19 pandemic forced a sudden shift to virtual learning platforms, and at the time of this study, there was not much

literature specifically discussing digital field placement experiences. Instead, the distance

learning section explores distance learning in both K-12 and college settings. Much of the virtual

learning discussed in this section differs slightly from the virtual learning taking place in

Massachusetts public schools in March 2020. Even with these differences, this section provides a

better understanding of how teachers teach and students learn across digital platforms. In

addition to understanding virtual learning and mentoring, the literature review also explores

other student teaching experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to gain a stronger

understanding of the experiences of student teachers outside of this study. Distance learning is

also explored as it specifically related to student teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A fourth section of the literature review seeks to better understand some of the emotions

and challenges experienced by humans when dealing with a crisis situation. The literature

explored in this section is broad, covering human reactions to natural disasters as well as specific

literature exploring the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The understanding of how people

build resilience and persevere through crisis is helpful in understanding how the individuals

participating in this study coped with the uncertainty of teaching during a global pandemic.

Finally, the literature review ends with the discussion of two theoretical frameworks. The

first, self-efficacy, is a theory from Albert Bandura which explores an individual's feelings about

whether or not they successfully complete a task with which they are presented. Literature from

Albert Bandura exploring and explaining the original theory is explored alongside literature

about teacher self-efficacy in this section. The second theoretical framework is cognitive

apprenticeship theory. This theory is a model of teaching and instruction which involves the

instructor making their thinking visible. Both of these theories are used to inform the study and

provide a broader understanding of how adults learn from their experiences.

The goals of this literature review are twofold, to overview general expectations of field placement experiences and to explore specific challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the literature, such as that on mentoring and field placement experiences, provides an overview of a crucial part of teacher education. The rest of the literature looks specifically into the challenges of distance learning and mentoring, as well as the crisis of COVID-19.

Supervising Practitioners, Mentors, or Both?

Across teacher education literature, the term mentoring is utilized in different ways. While some teacher education programs use the term to refer to any supervising practitioner working with student teachers, other teacher education and new teacher literature seek to identify differences between supervising practitioners and mentors, stating that not all supervising practitioners are mentors (Jones et al., 2016). A goal for supervising practitioners to adopt some of the qualities of mentors is present in the literature exploring the relationships between supervising practitioners and student teachers.

Mentor Training

Supervising practitioners are tasked with establishing multifaceted relationships with student teachers over the course of the field placement experience (Aderibigbe, 2013; Curcio & Adams, 2019; Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005; Nesheim et al., 2014; Palmer, 2018; Rhoads et al., 2013; Stanulis & Russell, 2000; Trevethan & Sandretto, 2017; Uusimaki, 2013). "It has been recognized that mentoring is a complex role that requires the supervising teacher to model good teaching practice, stimulate reflection, be encouraging, provide counselling, and provide constructive daily feedback to the pre-service teacher" (Uusimaki, 2013, p. 46). The challenge of establishing a positive mentoring relationship begins at the start—when the mentors and mentees identify the roles and expectations for the mentoring experience (Rhoads et al., 2013; Uusimaki,

2013). Establishing clear roles at the start of the relationship is a crucial first step to entering into

a mentoring relationship that will be mutually beneficial for both participants (Rhoads et al,

2013; Uusimaki, 2013). Some mentoring tasks are specific functions of the teacher education

program, such as providing regular feedback or the opportunity for the student teacher to reflect

on practice (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005; McGee, 2019; Orland-Barak & Rachamim, 2018;

Range et al., 2013; Stanulis et al, 2019).

When mentoring tasks are directly connected to the teacher education program, clarity in

expectations is crucial, and training can become extremely useful for the mentors. Supervising

practitioners feel more successful in their roles when they are provided training from the

universities with which they are working. Training may come in the form of structured

professional development about feedback and reflective dialogue (Abramo & Campbell, 2019;

Becker et al., 2019; Curcio & Adams, 2019; McGee, 2019; Stanulis et al., 2019; Uusimaki,

2013) or, may simply be an overview of the university's expectations (Nielsen et al., 2017; Wang

& Ha, 2012). In many instances, adequate preparation for the tasks involved with working with a

student teacher helps supervising practitioners develop stronger mentoring relationships.

When is a Supervising Practitioner a Mentor?

While there are teacher education programs that refer to all supervising practitioners as

mentors, other organizations identify mentoring as something that may happen in some

relationships between supervising practitioners and student teachers, but does not happen in all

relationships (Jones et al., 2016). One of the more important aspects of a mentoring relationship

is the emotional support that comes from the supervising practitioner during what is typically a

very challenging time for the student teacher (Hobson et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2016).

Establishing an emotional relationship, however, takes time. Many supervising practitioners feel

that the time allotted for a semester-long field placement experience may not necessarily be enough to build both an effective task-driven relationship described in the preceding paragraphs as well as an emotional relationship (Curcio & Adams, 2019). Not all teacher education programs allot the time to develop both personal and professional bonds, as shown in Curcio and Adams' 2019 study, which described an established institute for supervising practitioners and student teachers that allowed the individuals time to get to know one another outside a classroom; any relationship that exists beyond what is prescribed by the teacher education program is crucial to mentoring.

> While "supervising" is an official term for what a classroom teacher does while a preservice teacher is in practicum, suggesting a task orientation, "mentoring" is a broader category of activity that includes what supervising teachers do to support the preservice teacher (Nielsen et al., 2017, p 346).

Mentors may be able to establish deeper levels of support through open communication and trust between themselves and their student teachers (Alemdağ, & Şimşek, 2017; Hennissen et al., 2011; Jones at al., 2016; Nielsen et al., 2017). Communication is crucial across all levels of the student teacher/supervising practitioner relationship, but the way supervising practitioners communicate with their student teachers may help to foster a stronger mentoring relationship (Jones et al., 2016; Orland-Barak & Rachamim, 2018). When supervising practitioners are not only clear in their communication, but also offer two-way communication and provide the student teacher time to share their own thoughts and insights, then the relationship is able to develop into a deeper, more trusting relationship (Orland-Barak & Rachamim, 2018).

The Importance of Communication

Clear communication and time to develop a relationship on a more personal level may also lead to a relationship which exhibits strong feelings of trust within a mentoring relationship (Jones et al., 2016). Since the relationship between mentor and mentee frequently involves the giving and receiving of feedback, it is crucial that this feedback is given in a way which promotes growth of the mentee in their new professional position (James et al., 2015, Runyan et al., 2017). "Mentorship requires generous listening, sharing of experience, instilling confidence, and gentle nudging, or directive counsel or imparting knowledge. The core of mentorship is always an open and trusting relationship" (Runyan et al., 2017, p. 508). Communication with the mentee should provide opportunities for each individual to reflect on themselves and the work that they are doing (James et al., 2015).

In student teaching, it is common that supervising practitioners will share ideas about teaching and classroom management with preservice teachers, but a supervising practitioner who takes on the role of mentor will also provide space for a student teacher to try their theories and take risks (Aderibigbe, 2013; Alemdağ, & Şimşek, 2017; Hennissen et al., 2011; Nesheim et al., 2014; Rhoads et al., 2013). Genuine trust and communication can develop if supervising practitioners can be open with the student teacher about their past challenges and failures (Abramo & Campbell, 2019; Hennissen et al., 2011). In this way, supervising practitioners may help the student teacher to feel less alone in the struggles that they may encounter in the classroom and both will gain the opportunity to learn from one another's experiences (Abramo & Campbell, 2019). Student teachers also identified mentors as individuals who showed enthusiasm for the relationship established in the classroom and for the profession of teaching itself (Alemdağ, & Şimşek, 2017; Hobson et al., 2012, Jones et al., 2016).

Collaboration, Connection, and Mutual Benefits

When the parties involved in a mentoring relationship are allowed to collaborate in a variety of settings and develop a meaningful connection within the relationship, then the relationship can be successful (Runyan et al., 2017). Meaningful connections may come in many forms, from quality feedback and communication which empowers the mentee, sharing information and resources, or through the process of self-reflection. (James et al., 2015; Ralston & Blakley, 2021; Runyan et al., 2017; Warhurst & Black, 2019). While professionalism is valued among mentees in professional settings, equally valued is a mentor who is warm, welcoming, and emotionally invested in the relationship (Bailey et al., 2016). Feelings of trust and meaningful connections may have more space to develop when individuals are comfortable opening up with their mentor, and when both parties recognize that the relationship is an opportunity for growth (Abramo & Campbell, 2019; Bailey et al., 2016; Hennissen et al., 2011; Jones et al., 2016; Orland-Barak & Rachamim, 2018; Runyan et al., 2017).

Trust and collaboration form the path toward a mentoring relationship that provides mutual benefits for both parties (Aderibigbe, 2013). When the supervising practitioner approaches the field experience as not only an opportunity to share knowledge but perhaps gain knowledge, then "mentoring is conceptualized as a collaborative process through which both teachers and student teachers can learn from each other to further develop their professional knowledge and practice" (Aderibigbe, 2013, p 70). When supervising practitioners and student teachers can work together in a collegial, collaborative environment, almost working as co-teachers, the relationship moves from one of supervision to mentorship (Aderibigbe, 2013; Palmer, 2018). In instances such as these, supervising practitioners find that they also benefit from the sharing of resources and being able to take the time to experiment with new ways of

working with their students. Mentoring takes place in moments where both the supervising

practitioner and student teacher can engage in talk surrounding the co-planning of lessons,

observing and debriefing about teaching practice, and analyzing student work (Stanulis et al.,

2019). Collegial discussions about student achievement provide opportunities for both parties to

reflect on the teaching practice (Abramo & Campbell, 2019; Palmer, 2018). In working together,

mentors can model how teachers work to anticipate student challenges and outcomes from a

lesson (Stanulis et al., 2019).

Virtual Mentoring

In most instances, mentoring takes place when two people are geographically close to one

another. As our society has become more global, however, more opportunities are presented that

allow for mentoring to happen across states or countries (Lasater et al., 2014). In professional

settings, mentoring is between a seasoned veteran (the mentor) and a younger, or novice

individual (the mentee), and can be identified as a relationship that provides coaching,

psychosocial support, and role modeling (de Janasz & Godshalk, 2013; Dorner et al., 2020).

Formal mentoring experiences help provide equal access to professional dialogue, and an

understanding of professional dispositions and the professional culture of a work or academic

environment. In some instances, virtual mentoring can help individuals connect with similar

interests and expertise across a significant distance (Dorner et al., 2020). Virtual mentoring,

sometimes referred to as e-mentoring or online mentoring, should meet these same standards, but

through the use of virtual platforms (de Janasz & Godshalk, 2013; Dorner et al., 2020; Wilbanks,

2014).

A virtual mentoring relationship can be set up in a variety of different ways. The

organization of the relationship takes into consideration several factors, including the physical

distance between mentor and mentee, the program prescribed, and the purpose of the mentoring.

Mentors may communicate through only virtual means without seeing one another; they may

meet face-to-face but, later on, supplement digital resources for face-to-face meetings, or the pair

may communicate solely through virtual resources that may mimic face-to-face meetings

(Wilbanks, 2014). Mentor and mentee pairs may communicate using synchronous

communication in real time through telephone or video conferencing software, using

asynchronous communication, such as email or time-delayed message boards, or a combination

of synchronous and asynchronous communication (Cothran et al., 2009; Wilbanks, 2014).

Benefits of Virtual Mentoring

One of the largest advantages of virtual mentoring is the ability to exist and be accessible

by anyone with the available technology, regardless of geographic location (Anisa & Olivarez,

2017; Cooper et al., 2014; Cothran et al., 2009; Dorner et al., 2020; Lasater et al., 2014;

Mollenkopf et al., 2017; Wilbanks, 2014). Given our current access to technology as a culture,

"distance need not be an impediment to developing a meaningful mentoring relationship"

(Lasater et al., 2014, p. 505). In some situations, it may not always be possible to pair a mentee

with a highly qualified mentor who works in the same office, school, or geographic area.

In education, it can be difficult to pair novice teacher mentees with mentors in specific

content areas. Teachers who teach subjects such as physical education, music, or art, may not

have another "counterpart" in their school building, and therefore may not have the opportunity

to work with a mentor who teaches the same subject (Cothran et al., 2009). Virtual mentoring,

used in this case, could allow for another teacher in the district to still work with the novice

teacher, sharing valuable content-specific insight and providing feedback while not in the same

school building (Cothran et al., 2009).

Bringing down geographic borders between mentors and mentees can also be helpful for teachers and teacher education programs looking to place students in rural districts with high attrition rates (Ussher, 2016). Virtual mentoring has been used to reduce feelings of isolation for preservice teachers who are working in field placement experiences far from their college or university. In these instances, mentoring comes from university staff who use the digital resources available to continue communication and provide feedback to preservice teachers working away from their university. In addition to the student not feeling isolated, the rural district may receive a stronger pool of new teacher candidates as a result of the teacher candidate's positive experience (Ussher, 2016). When both mentor and mentee are committed to the relationship, despite barriers provided by geography, the relationship will help boost the mentee's confidence and reduce feelings of isolation (Dorner et al., 2020; Harris et al., 2016; Mbuagbaw & Thabane, 2013; Ussher, 2016). Even online, mentors can still give professional advice, validate professional practice and decisions, and evaluate the mentee if the virtual mentoring program is set up with intention and training for the mentor (Dorner et al., 2020).

Individuals who have participated in virtual mentoring relationships have also noted that another benefit of the style of relationship is the flexibility that meeting online provides (Dorner et al., 2020; Fyfe & Dennett, 2012; Kernan et al., 2021; Mollica & Mitchell, 2013; Singh & Kumar, 2019; Wilbanks, 2014). Professional mentoring relationships that exist in professional spheres may be met with challenges if individuals are required to schedule face-to-face meetings based on a certain schedule (Singh & Kumar, 2019). Within a virtual mentoring program, individuals can communicate through asynchronous means, such as e-mail or message boards. Messages containing questions or feedback can be sent between mentor and mentee at any time during that individual's day when they can sit down and provide more meaningful

communication (Harris et al., 2016; Kernan et al., 2021; Welch, 2017). In Dorner et al.'s 2020

study, individuals who participated in an online mentoring program did not believe that

technology took away from the overall experience, describing the online mentoring platforms "to

be just transmitters or a means of communication, which do not affect the quality of mentoring

interactions" (p. 104).

Since feedback is so crucial to the mentor/mentee relationship, busy mentors and mentees

have also found success communicating through reflective journals. These journals, which can

be stored online for the access of all involved individuals, can provide both mentor and mentee

the opportunity to reflect on challenges and successes of the work day while also providing

another form of dialogue, where feedback can be given thoughtfully when each individual has

the chance to read and respond (Fyfe & Dennett, 2012; Merch 2015).

Synchronous Communication in Virtual Mentoring Relationships

Face-to-face communication within a mentoring partnership is beneficial and can still be

attainable, with effort, in virtual mentoring relationships. Face-to-face communication helps

individuals to better connect, especially in vulnerable moments that may arise during the

mentoring relationship (Lasater et al., 2014). While it is always preferred for mentors and

mentees to meet in person, the use of synchronous communication through platforms like video

conferencing software, chat rooms, or phone calls may help to fill some of these gaps that may

be present in a virtual-only mentoring relationship (Anisa & Olivarez, 2017; Lasater et al., 2014).

Trust and connectedness can be more easily established through virtual mentoring which

utilizes online office hours, video conferencing, and phone calls (Anisa & Olivarez, 2017;

Cothran et al, 2009; Lasater et al., 2014). In some instances, video conferencing may enhance the

relationship in ways that face-to-face communication may not be able to. Communicating over

video conferencing software may eliminate some of the hierarchal cues and patterns of speech

that may take place between mentors and mentees who are working together in the same

geographical space where the differences between veteran and novice may be more defined

(Cothran et al., 2009).

Communication Challenges Between Virtual Mentoring Pairs

As previously stated, an important aspect of the relationship between mentors and

mentees is communication between the individuals involved in the relationship. In a mentoring

relationship, clear communication provides many benefits. Communication allows for feelings of

trust to develop between mentors and mentees, reflection on practice, and the exchange of

feedback (Jones et al., 2016; Orland-Barak & Rachamim, 2018; Runyan et al., 2017).

A digital environment, however, can pose several challenges for establishing clear

communication. Depending on the schedules and availability of the mentor and mentee,

asynchronous communication may be the preferred method of communication. In these

instances, communication may be limited to emails or chatrooms where questions cannot be

answered as quickly or in the moment as in a traditional mentoring relationship (Cooper et al,

2014). Mentors working with mentees over virtual platforms may struggle with providing

guidance and feedback promptly, due to these asynchronous communication methods (Cooper et

al, 2014; Cothran et al., 2009; Fong et al., 2012; Womack et al., 2011). While this does not

necessarily mean the mentor will be ineffective, as feedback and reflection can still take place

based on recorded lessons, the lack of face-to-face time may cause hurdles for the developing

relationship (Fong et al., 2012).

Even with the numerous different methods of communication that can be utilized for

virtual mentoring pairs, miscommunication still provides the largest threat to virtual mentoring,

specifically if the relationship is reliant on asynchronous communication methods (Hart, 2016;

Shpigelman & Gil, 2012). While the use of words is important to communication, equally

important is being able to hear someone's tone of voice, see facial expressions, and other

nonverbal cues. When communicating via email, miscommunication can occur for a variety of

reasons. An individual may appear terse or overly formal. Additionally, questions asked may go

unanswered, which could potentially cause strain on the relationship (Shpigelman & Gill, 2012).

Since many pairs involved in virtual mentoring experiences may not meet in person,

developing a friendly relationship over email and other types of asynchronous communication

tools is still crucial. Time must still be made for the mentor/mentee pair to exchange personal

information and communicate not just about professional concerns and feedback (Adams &

Hemingway, 2014; Shpigelman & Gill, 2012). When initially engaging in a virtual mentoring

relationship, both mentor and mentee should agree on a style of communication that suits the

relationship and discuss norms revolving around potential moments of miscommunication (Hart,

2016; Wilbanks, 2014).

The Importance of Utilizing Technology and Time to Build the Relationship

Despite the challenges that can be presented by miscommunication, virtual mentoring can

prove useful for the mentor and mentee when there is both access to the technology and also a

solid understanding of how the technology works (Cothran et al., 2009; Fyfe & Dennett, 2012;

Welch 2017). When entering into a virtual mentoring relationship, access to the necessary

technology, whether that is access to a computer at home or a computer at work, a reliable

Internet connection, a phone, and any other hardware and software is essential (Cothran et al.,

2009).

Since the potential for miscommunication is higher when working together across virtual platforms, mentors and mentees need to be given time to develop a solid understanding of digital communication tools. When mentors and mentees can navigate the digital tools at their fingertips, miscommunication, and discomfort within the working relationship can potentially be avoided (Fyfe & Dennett, 2012; Welch, 2017). When mentors and mentees receive training, extra time, or resources to aid in learning about the technology that will be used, then they will be able to dive into relationships that can transcend the distance between individuals (Anisa & Olivarez; Fyfe & Dennett, 2012).

Virtual mentoring has the potential to provide the same benefits as a traditional, face-to-face mentoring experience (Cooper et al, 2014; Fyfe & Dennett, 2012; Mbuagbaw & Thebane, 2013; Mollica & Mitchell, 2013; Welch, 2017). These benefits, however, do not come without challenges. Matching of personalities and interests is crucial when mentors and mentees are not physically close to one another. When mentors and mentees are geographically distant from one another, it is even more important to establish trust and understanding, or else the mentee may cautiously heed a mentor's advice if they perceive the mentor to not be connected locally (Dorner et al, 2020). Even though the mentor may not be directly beside the mentee, when careful time and attention are paid to work on the relationship and understand the technology at hand, the mentee will be able to utilize support from the mentor (Mbuagbaw & Thebane, 2013).

Virtual mentoring can be a powerful tool in professional and academic circles, helping to reduce anxiety amongst students and novices, gain crucial skills, provide opportunities for feedback and reflection, and provide mentors with increased job satisfaction when given the chance to work with a mentor (Fyfe & Dennett, 2012; Mollica & Mitchell, 2013; Rand & Pajarillo, 2015).

Sociocultural Factors Affecting Mentoring Relationships

One challenge facing the teacher education field is a lack of diversity in both teacher education programs and the career as a whole. Students of color make up over 50% of the K-12 student body nationwide, but they are still taught by a teaching corps that is over 80% white. The benefits of diversifying the teaching profession are twofold. Students of color benefit from developing and maintaining relationships with teachers from similar racial and ethnic backgrounds and white students benefit from gaining other perspectives to prepare them for a more diverse working world (Plachowski, 2019).

Students of color face various barriers to success in K-12 education, higher education, and beyond. These barriers, which include microaggressions and feelings of isolation from their white peers can be mitigated in part by forming positive mentoring relationships in professional or academic environments (Apugo, 2017; Harris & Lee, 2019; Plachowski, 2019). Mentoring alone will not diversify the profession, but approaching the mentoring relationship with the specific needs of students of color may help students of color navigate the challenges presented by higher education and even early in their careers (Harris & Lee, 2019). This section of the literature review will explore ways in which mentors can have a more positive impact on mentees of color.

Recognizing Barriers and Challenges

As previously stated, some of the major challenges faced by individuals of color in professional settings include microaggressions, which may come from colleagues or superiors, feelings of isolation, taking on the role of "representative" of their race or ethnicity, and the avoidance of cross-cultural conversations (Apugo, 2017; Harris & Lee, 2019; Moore & Toliver, 2010; Plachowski, 2019; White-Davis et al., 2016). While mentoring has proven to be useful

across many different professions for the reasons discussed in prior sections, individuals of color

struggle to identify mentors in their academic and professional lives who come from similar

ethnic and racial backgrounds (Moore & Toliver, 2010). In heterogeneous pairings between

mentors and mentees, the mentor must make themselves aware of the unique challenges which

face people of color and other underrepresented groups in both professional and social settings

(Harris & Lee, 2019).

A number of sociocultural and gender differences can impact the mentoring relationship,

including race, ethnic background, culture, language, and gender (Bickel & Rosenthal, 2011).

Potential challenges can be related to communication differences, cultural understandings, and a

mentor's colorblindness (Bickel & Rosenthal, 2011; Harris & Lee, 2019). It is crucial for

mentors working with mentees from underrepresented groups to not only understand the

potential barriers to the mentoring relationship, but also anticipate challenges, and be willing to

have open conversations with their mentees (Bickel & Rosenthal, 2011; Harris & Lee, 2019).

Establishing Cross-Cultural Trust and Recognizing Bias

Cross-cultural trust can be challenging to achieve, but it is the most essential piece

involved in a white mentor establishing a strong relationship with a mentee of color. This is

especially crucial in the United States, where generations of systemic racism have created a large

gap in trust between Black and white individuals (Brown & Grothaus, 2019). It is important for

white mentors who are working with mentees of color to be aware of potential gaps in trust and

work to bridge those gaps during the mentoring relationships.

In many mentoring relationships, mentors are in a position of power due to their veteran

status within the organization. As the member of the dyad in the position of power, the mentor is

responsible for establishing a safe place for the mentee to not only grow and learn professionally,

but also be able to express and navigate personal challenges and growth (Bickel & Rosenthal,

2011). Cross-cultural conversations are challenging and mentors must address their own implicit

biases when working with people of color or individuals from other cultural, linguistic, or gender

groups (White-Davis et al., 2016). Teacher educators, especially, "must recognize the pervasive

intransigency of colorblindness and interest convergence as the most dangerous barrier for

desperately needed change in teacher preparation" (Plachowski, 2019, p. 16). While white

individuals may not view conversations about race as crucial to the mentoring process, these

conversations are important to fully understand the potential power structures and privilege that

could impact the relationship (Butz et al., 2019; McCoy et al. 2015; Plachowski, 2019).

Listening as an Act of Mentoring

Once mentors address their biases and begin to establish a safe space for their mentees,

acknowledging the potential tensions that may arise due to racial and cultural differences is a

crucial next step (Bickel & Rosenthal, 2011; Lanzi et al., 2019; White-Davis et al., 2016).

Discussions regarding race must happen when individuals are placed into a heterogeneous

mentoring relationship and these discussions must be approached with compassion,

understanding and empathy (Harris & Lee, 2019). Mentees, especially those of color, want to be

heard and understood. Mentors should be prepared to listen to the challenges which mentees may

face and understand that they may make mistakes in understanding their position of power,

privilege, and implicit bias. Mistakes should be used as opportunities to learn more about power

and privilege and the mentor should be then prepared to use this privilege to advocate for their

mentees, should the need arise (Harris & Lee, 2019).

> An advocate is an intercessor, one who pleads on behalf of a less powerful person. Their
>
> interest must be genuine, and they must be willing and committed to assertively

addressing situations and people when the SOC [student of color] has been unfairly

treated (Harris & Lee, 2019, p 107).

Discussions about race in the mentoring relationship should be ongoing and exist in

addition to the other important conversations that occur in mentoring relationships, such as

conversations about goals and conversations that involve feedback (Bickel & Rosenthal, 2011).

The Threat of Colorblindness and Importance of Cultural Competency

Perhaps one of the biggest threats to effective cross-cultural mentoring and

heterogeneous mentoring relationships is a mentor who adopts a colorblind attitude to race and

ethnicity (Butz et al., 2019; Byars-Winston et al., 2019; McCoy et al. 2015). It may be true that

white mentors do not feel that conversations regarding race have a place in conversations with

their mentees. Mentees, however, may perceive this colorblindness as the mentor not truly

understanding an important aspect of the mentees' identity (Butz et al., 2019).

Of course, mentors who may be reluctant to discuss matters of race and ethnicity with

their mentees may have a number of different reasons for feeling this reluctance. The mentor's

avoidance of these topics may not be intentional. Many mentors may not wish to treat students

differently based on race or ethnicity or fear being perceived as racist or biased in their treatment

of students (McCoy et al., 2015). In other instances, mentors may not feel that they have the

knowledge to adequately address race with their mentees (Byars-Winston et al., 2019). Evidence

suggests that when mentees feel heard and understood within the relationship, and this includes

addressing how race and ethnicity differences may impact the relationship, then the relationship

is more likely to be successful. It is, therefore, beneficial to provide mentors with the tools and

knowledge necessary to build the cultural competency necessary to engage in these challenging

discussions (Bickel & Rosenthal, 2011; Brown & Grothaus, 2019; Butz et al., 2019; Byars-

Winston et al., 2019). Raising awareness of cultural issues that may impact the mentoring

relationship may help mentors to feel more comfortable addressing the challenges and better

serving their mentees.

While most mentees of color may feel more comfortable with mentors from the same

racial group, if the mentoring is taking place in a university setting, faculty of color are still

underrepresented in postsecondary education. Mentors from diverse racial and cultural

backgrounds have the experience necessary to help mentees of color navigate professional

challenges specifically related to race and ethnicity (Alegría et al., 2019). In instances where this

is not possible, however, white mentors need to be prepared to embrace the diversity within the

relationship, advocate for mentees needs, and establish a trusting and open relationship where

mentees of color can feel most supported (Alegría et al., 2019; Bickel & Rosenthal, 2011; Brown

& Grothaus, 2019; Harris & Lee, 2019).

The Field Placement Experience

Spending time in schools is an essential component to the teacher preparation process.

Field experiences can take a number of different forms. Shorter field placements may be directly

connected to coursework and involve observation, and longer field placements allow for more

time for the preservice or student teachers to practice teaching (Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012).

While individual teacher preparation programs dictate and require a number of different field

placement experiences, the type of field placement experience that this literature review will

focus on are longer, 12-15-week, field placement experiences that conclude the teacher

preparation program (Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012).

Important Lessons from Diverse Field Placement Experiences

While in the field, preservice teachers are allowed to connect what they have covered in the classroom to practice (Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012; Singh, 2017). Field experiences have been shown to reduce preservice teacher anxiety about teaching, help preservice teachers make real-world connections with educational theory, build confidence, add to preservice teachers' feelings of self-efficacy, enhance knowledge of content and pedagogy, provide more awareness of the preservice teachers' strengths and limitations, and promote deeper understanding of professional teacher attributes (Singh, 2017; Ralston & Blakley, 2021). Self-efficacy, which develops from having successful experiences and overcoming obstacles is one of the most significant benefits of field placement experiences. In the field, preservice teachers can benefit from opportunities to work with struggling learners in challenging conditions or in diverse. These opportunities allow preservice teachers to find success working with different populations of students in order to build the critical self-efficacy needed when they are beginning teachers (Raymond-West & Snodgrass Rangel, 2020).

Student teachers develop invaluable knowledge about teaching while in field placement experiences. Included in this knowledge is an understanding of the communities in which they teach, and a better understanding of the realities of the teaching profession (Singh, 2017; Ralston & Blakley, 2021). Through observing and working with supervising practitioners and other educators they are able to gain a variety of knowledge of pedagogical practices and classroom management. Positive field experiences, where student teachers are given opportunities to receive feedback, write and create lessons, and receive continuous support, are connected with positive feelings about teaching full-time after the practicum ends (Ralston & Blakley, 2021). Time with students in the classroom is also beneficial to student teachers.

When student teachers in field placement experiences can get to know their students, they develop a better understanding of students with disabilities as well as students in urban or other underrepresented communities (Kalchman, 2015; Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012; Singh, 2017). Even though student teachers may be nervous about working with students in urban environments, being given the chance to get to know the needs of students and work directly with them can help to dispel some of the nervousness beginning teachers feel in urban schools (Kalchman, 2015). In these situations, it is not only pedagogical practices which help student teachers grow, but student teachers also gain critical understanding about the social and emotional needs of all students (Kalchman, 2015).

Self-Efficacy, Confidence, and Reflection in Field Placements

Field placements play a major role in the development of self-efficacy for student teachers (Raymond-West & Snodgrass Rangel, 2020; Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012). Student teachers leave field placement experiences having completed both academic and non-academic tasks that take place in schools. Some experiences that a field placement may provide involve interacting with parents, school administration, and other educators as members of a teaching team (Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012; Singh, 2017). When student teachers are able to gain self-efficacy in field placement experiences, they may enter the teaching field more willing to teach in more challenging schools and situations, take risks and be innovative in their instructional practice, and may have higher retention rates (Raymond-West & Snodgrass Rangel, 2020).

Field placement experiences also provide the opportunity for preservice teachers to engage in reflective practice. Dewey had strong beliefs surrounding reflective practice for educators, believing that it was important for teachers to engage in reflection not only on teaching itself but also on their personal beliefs about teaching and the students with whom they

work (Kalchman, 2015). Preservice teachers need to be able to engage in reflection that examines both their pedagogical practice and the social constructs that impact the classroom. This practice is important in all classrooms, but a strong reflective practice can be especially powerful in urban classroom environments. In working in urban classrooms, preservice teachers can learn from their classroom experiences and better understand the backgrounds of their students (Kalchman, 2015).

Field Placement Criticisms and Critiques

Even though field placements provide numerous benefits for preservice teachers, field placements still face some criticism. Those who are critical of the field placement experience cite that there is a disconnect between the coursework being taught and the experiences in which student teachers can engage (Hales et al., 2019; Mitka et al., 2014). Traditional field placement experiences are criticized for being established with a lack of intentionality in how preservice teachers can apply coursework to the field. Additionally, traditional field placements are criticized for both preparing and selecting supervising practitioners to work with student teachers. "At present, too many aspects of clinical education are essentially left to chance—the selection of mentor teachers, appropriate matching of triad members, defining roles and expectations within the triad, the construction of interpersonal relationships, to name a few" (Hart, 2020, p. 22).

Even with these criticisms, there is a current push for more field experiences for student teachers (Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012). In order to provide more intentionally aligned field experiences for student teachers, it may be important for teacher education programs to take time to outline and communicate the expectations for all parties involved in the field placement.

Expectations of Student Teachers and Supervising Practitioners

While in a field placement experience, student teachers and supervising practitioners work closely with one another. Just as field placements vary, so do relationships between supervising practitioners and preservice teachers, depending on the type of experience and personalities of those involved. Supervising practitioners may work differently with student teachers, based on individual expectations. For example, one may find "the roll-out-the-ball teacher, the teacher who cannot relinquish control of their class, the teacher who disappears, the teacher who does not communicate their expectations, and the teacher who expects too much" (Johnson, 2011, p. 14-15). Regardless of the length of the field placement experience, one of the most crucial pieces is that each party in the relationship establishes and communicates clear expectations for the other (Hart, 2020). The formal roles of the individuals may vary, depending on the teacher education program and state requirements, but it is crucial that the individuals involved define their roles in the relationship ahead of time, since strong relationships between student teachers and supervising practitioners rely on clear visions and expectations (Darling-Hammond, 2014; Hart, 2020).

Formal expectations for student teachers and supervising practitioners are often defined by the teacher education program. In addition to these, individuals involved in field placements may have their own assumptions and expectations for themselves and one another. Communication and conversation remain the most important parts of the relationship, in order to have these expectations met during the field placement experience (Hart, 2020; Land 2018).

What Student Teachers Want

Field placement experiences are seen as an opportunity for the student teacher to link theories learned in education courses with practice in a classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2014;

Montecinos et al., 2011). Since the field placement, ideally, provides significant hours in the classroom for the student teacher, they enter into this experience with certain expectations of what they will learn. Student teachers in field experiences want to learn about classroom management and interactions with students (Montecinos et al., 2011). School-based experiences that provide opportunities to work with students and identify ways in which to engage students' learning are of great value to student teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2014; Montecinos et al., 2011). Student teachers expect to obtain this knowledge through careful observation of the classroom, working with students, and practicing teaching (Montecinos et al., 2011).

Supervising practitioners expect to fill a number of roles while working with student teachers. "A successful student teaching experience is more likely present when student teachers have effective and appropriate supervision, support, and encouragement from cooperating teachers who utilize effective supervision strategies" (Johnson, 2011, p. 14). The role of the supervising practitioner may be a multi-faceted one. It may be expected that the supervising practitioner act as a model teacher, mentor, evaluator, and collaborator (Johnson, 2011). Supervising practitioners should enter the field placement experience with an open mind, ready to both share experiences, ideas, and materials and also learn from the student teacher in their classroom (Guise et al., 2017; Johnson, 2011; Thompson & Schademan, 2019). Since many teacher education programs expect that the student teacher will gradually take over teaching through the duration of the field placement experience, supervising practitioners' roles will shift throughout the field placement from that of a model teacher to that of a co-teacher (Guise et al., 2017; Johnson, 2011; Thompson & Schademan, 2019).

Co-Teaching Within the Field Placement Experience

While not a formal expectation, the gradual release of responsibility from the supervising practitioner to the student teacher may result in an emerging relationship where the pair can work together as co-teachers. Both the student teacher and supervising practitioner benefit when a supervisory relationship can turn into one where the pair are working more as colleagues. (Thompson & Schademan, 2019). When the field placement relationship is more like a co-teaching relationship, the pair may decide to split up the teaching workload, co-plan, and co-instruct during lessons. (Guise et al., 2017). A student teacher who has been introduced to a class as a co-teacher in this way can learn valuable lessons about professionalism related to working through differences, sharing authority, co-mentorship or reciprocal mentoring, coaching, and a deeper immersion into teaching as a whole (Thompson & Schademan, 2019). When student teachers are able to be seen as a teaching partner by the supervising practitioner, they receive real-world experiences that will benefit them in their first few years of teaching (Johnson, 2011).

What Supervising Practitioners Gain

Field placements are times of growth and learning, not just for the student teacher, but also the supervising practitioner. Both individuals should enter the experience with expectations to learn, share, and reflect on that learning (Aderibigbe, 2013; Johnson, 2011; Land, 2018; Thompson & Schademan, 2019). Since student teachers enter field placements with the knowledge that they have gained from their university courses, they should be allowed to try out pedagogical methods they have learned in their classes to make connections between theory and practice (Darling-Hammond, 2014; Johnson, 2011; Rhoads et al., 2013). In turn, these teaching opportunities are followed by feedback and critical discussions about teaching and student learning (Johnson, 2011; Thompson & Schademan, 2019). Supervising practitioners are often

prepared and expect to share resources and ideas with supervising practitioners, and should

encourage student teachers to share new ideas or approaches to teaching and learning

(Aderibigbe, 2013). "The relationship between ST and CT can have a considerable impact on

both the mentoring that occurs in the student teaching experience and the overall experience of

both parties" (Rhoads et al., 2013, p. 109). Since the feedback between student teachers and

supervising practitioners should be ongoing, there are many opportunities to reflect and learn

about both classroom ideas and ideas beyond the classroom itself, such as how social justice

plays a role in the classroom (Land, 2018). When the relationship between the two individuals is

strong, both can learn, reflect, and improve their practice while working together.

Distance Learning

Distance learning is defined as both formal and informal learning with the aid of digital

communication and media platforms. Online platforms are used to lessen the physical distance

between the students and the educators through audio, live and prerecorded video, and other

computer technologies (Costa et al., 2020; Kim 2020; Rice, 2009).

Distance learning can take a variety of formats. Educators may use synchronous,

asynchronous, or a hybrid of both of these models. Synchronous distance learning models

require students and educators to be connected in real time for instruction. (Costa et al., 2020;

Kim, 2020, Rice, 2009). When prepared for accordingly:

> Synchronous learning enables spontaneous interaction and immediate feedback to
>
> students because of the utility of video, audio, and text communication. Research on
>
> synchronous learning has indicated that there is little difference between video
>
> conferencing and traditional classroom lectures because of the level of engagement that
>
> can take place in this environment (Mader & Ming, 2015, p. 110).

By contrast, asynchronous models do not require that students be connected in real time to one another or to their instructors. Asynchronous models typically utilize message boards and other digital resources to connect students and instructors with one another (Chen et al., 2020; Costa et al., 2020).

In recent years, distance, or online learning, has played an increasingly significant role in post-secondary education, but there is not much research on its use in the K-12 school setting, the setting on which this study focused (Chang & Kim, 2020). At the post-secondary level, the rise in demand for online and hybrid learning options has called for instructors to examine the integrity of online instruction, making sure that online classes are meeting students' needs in the same fashion as traditional, face-to-face, classes.

Establishing Effective Instruction in Online Spaces

Just as in the traditional learning environment, human connection and opportunities to collaborate on work are important to help students feel a part of their learning environments (Besser et al., 2020; Mader & Ming, 2015). It has been suggested that, at the post-secondary level, the use of videoconferencing software can help instructors to achieve some of the connections that are sometimes lost in asynchronous models of online learning (Mader & Ming, 2015).

In asynchronous models, creating connections with and between students are equally important. Asynchronous online instructors are encouraged to build a safe, respectful community among students. It is helpful to establish norms and guidelines for communication in all learning environments, but especially online environments, since the anonymity tied to working behind a computer screen can result in an increase of aggressive verbal discourse in other online environments (Chen et al., 2020).

Distance Learning in the K-12 Classroom

Distance learning in K-12 schools has grown in recent years, though it is still not as widely used or researched as online learning in post-secondary schools (Huett et al., 2008; Rice, 2009). K-12 models for distance learning may be site-based, meaning that the courses take place within the walls of a traditional brick-and-mortar school building or they may be non-site-based and take the form of virtual high schools or charter schools (Huett et al., 2008). Distance learning can be beneficial for K-12 schools because it allows schools to provide better to qualified teachers in areas of the country that experience teacher shortages and provide access to courses that may not otherwise be offered due to scheduling or qualified faculty. K-12 distance learning can also provide learning opportunities for students who may be sick, students who require flexible schooling hours due to employment, or students who are incarcerated. Parents also cite that distance learning provides them with and more opportunities to be involved with their students' education (Huett et al., 2008).

Online learning options for K-12 students are not without their own sets of criticisms and challenges, however. Some of the biggest concerns for online K-12 educators engaging in distance learning are academic accountability, student attendance, accessibility and equity for students engaging in the online coursework, effective course and instructional design, and adequate funding to run these virtual experiences (Huett et al., 2008; Rice, 2009). Where online learning can be beneficial for young adults, younger K-12 students who require more parent supervision, who benefit more from hands-on and collaborative learning experiences, and who may have a limited understanding of technology may struggle with distance learning methods (Kim, 2020).

Just as in traditional face-to-face learning, professional development and clear instructional design are crucial to the effectiveness of the courses being offered to students (Rice, 2009). Educators and instructors in distance learning environments need the assistance which can come from professional development and instructional designers if they want to most effectively utilize pedagogy to deliver content. "Expecting teachers to be instructors, content experts, distance education instructional designers, and technology experts, in addition to their other responsibilities, is asking too much" (Rice, 2009, p. 65). More research, adequate funding, and time is necessary to most firmly establish distance learning options for K-12 students (Huett et al., 2008; Rice, 2009). The COVID-19 pandemic brought conversations about distance learning in the K-12 environment to a forefront. Teacher education programs would benefit from providing future educators with opportunities to discuss distance learning pedagogy and methodology before they enter their practicum experiences (Kim, 2020).

Distance Learning During COVID-19

On March 13, 2020, a national emergency was declared due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, many in-person events of 50 people or more were canceled or postponed. That number that would later be reduced to gatherings of 10 or more. These cancellations and postponements included face-to-face courses on university campuses and in public K-12 schools (Garris & Fleck, 2020; Moser et al., 2020). Educators found themselves in the challenging position of identifying ways to connect with students. In many places, teachers were asked to make a quick transition to distance learning. While distance learning was not a new concept in the education world, many aspects of distance learning were new to educators who had to suddenly learn completely new methods of teaching (Kaden, 2020). "This unplanned and unprecedented disruption to society and education changed the work of many teachers suddenly

and in many aspects. School buildings were closed, and schooling migrated to an online

environment" (Kaden, 2020, p. 1). Typically, students who actively choose online learning

benefit from the design and curricula of the course. The pandemic, however, created a situation

where students were forced into online learning, resulting in challenges for both students and

educators (Besser et al., 2020).

Online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic is not the same as the distance learning

described earlier in this section. Due to the abrupt nature of the transition, educators did not have

the time to implement best online instructional practices and did not feel that they had adequate

training to best meet the needs of learners (Anand & Bachmann, 2021; Garris & Fleck, 2020;

Gierhart, 2023; Moser et al., 2020). The emergency nature of the switch to online instruction

made learning difficult for many learners and their teachers, with teachers struggling to manage

the demands of a sudden pedagogical shift (Anand & Bachmann, 2021; Garris & Fleck, 2020;

Moser et al., 2020). Educators were required to use a variety of different tools to meet student

needs during the pandemic. For some educators, these new technologies were difficult to

effectively use and navigate (Gierhart, 2023). While some schools opted for synchronous

courses, meeting online using Zoom or other video conferencing software, others opted for

asynchronous learning experiences (Kaden, 2020; Moser et al., 2020).

Reaching and connecting with students during this time was challenging for many

educators, due to both a significant divide in digital resources available to students, as well as

students' mental health challenges related to the pandemic (Besser et al., 2020; Kaden, 2020;

Moser et al., 2020; Ralston & Blakley, 2021). University students learning in online

environments during the pandemic reported higher levels of stress, isolation, and negative

moods, connected to the uncertainty of the global pandemic (Besser et al., 2020; Ralston &

Blakley, 2021). As a result of this, and the fact that they did not necessarily choose to take online

classes during the spring 2020 semester, many students in the Besser et al. (2020) study indicated

that the quality of their courses decreased after the switch to online learning due to the pandemic.

Students considered their courses to be less enjoyable, and students felt that they would have

learned more had they been able to complete the semester in a face-to-face course, as planned.

Despite the challenges students experienced related to course engagement, they noted that

educators during this time became more flexible and willing to meet students' needs (Besser et

al., 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted challenges surrounding digital equity and the

social-emotional support of students (Kaden, 2020; Moser et al., 2020). Students in rural and

low-income areas struggled with access to digital resources like a fast Wi-Fi connection, access

to technology devices, and learning support from parents at home. As a result of these barriers,

students from low-income families struggled to consistently connect and engage with online

courses. Schools used what resources they could to help create productive learning environments

while students were at home, but still found challenges in creating these online connections

(Kaden, 2020; Moser et al., 2020). With limited training in online teaching best practices and a

short amount of time to re-envision their teaching practices, many educators shifted the focus of

their online instruction away from academics and toward the social-emotional wellbeing of their

students (Moser et al., 2020).

The Future of Distance Learning

Using the COVID-19 pandemic as a model, the future of teacher education may focus

more on online best practices, course design, and learning (Moser et al., 2020). "Teacher

education programs need to focus more extensively on the development of skills for teaching

with technology" (Kim, 2020, p. 154). With education policies that focus specifically on course design and delivery, best online teaching practices, accountability, bridging the access gap, professional development for teachers of record, accreditation, and educational technologies, more teachers may develop the confidence necessary to teach online for the purposes of both an ever-changing educational landscape as well as preparation for future emergency online teaching (Moser et al., 2020; Rice, 2009). While it is still inadvisable to change the delivery of a course mid-semester or school year, with better preparation for online learning, many of the learning concerns outlined in this section could be avoided, should emergency online teaching become necessary again (Garris & Fleck, 2020).

Student Teaching During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Student teachers had an incredibly unique perspective on the COVID-19 pandemic because they faced the challenges of distance learning as both college students and teachers (Ralston & Blakley, 2021). Student teachers cited that they found completing their student teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic challenging, especially because they spent a full school day teaching online only to attend classes in the evening, which were also meeting online. Students themselves, they also sympathized with the students in their classrooms. Like classroom teachers, student teachers, too, struggled with work/life balance. They were concerned with how the school closures were going to impact their field placements and, in turn, their teaching certifications and future careers (Delmarter & Ewart, 2020). Across the country, there was a great deal of uncertainty over how student teachers would complete the necessary hours for graduation and licensure, especially when the first described temporary school closures became permanent (Delmarter & Ewart, 2020). Student teachers explained that they felt they were under a great deal of pressure to not only teach and attend their college courses, but also hold part-time

jobs, and, in some cases, contribute to family finances when parents lost their wages (Delmarter & Ewart, 2020; Ralston & Blakley, 2021).

Student teachers were completing their field placement experiences in classrooms that were unlike the classrooms they were prepared for through their university coursework (Delmarter & Ewart, 2020; Gierhart, 2023). They shared frustrations that they were unsure of how to adequately prepare to teach online (Delmarter & Ewart, 2020). In addition to learning digital pedagogy, student teachers were also forced to find different ways to engage and build relationships with students online. Student teachers noted that it was difficult to be sure that students felt connected with the class during distance learning (Gierhart, 2023; Varela & Desiderio, 2021). In addition, a Gierhart study in 2023 found that the student teacher interviewed did not feel confident in her classroom management abilities or in her ability to build community within the classroom, due to her student teaching experience during the fall of 2020. A study of student teachers in Texas during the spring 2020 also discovered that student teachers felt that they missed out on teaching experiences due to the shift to online learning. The lack of time in the classroom resulted in student teachers questioning their own preparedness for teaching full-time (Varela & Desiderio, 2021). With so many missed opportunities in the field placement, student teachers also wondered how the disrupted experience would impact their marketability as new teachers entering the job market (Delmarter & Ewart, 2020).

For support during the semester, student teachers turned to both their university communities and their cooperating teachers (Ralston & Blakley, 2021). They appreciated university professors who were flexible and understanding of the unprecedented challenges that they were facing. Additionally, they found community with their cohorts of other student teachers who were all navigating the same challenges together (Ralston & Blakley, 2021).

Student teachers also found comfort when working with university staff who validated their fears and concerns and gave them time to process the semester's challenges (Delmarter & Ewart, 2020).

In their placement classrooms, they found comfort with their cooperating teachers, as well. They found that, since the classroom teachers were also new to online teaching, they were engaging in more collaboration with their student teachers (Gierhart, 2023; Ralston & Blakley, 2021; Varela & Desiderio, 2021). First hand, the student teachers witnessed veteran teachers as learners—exploring new technologies and pedagogy for the benefit of their students (Varela & Desiderio, 2021). In this regard, there was safety in trying new things, potentially failing, and trying again to gain independence and experience in the classroom (Ralston & Blakley, 2021; Varela & Desiderio, 2021). The student teachers engaged in reflection with their cooperating teachers, frequently asking themselves what could be done better when working with their students in online or hybrid environments (Gierhart, 2023).

One of the benefits of student teaching during COVID-19 was the access student teachers had to different digital teaching tools (Gierhart, 2023). Student teachers were allowed to experiment with different ways to engage students digitally, gaining useful skills for both online and traditional learning settings (Gierhart, 2023; Ralston & Blakley, 2021). Student teachers were quick to learn about the technology necessary to engage with students online (Gierhart, 2023). They gained valuable experience working with the technology they had access to through their student teaching districts that they felt would be helpful in the future (Varela & Desiderio, 2021).

On the contrary, however, other student teachers expressed challenges with the district technology tools. Many digital teaching tools, like Google Classroom, require school district

email addresses, and student teachers who were not in the district's IT systems did not have

access to some of the educational technology (Varela & Desiderio, 2021). Student teachers'

cooperating teachers had varying levels of understanding and expertise in classroom technology,

making it difficult for some student teachers to learn how to use the technology effectively

(Varela & Desiderio, 2021). Some veteran teachers lacked proper preparation to engage in online

learning. These veterans struggled with designing digital lessons, which, in turn, impacted their

student teachers. The student teachers were also trying to implement and design digital lessons

without confident guidance from their supervising practitioners (Gierhart, 2023; Varela &

Desiderio, 2021).

Ralston & Blakley (2021) found that student teachers felt that "the pandemic actually

provided an opportunity of sorts for the student teacher to be on a level playing field with their

CT, to be seen as a peer and colleague rather than a student and mentee" (p. 70). Since the

veteran teachers paired with the student teachers in this study also did not have experience with

teaching online, student teachers shared that the pandemic provided more opportunities for the

relationship to be one of professionals working together to solve problems and work for the

benefit of the students (Delmarter & Ewart, 2020; Gierhart, 2023; Ralston & Blakley, 2021;

Varela & Desiderio, 2021). One student teacher noted, "my cooperating teacher and I are

experiencing the same thing. We both had to learn this new way of teaching" (Varela &

Desiderio, 2021, p. 6). In some instances, student teachers were highly involved in working with

their cooperating teachers as they learned new teaching pedagogy, and expressed appreciation

for the opportunity to see how teachers problem-solved (Varela & Desiderio, 2021).

Human Response to Crisis

Defining and Managing Crisis at the Community Level

A crisis is what occurs when there is a breakdown or disruption in normal life for a community or society (Gómez, 2015). Crisis can come in a number of forms, but the disruption is often one that is human-made, rather than a disaster, which is typically done by a force of nature (Cartier & Taylor, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic presented a number of challenges for people worldwide, as governments began to impose a number of sweeping restrictions to help to mitigate the spread of the virus. Restrictions and quarantine requirements for both domestic and international travel, limits on large in-person gatherings, the closure of non-essential businesses, stay-at-home orders, school closures, and restrictions on restaurants and bars posed challenges for individuals as they navigated their concerns related to the virus (Kong & Prinz, 2020; Schudy et al, 2020; Scott et al., 2021). These restrictions, while backed by suggestions from the CDC, were not imposed without major effect on individual citizens. In response to the restrictions, individuals expressed a number of concerns, including fear of unemployment, blurred boundaries between work and home life, social and academic concerns for children who were learning remotely, and the impacts of the virus itself on personal and family health (Kong & Prinz, 2020; Schudy et al, 2020; Scott et al., 2021).

Communication and Crisis Management

In a crisis, community leaders are forced to operate and make difficult decisions in uncertain environments (Cartier & Taylor, 2020). While the decisions made by these individuals can be limiting for the general public, crisis situations may also make individuals more willing to suspend their individual freedoms and rights (Gómez, 2015). Governing bodies will typically make decisions based on suggestions from experts, with the intention of returning rights and

freedoms in the recovery phase of crisis management (Gómez, 2015). In these situations, when community stress is high, communication from leaders is all the more important.

Managing a crisis, such as the public response to the COVID-19 pandemic, requires leaders to communicate and build up community resilience to the uncertainty (Cartier & Taylor, 2020; Gigliotti, 2016). Communication from leaders should be calm, consistent, and focused in order to best build resilience in the community, utilizing as many modes of communication as possible, such as hotlines, social media, and public signage to get messages across (Cartier & Taylor, 2020, Gigliotti, 2016). A more local response is preferred by many communities over a national response because local communication focuses on a community's unique needs. In addition, responding to crisis in a local community helps a community to feel more united, with more individuals willing to help out others (Cartier & Taylor, 2020).

Individual Emotional Response to Crisis

While communities use expert guidance to respond to and mitigate a crisis, individuals also experience their own emotional challenges and respond to crises accordingly. While research on coping with emotional challenges suggests that individuals' coping strategies should be flexible and adaptable to the situation, personality traits may also impact how individuals respond emotionally to crises (Bonanno et al., 2004; Prentice et al., 2020). For example, different personality types perceive stressful situations in different ways, and will thus react differently when attempting to cope with the situation. Individuals with more open personality types may respond in creative, more innovative ways, perhaps even viewing the crisis as a new challenge that must be conquered. On the other hand, individuals with more neurotic personalities are more sensitive to stressful environments and may be more likely to cope with avoidance or indulge in negative behaviors like drinking or drug use (Prentice et al., 2020).

Gender and age may also play a role in how an individual both perceives and reacts to a crisis situation, due to different perceived roles in society (Rana et al., 2021). Women's roles in society as caretakers of families resulted in increased concerns about infection and spread of COVID-19 as potential dangers to their family lives. As a result of these concerns, women wanted more information communicated to them about the virus and the methods being used to mitigate the spread (Prentice et al., 2020; Rana et al., 2021). Women coped with the stress of the pandemic by focusing on educating themselves about the safety practices necessary to reduce the spread of the disease for the sake of their families and their communities (Rana et al., 2021). In addition, when they found they were struggling emotionally, women were more likely to seek support from outside sources (Prentice et al., 2020). Men, on the other hand, coped with the pandemic by focusing more intently on work and activities, while also having a higher tendency to engage in more avoidant coping strategies (Prentice et al., 2020; Rana et al., 2021).

Cognitive biases surrounding risk perception can directly impact individuals' ability to cope with a crisis situation (Schudy et al., 2020). According to Schudy et al. (2020), the social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic response as well as inconsistent communication from governing bodies at the start of the pandemic had a significant influence on individuals' cognitive biases. During the COVID-19 pandemic, avoidant coping strategies and less emotional regulation were connected with these cognitive biases (Schudy et al., 2020).

Flexibility may be crucial to successfully working through the emotions presented by a crisis situation (Bonanno et al., 2004; Cartier & Taylor, 2020). A fluid and flexible response to crisis can lend itself to resilience, especially as society moves towards recovery (Cartier & Taylor, 2020). Those who can adapt to new situations easily may also find themselves better able to cope with ever-changing landscapes of crises (Bonanno et al., 2004). According to Everett et

al. (2020), even the community members who struggle with flexibility and resilience may be able to cope with the challenges presented by a crisis. If community leaders can communicate, educate, and empower a community to work together, then the community can help one another navigate the hardships at hand. As a community navigates hardships together, the community's collective resilience increases, helping individuals to better weather the storm (Everett et al., 2020).

Coping with the COVID-19 Crisis in Schools

Schools faced significant challenges when forced to close to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. For teachers and other school staff, the closure of schools to in-person learning brought on new challenges as they switched to teaching from home (MacIntyre et al., 2020; Schudy et al., 2020). Educators shared that reaching students in the virtual space was challenging. Teachers found that students were either not participating in classes, or turning their cameras off entirely, making it difficult for educators to check in and engage (Ralston & Blakley, 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers cited that they struggled with blurred boundaries between work and home life, sharing work space with significant others, caring for their children while teaching, and frequent changes in expectations (MacIntyre et al., 2020; Ralston & Blakley, 2021). With professional challenges combined with the personal challenges of lockdowns, health concerns, restricted services, and uncertainty over when life would return to normal, teachers were under immense pressure during the pandemic (MacIntyre et al., 2020; Ralston & Blakley, 2021; Schudy et al., 2020).

Teachers were not the only members of school communities struggling with stay-at-home orders. In a study by Scott et al. (2021), students reported school-specific challenges across academics and social connections. Students suffered academically, stating that they struggled

with maintaining a productive work schedule due to being unaccustomed to online learning (Ralston & Blakley, 2021; Scott et al., 2021). The online learning expectations, time management, staying motivated, and feeling as though teachers were assigning too much homework were other concerns expressed by students in the Scott et al. (2021) study. Socially, students missed their friends and feared falling out of contact with their friends while social distancing. Like their teachers, they also were concerned about how the virus would impact their family members' health and overall well-being (Scott et al., 2021). Some students struggled with life at home while their parents worked from home and others were concerned about family members who were essential employees and still leaving the house to work (Ralston & Blakley, 2021; Scott et al., 2021).

In addition to relying on schools for academics and socialization, schools also provide essential services for students. Students of lower socioeconomic statuses frequently rely on schools for subsidized meals, mental health services, and other healthcare needs. An inability to access these resources at school was a noted challenge for students as they navigated online learning (Scott et al., 2021).

Dealing with these previously mentioned stressors required both educators and students to use coping mechanisms to navigate the challenges of COVID-19. Despite the many challenges of the pandemic, school systems adapted. "There has been an expectation that teachers will simply carry on and do their best by adapting" (MacIntyre et al., 2020, p. 2). In an exploration of language teachers who were teaching online during the pandemic, many shared that their coping mechanisms were more active, rather than avoidant. Levels of stress, however, impacted how these teachers coped with the challenges, with teachers who were facing more challenges,

anxiety, or anger having a greater tendency to engage in avoidant coping mechanisms (MacIntyre et al., 2020).

Should future crises impact schools in the same way that COVID-19 did, it may be beneficial to remember that communication from community leadership, better trauma-informed resources, and community coalitions to assist those who are suffering financially are essential to help individuals cope in times of crisis (Everett et al., 2020; Gigliotti, 2016). Since many school-related challenges stem from changing expectations and a loss of control in the work environment, remembering the impact of both communication and flexibility may help schools better navigate major crises more successfully (Cartier & Taylor, 2020; MacIntyre et al., 2020).

Theoretical Frameworks

Self-Efficacy

Defining Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy relates to individuals' perceptions about their ability to be successful at a task, even if they have not completed that task before (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy can come from a variety of variety of different places. Individuals may develop self-efficacy when achieving success at a task itself, which is also known as a mastery experience, through experiencing success vicariously through another individual, when motivated through socialization, or through their emotional state while completing a task (Bandura, 1977; Taiyi Yan et al., 2021). Self-efficacy can be an accurate predictor of individual success and performance in a given situation because it can be tied to a person's ability to set goals, work towards those goals, and persevere through challenging situations (Bandura, 1977; Răducu & Stănculescu, 202; Yıldızlı, 2019).

Mastery experiences are particularly powerful in the development of self-efficacy. Completing a task for the first time may sometimes end in failure, but an individual who is able to see through failure and recall times when they have been successful in the past is likely to continue trying (Bandura, 1977). Mastery experiences can, and should, be self-directed (Bandura, 2022).

> After strong efficacy expectations are developed through repeated success, the negative impact of occasional failures is likely to be reduced. Indeed, occasional failures that are later overcome by determined effort can strengthen self-motivated persistence if one finds through experience that even the most difficult obstacles can be mastered by sustained effort (Bandura, 1977, p. 195).

The more examples a person has of self-directed success, the more likely they are to also attempt new and unfamiliar tasks when faced with a challenge (Bandura, 2022).

If individuals do not have access to self-directed mastery experiences, they can also achieve mastery experiences and build self-efficacy vicariously through others' experiences (Taiyi Yan et al., 2021). Modeling builds self-efficacy because it allows individuals to see someone else's success, which can then alter how the individual is able to perceive themselves also being successful in similar instances (Bandura, 2022). While modeling does require some support, exposure to behavioral mentors can be important to creating mastery experiences (Taiyi Yan et al., 2021). People can learn from others while observing what they do, as it helps them to build a better understanding of how one's behaviors can impact their actions (Bandura, 1977).

Self-Efficacy and Cognition

Self-efficacy is a powerful force that can alter cognition and impact an individual's ability to adapt to challenging situations (Bandura, 2022; Răducu & Stănculescu, 2021). "It

works through motivational processes, through affect processes, and decisional processes, namely, determines the kind of decisions we make at critical choice points" (Bandura, 2022, 39:54). When faced with uncertainty, people have the tendency to avoid potentially threatening situations, or situations where they are unable to predict the outcome (Bandura, 1977). Since individuals with high self-efficacy have a background of mastery experiences that lend themselves to reducing anxiety in uncertain situations, self-efficacy makes an individual more adaptable to change (Bandura, 1977; Răducu & Stănculescu, 2021).

Self-efficacy powers a person's belief that they are going to be successful, providing an incentive to persevere when challenges and threats arise. Thus, when people are more likely to be able to adapt to change and less fearful to engage in challenging situations, they are likely to set and achieve higher goals for themselves, impacting their overall personal performance and job satisfaction, when self-efficacy is applied to the workplace (Bandura, 2022).

Teacher Self-Efficacy

In education, teacher self-efficacy relates to an individual teacher's beliefs about their own effectiveness as an educator. Self-efficacy has positive impacts on classroom behavior management, support for student achievement, higher goals for personal and student achievement, more positive classroom practices, content area knowledge, and the reduction of teacher burnout (Rogers-Haverback & Mee, 2015; Yıldızlı, 2019).

To build self-efficacy, teachers gain mastery experiences from student teaching and other field placement experiences (Rogers-Haverback & Mee, 2015). Field placements create mastery experiences for preservice teachers before they are in classrooms full-time. These mastery experiences help to provide a bank of successful moments which teachers can recall in order to navigate the challenges of their first years in their own classrooms (Evans-Palmer, 2016).

"Research supports the idea that what teachers believe about their ability to perform tasks guides their success more powerfully than their actual ability to perform" (Evans-Palmer, 2016, p. 267). The beliefs which stem from higher levels of self-efficacy and higher levels of perceived performance help teachers—preservice and beyond—to have better overall views on teaching as a profession as well as an openness to change (Evans-Palmer, 2016).

By contrast, teachers with low self-efficacy tend to avoid challenging situations, lacking the ability to effectively explore and experiment with new teaching materials and instructional techniques (Yıldızlı, 2019). Without mastery experiences, either achieved by self-mastery or vicariously, teachers with lower levels of self-efficacy may feel anxious about addressing challenging student behaviors and other student concerns. This anxiety, on the part of the teacher, can potentially result in lower academic outcomes for students (Yıldızlı, 2019). Resiliency from self-efficacy helps teachers to embrace challenge with little worry about failure, but a teacher lacking in self-efficacy may not be able to embrace these same challenges and, as a result, may avoid any change in practice that may result in failure (Evans-Palmer, 2016). As such, teachers who lack self-efficacy may be more apt to avoid the challenges of work altogether, which can eventually result in burnout during especially challenging times (Yıldızlı, 2019).

Navigating COVID-19 Using Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy was an important tool in helping teachers navigate the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically the switch to online learning. Since teacher self-efficacy is closely aligned with both perseverance through challenges and an openness to new methods of teaching, the teachers who exhibited high levels of efficacy during the pandemic fared better than teachers who did not (Răducu & Stănculescu, 2021). During the pandemic, self-

efficacy helped teachers navigate the rapid changes that the pandemic response required (Răducu & Stănculescu, 2021). These teachers were able to more confidently manage their emotions and expectations in working through the shift to teaching online. While many pandemic educators had not personally taught in situations in which their students were not directly in front of them, their openness to technology and risk-taking helped them to navigate a situation in which they did not already possess self-efficacy (Răducu & Stănculescu, 2021).

Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory

Apprenticeship, as a style of learning and teaching, is evidenced throughout history. Beginning in the Middle Ages, history notes that children engaged in apprenticeship experiences in order to learn a task. In these instances, the apprentice observed the master at work, gradually taking on and practicing the different techniques required, until the apprentice eventually became the master (Kirsher & Hendrick, 2020). Apprenticeship, as a practice, centers around the tangible creation of a product. In 1991, Collins et al. explored the idea of cognitive apprenticeship theory as a means of educating and teaching reasoning, thinking, and more complex skills. This model, which has been used in many academic settings, including the K-12 classroom, teacher preparation, student teaching and clinical practice in non-teaching fields, and the mentoring of new university faculty, requires that the expert make their internal thoughts visible to the apprentice as a means of sharing more complex learning and ideas (Caskey & Swanson, 2020; Collins et al., 1991; Heath, 2017; Kirschner & Hendrick, 2020; Rucker et al., 2021; Stalmeijer et al., 2009; Urbani et al., 2017).

Modeling

Traditional apprenticeship lends four important pieces to cognitive apprenticeship theory: modeling, scaffolding, fading, and coaching (Collins et al., 1991). During the process of

modeling, the expert performs the task at hand while the apprentice observes. It is in the

modeling phase that the expert should make a concentrated effort to make their thinking visible

(Caskey & Swanson, 2020; Collins et al., 1991). For example, in the context of a preservice

teaching program a university methods instructor may model the process of thinking about a

teaching observation by asking targeted questions about a lesson being given by a classroom

teacher. These questions will serve as a model for the preservice teachers to think about other

lessons they observe, as well as their own teaching practice (Heath, 2017). In other professions,

modeling may be a part of crucial observations. In the health sciences, medical and pharmacy

students may observe expert clinicians modeling different procedures and cases, providing

crucial insight into how to complete a procedure while providing explicit instructions and

opportunities for the students to question the clinician's practice (Rucker et al., 2021; Stalmeijer

et al., 2009).

Scaffolding

Scaffolding is the gradual release of the task by the supervisor over to the apprentice

(Kirshner & Hendrick, 2020). The learner will begin to transfer what they have learned,

receiving coaching from the expert, mentor, or clinician in the form of constructive criticism and

feedback (Collins et al., 1991). In the case of a teacher education program, scaffolding may take

the form of a teaching methods instructor who has previously modeled and provided questions

for lesson reflection to now encourage the learners to begin asking their own reflective questions

(Heath, 2017). In the scaffolding phase of the Cognitive Apprenticeship Method, it is important

that the expert has some understanding of the student's knowledge level about the task at hand.

When the expert or mentor knows the student well, students find the scaffolding phase to be

highly motivating due to the receipt of feedback and targeted practice opportunities (Stalmeijer et al., 2009).

Fading and Coaching

Fading and coaching are ongoing throughout the learning approaches outlined by the Cognitive Apprenticeship Model. As the learner progresses in their understanding of a process or topic, the mentor or expert will gradually provide less support. Throughout this entire process, the expert or mentor is coaching, however. Coaching, or the providing of meaningful feedback, opportunities for growth, and questioning, teaches the students to self-monitor and reflect on their own practices (Kirschner & Hendrick, 2020).

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory is a strong methodology for teaching complicated skills and tasks, such as critical thinking and problem solving (Rucker et al., 2021). "It is rooted in the idea that the ability to problem solve, comprehend, or think critically about problems is not intuitive, but is instead a learned process" (Rucker et al., 2021, p. 836). For the theory to be most effective in teaching, however, the teacher, expert, or mentor must ensure that three strategies are followed. First, the expert must identify the process by which the apprentice will be learning and make these processes visible. This includes the practice of thinking out loud when modeling and teaching new tasks. Second, the work that is undertaken by the apprentice must be relevant to the real world. Third, there should be a diverse range of practice opportunities for the tasks so that apprentices can practice at differing levels of complexity (Collins et al., 1991; Kirschner & Hendrick, 2020). Support from the mentor in a Cognitive Apprenticeship Model should be encouraging throughout the learning process by helping to not only build knowledge and teach a

task, but also inspire the learner to explore on their own, make their own goals, and become more independent thinkers (Caskey & Swanson, 2020).

Learning as a Social Activity

In addition to the relationship between expert and apprentice, Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory puts a strong emphasis on the social environment of learning. Mentoring and learning within this model involves not only learning from an expert, but also learning from other learners who may be at different processes and have varying levels of expertise (Caskey & Swanson, 2020). For example, in a mentoring program for new female collegiate faculty, new faculty were not only encouraged by their mentors to verbalize their thoughts about their own research and writing, but they were also encouraged to write alongside other faculty with similar research interests so that they were able to learn from others in different stages of the learning process (Caskey & Swanson, 2020). In other settings, such as teaching methods class in a teacher education program, preservice teachers benefit from opportunities to share created materials such as math games, lessons, IEPs, rubrics, and lesson plans with one another so that they are not only receiving feedback from an expert, but also other learners. This sharing also culminates in the preservice teacher creating tools that can be used in real-world teaching scenarios (Urbani et al., 2017).

> Apprenticeship derives many cognitively important characteristics from being embedded in a subculture in which most, if not all, members are participants in the target skills. As a result, learners have continual access to models of expertise-in-use against which to refine their understanding of complex skills (Collins et al., 1991, p. 2).

Participants in this model of learning are constantly given access to refine their

understanding under the watchful eye of many different mentors while practicing and mastering

different methods of thinking and problem-solving (Collins et al., 1991).

Reflection on Practice

In its essence, Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory is also effective in teaching about

reflection, one of the most crucial aspects of teacher education programs (Heath, 2017). In

witnessing a mentor's modeling and receiving feedback preservice teachers gain the ability to

think more deeply about their own teaching practice. Through this learning theory, with the

proper communication, the preservice teacher is not simply encouraged to replicate what a

mentor has done in the classroom, but encouraged to observe, question, and apply what has been

modeled in unique ways (Heath, 2017). Teacher education programs can benefit from this

model's integrated social approaches to learning and reflection on practice (Heath, 2017; Urbani

et al., 2017). In Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory, the master is not always the sole expert in the

room (Collins et al., 1991). As preservice teachers experience the real-world applications of this

style of learning and teaching as well as the opportunities to reflect on their own practice, they

will gradually become experts themselves.

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Summary

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The literature in this section explored the major topics and components of this study.

Through literature about mentoring, student teaching and field placement experiences, digital

and virtual learning and mentoring, student teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, the human

response to crisis situations, and the COVID-19 pandemic, a firm foundation for the study was

built. In addition, literature exploring mentoring relationships between individuals of different

socioeconomic backgrounds filled the gaps that exist due to the mostly homogenous sampling

and recruitment of white, female participants. The literature review ended by exploring two

theoretical frameworks that were critical to this study—self efficacy theory and cognitive

apprenticeship theory. These frameworks are examined again more closely in the context of the

study's findings in the final discussion chapter.

Methodology for this study will be examined in the next chapter. Chapter three will

explore the use of case study methodology, convenience sampling, and semi-structured

interviews. Background information necessary for understanding the research site, study

participants, and specific timeline details important to understanding the COVID-19 pandemic

will be provided in this chapter. Finally, the chapter will explain the process by which

participants were able to remain anonymous, the researcher's own biases, delimitations, and

limitations of the study.

Chapter 3: Methods

Introduction and Research Questions

This qualitative research used a case study approach with semi-structured interviews. The study examined the student teaching experience, and how it was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The qualitative nature of this work allowed for unique stories about the relationships between supervising practitioners and student teachers from one private university in Massachusetts. The study explored how student teachers were supported in the spring 2020 semester, the relationships between student teachers and supervising practitioners working together during the pandemic school closures, and the student teachers' and supervising practitioners' perceptions of the student teachers' readiness to teach. These stories will contribute to the ever-growing body of literature about field experiences in teacher education programs and the ways in which education was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The questions answered through this study were:

1. What factors contribute to and detract from the development of successful relationships between preservice teachers and their supervising practitioners?

2. In what ways is the student teacher/supervising practitioner relationship impacted by times of uncertainty?

3. In what ways does the practice of mentoring over virtual platforms affect the relationship between supervising practitioners and student teachers?

4. In what ways can supervising practitioners support student teachers through times of crisis? In what ways can student teachers support supervising practitioners?

5. What impact does a sudden interruption of the field placement experience have on student teachers' confidence and perceptions of their own readiness to teach?

Case Study Research Design and Rationale

Case studies are used to "develop an understanding through the description of what, where, how, when, and why…using narrative and testimony…looking for what is meaningful to researchers but simultaneously try to discover what is meaningful to the case" (Stake, 1997, p. 403-404). Themes emerging from data analysis were related to relationships between student teachers and supervising practitioners, feelings of self-efficacy, as well as the complexities of teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

All of the student teachers and supervising practitioners who participated in this study reported different experiences in response to the unique nature of school closures. While participants' individual experiences were unique, the unifying focus if the study was on one university during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the use of a case study was appropriate given that "[c]ase studies become particularly useful where one needs to understand some particular problem or situation in great-depth" (Noor, 2008, pg. 1602-1603). The stories gathered from the interviews provided opportunities for comparison and the identification of themes, which speaks to the universal nature of student teaching in both normal and unusual situations. Participants' perceptions were relied upon heavily to inform the case study. The purpose of this study was to capture how participants thought about the relationships formed within a student teaching experience and especially one that experienced a major disruption. One reason in utilizing perceptions rather than evaluative or quantitative data is to honor and deeply explore the unique experiences from each participants' perspective. Participants shared their thoughts and feelings about the student teaching experience through semi-structured interviews, allowing for their unique stories to be collected and analyzed for emerging themes as each participant discussed how the pandemic impacted the student teaching experience. This case study explored the

individual challenges of the student teachers and supervising practitioners during the COVID-19

pandemic. In addition, the study provided an understanding of how the field placement

relationship of the 17 individual participants fared through a tumultuous time.

It is important to note that the study's goals were multifaceted: to examine the

relationships established during a field placement experience, to tell the story of how individuals

in these relationships navigated through unprecedented challenges during the COVID-19

pandemic, and to identify ways in which the pandemic affected the relationships between student

teachers and supervising practitioners. Between March and May of 2020, when the student

teachers participating in the study were completing their final student teaching experience,

schools experienced a great deal of rapid-paced change. In this instance, qualitative case study

provided a particularly strong methodology due to the fact that case studies capture "the

emergent and imminent properties of life in organizations and the ebb and flow of organizational

activity, especially when it is changing very fast" (Noor, 2008, pg. 1602-1603). In limiting the

scope of the case study to one student teaching semester, participants were able to clearly

articulate the uncertainty and, in many cases, frustration related to frequent and rapid change.

The case study honored the chaos of the time and validated the voiced frustrations that student

teachers, supervising practitioners, and university staff navigated. In addition, the narrative

nature of case study allowed participants to share their stories of communication, resilience, and

community.

Site Description

This study took place within the masters' level teacher education program at a private

university near Boston, Massachusetts. The university was selected based upon the researcher's

familiarity with the program, access to participants, and the university's strong history of

preparing future educators for the classroom. With a number of different programs, the

university's school of education has a strong reputation throughout New England for preparing

effective teachers and other education leaders. During the 2018-2019 school year, the

university's graduate student enrollment was 3,886 with 2,650 of those students enrolled in the

school of education. The school had 140 student teachers, placed in a number of different school

districts, who were completing their final practicum experiences when the COVID-19 pandemic

mandate the closure of schools.

　　　　This university is a private institution that prepares teacher candidates to be licensed in

Massachusetts, and is, therefore expected to follow the Candidate Assessment of Performance

(CAP). An important part of the teacher candidate process, CAP evaluates teacher candidates

and assesses career readiness while the student teacher is in the field. In addition, the school was

required to follow and abide by state guidelines for student teaching and licensure during the

COVID-19 pandemic which were established by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary

and Secondary Education (DESE).

Pandemic and Study Timeline

　　　　The timing of the case was particularly important to the overall study, as the study sought

to capture the snapshot of student teachers working during a specific time period. This study took

place during the spring 2020 academic semester, specifically January to May of 2020. Early in

that semester, in February, the Boston area saw its first recorded cases of COVID-19. A Biogen

conference held in Boston that month was connected to a significant number of the initial cases

in Massachusetts (Arsenault et al., 2020). As cases continued to climb, Massachusetts Governor

Charlie Baker declared a state of emergency on March 10, 2020 (Mass.gov). In response,

individual school districts in Massachusetts announced temporary closures to mitigate the spread

of COVID-19 with most of the schools closing on or around March 13, 2020. Table 1 outlines

the official timeline of COVID-19 closures in Massachusetts, as provided by the Commonwealth

of Massachusetts' COVID-19 State of Emergency Archives.

Date	Official Order	Expectations of Schools
March 15, 2020	Governor Baker's COVID-19 Order #3 closes all public and private K-12 schools for two weeks.	Superintendents were advised to work with their school stakeholders to identify ways to best continue learning during the two-week closure.
March 25, 2020	Governor Baker's COVID-19 Order #16 closes all public and private K-12 schools until May 4.	Academic stakeholders were expected to continue providing remote learning opportunities to students.
April 21, 2020	Governor Baker's COVID-19 Order #28 closes all public and private K-12 schools for the remainder of the school year.	Public schools were expected to continue each district's agreed-upon remote learning opportunities.

Table #1: COVID-19 Pandemic Timeline

While many participants referenced the frequently changing expectations from DESE as

a source of frustration, their frustrations were not specifically connected to any singular date on

this timeline. It can be assumed that much of the participants' discussion of "after schools

closed" can be any time after March 15, 2020. Additionally, this study did not extend past the

spring semester of 2020, so any additional issues related to COVID-19 in schools occurring after

June 2020 were not included in the scope of this study.

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Participant Selection

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Convenience Sampling

Participants were selected using convenience sampling with the assistance of a university

staff member who was working with student teachers and supervising practitioners during the

pandemic. Convenience sampling, which is a common method of participant selection, allowed

the researcher to choose participants based "on the convenience of the investigator" (Acharya et

al., 2013, pg. 332). Through this method the researcher was able to choose individuals who fit a

specific profile. The researcher sought participants who were participating in a final field

placement experience, located within the same state in which the study was being conducted,

connected with a university with which the researcher had some familiarity, and who were

teaching virtually in some fashion during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher used

knowledge about the university and the schools in which participants worked to select

individuals who fit this ideal study participant profile.

  Convenience sampling, however, is not without drawbacks and limitations. Due to this

type of sampling, bias for both the university and also the school districts in which student

teachers and supervising practitioners were placed had to be carefully considered when

reviewing the interview data. Additionally, convenience sampling is limiting because, "data

cannot be generalized beyond the sample" (Acharya et al., 2013, pg. 332). Another limitation of

utilizing this method of participant selection is the fact that the researcher was limited to

volunteers from the available pool of potential participants. Due to both the majority

demographics of the participants within the university and the majority demographics amongst

teachers within suburban New England schools, there was a significant lack of diversity amongst

the participants. All but one of the participants identified as white, female, and as either working

or student teaching in a middle-class suburban community. The exception to this was Clark, an

Asian male teaching in an urban setting. This lack of diversity limited the researcher's ability to

truly capture how socioeconomic or cultural barriers may have contributed to the challenges of

the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews with Clark, however, opened up the researcher's

understanding to a small-scale view of some of the challenges presented in urban schools, as well

as for his student teacher, who was the daughter of an immigrant family.

While these limitations and others existed when selecting the sample of participants, it is also important to note that this case study intentionally utilized a small sample size in order to establish an in-depth snapshot of student teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the goal of this case study is to establish, capture, and describe the unique aspects of this time period, rather than to generalize, the researcher believes that convenience sampling, despite the limitations, is still an effective method of recruiting and selecting participants.

Contacting and Recruiting Participants

During the selection process, an email was sent by the field placement coordinator to the spring 2020 cohort of student teachers with the purpose of generating interest in and explaining the study. At the start of the study, the researcher requested that the participating student teachers be placed in upper elementary or middle school classrooms, in a variety of different schools, and school districts. When the initial, grade- and subject-level limiting request did not result in enough interest, the pool of possible participants was opened up to include all student teachers from the spring 2020 semester. On this second attempt to recruit participants, student teachers from high school placements, special education placements, lower elementary school placements, full-year student teachers, and student teachers completing their final field placement in their own classrooms were included. Eight student teachers participated in the study. Of these eight student teachers, three were special education student teachers. Of these three, two of the special education student teachers completed their field placement experiences in their own classrooms. Two participants were in a high school setting, one was in middle school, and three were in elementary school classrooms for their field placements.

Table 2 lists the student teachers who participated in the study, identified by pseudonym:

Participant Pseudonym	Teaching Subject/Grade Level(s)	Experience and Placement Information
Julia	High school special education	Dual licensure, completing a second ST experience.
Katie	Special education	Student teaching in her own classroom.
Lily	Elementary school (grade 5)	Worked in her school as a building substitute teacher.
Amanda	Special education 6-8	Student teaching in her own classroom.
Courtney	Elementary school	Year-long placement experience.
Melissa	Middle school humanities	Placed with two different SPs.
Megan	High school science	Completed fall pre-practicum and student teaching at the same school.
Shannon	Elementary school art	Only placed for the spring semester, no prior experience at the school.

Table #2: Student Teacher Participants

In addition to aiding with selecting and contacting student teachers, university staff also assisted with contacting supervising practitioners who had student teachers in their classrooms during the spring semester of 2020. All supervising practitioners connected with the university field placements during the spring 2020 semester were contacted and invited to participate. In total, eight supervising practitioners participated in the study. Of these eight supervising practitioners, one taught high school, two taught middle school, two were elementary school general education teachers, two were special educators, one was an elementary school reading specialist, and one was am elementary school literacy specialist.

Table #3 is a list of supervising practitioners who participated in the study, identified by

pseudonym:

Participant Pseudonym	Teaching Subject/Grade Level(s)	Experience with Student Teachers
Clark	High school	Hosted STs before, but never from the university in this study.
Leila	Elementary reading specialist	Previously worked with her ST in other teaching positions.
Martina	Middle school special education	ST had to take a break during the practicum for personal matters.
Lauren	Elementary literacy specialist	Had a previously-established relationship with ST due to ST's position as a substitute.
Michelle	Elementary school special education	Had a previously-established relationship due to ST's dual licensure (ST was placed with her general education co-teacher in the fall).
Kristy	Elementary school (grade 2)	Had prior experience hosting STs from the university in the study.
Larissa	Middle school science	Had a pre-practicum ST at the same time as her final practicum ST. Spoke about the ST in final practicum for this study.
Alice	Elementary school (grade 2)	Had prior experience with student teachers, but this was her first experience with an older, career-change ST.

Table #3: Supervising Practitioner Participants

The university field placement coordinator who assisted in contacting potential

participants also participated in the interview process. Cara, also identified in this study by a

pseudonym, worked at the university as a field placement coordinator. In her role, she was

responsible for organizing the field placement experience by working with and supporting

student teachers and supervising practitioners. Cara assisted student teachers in connecting with

their field placement sites, completing DESE licensure paperwork, and also serves as a point of

contact between the university and DESE. In challenging practicum experiences, Cara also helps

to support student teachers and supervising practitioners navigating conflicts. Specifically,

during the pandemic, much of Cara's role included serving as a key point of contact for

questions from student teachers, supervising practitioners, and the university. She provided as

much up-to-date information from the state and DESE related to field placement requirements

and the school closures as possible.

Interested participants contacted the researcher and were then informed about the study,

their participation in it, and asked to give their informed consent before scheduling an interview.

Copies of the informed consent letter shared with participants can be found in Appendix A. Upon

completion of the interview, participants received a $25 Amazon gift card, as a thank you from

the researcher, to be used on classroom materials or professional development literature.

A Note About ST/SP Pairings

It is important to note that the student teachers and supervising practitioners who

participated in the study were not paired with one another. The researcher attempted to include

pairs in the study by asking the participating student teacher or supervising practitioner to share

the researcher's contact information with their supervising practitioner or student teacher. None

of the other partners in the pairs reached out with interest in participating in the study. Due to

this sampling, the researcher recognizes that the perceptions of success in the relationship may

be limited to one side of the partnership.

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Instrumentation, Data Collection Procedures, and Tools

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Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews conducted in August of 2020 provided information for this

study. Interviews were scheduled as close as possible to the end of the student teachers' and

supervising practitioners' academic years in order to obtain as accurate memories of the COVID-

19 closures as possible. The interviews were designed to last approximately one hour, but varied

in length from thirty minutes to over an hour, depending on the depth of answers provided by the participants.

For a semi-structured interview, the interview guide is established by the researcher ahead of the interview. Semi-structured interview questions are open-ended and the questions may either be asked in a specific order or the interviewer will ask the questions out of order if the conversation with the participant allows (Ahlin, 2019; Barclay, 2018; Naz et al., 2022). The open-ended nature of the questions in a semi-structured interview allows for some elaboration on the part of the participants, but keeps the focus of the interview on the study itself (Ahlin, 2019; Barclay, 2018; Naz et al., 2022). For this study, the interview guide organized the questions into two major categories—a discussion of the experience before the pandemic closed schools and a discussion of how things changed afterwards. The interview guide for this study can be found in Appendix B.

Using semi-structured interviews in case studies is particularly appropriate because the interviewer can use the interview guide to dig into more in-depth ideas as the conversation with the participant flows from topic to topic (Naz et al., 2022). The flexible, but focused, nature of a semi-structured interview allows participants to "talk about their point of view about a topic, raise concerns, and alter the content of the interview" (Naz et al., 2022, p. 43). Semi-structured interview participants can express themselves freely while the interview is permitted to take somewhat of an organic structure, focusing on the issues and topics set by the researcher (Ahlin, 2019). In turn, the interviewer is also able to probe the interview participant to gain a deeper understanding of the participant's experience, painting a more detailed picture of the case being explored (Naz et al., 2022).

Utilizing a semi-structured interview approach for this case study enabled the researcher to ask guided questions, while also allowing for the conversation to flow in a way that let the participants share their unique experiences (Ahlin, 2019). All participants answered a specific set of questions which outlined what the student teaching experience was like before schools shut down, as well as how the participants adjusted to school closures. In addition, all participants were asked to reflect on their thoughts, feelings, and emotions over the course of the challenging semester. While the order of these questions was fixed with participants being asked to reflect on the semester in order, the questions also provided time for participants to share their unique circumstances. Ahlin (2019) explains that semi-structured interviews are most effective in research when "there is (a) some, though not substantial information about your topic…(b) a need to understand the perspective of the respondent; and (c) an opportunity to sit down one-on-one with someone very knowledgeable about the subject matter" (p. 5). In this study, with participants who all had different personal and professional expectations and concerns about the pandemic, the participants were able to be the experts of their own stories that they shared throughout the interview process.

Each student teacher and supervising practitioner participating in this study had different experiences during the pandemic. The questions required the participants to focus on their perceptions of the relationships formed during the semester, as well as any challenges experienced.

Interviews with student teachers focused on information about the field placement experience, the student teachers' relationship with their supervising practitioners, and the student teachers' perceptions of their readiness to teach following their field placement. The interview questions were broken up into two sections—before and after schools closed due to COVID-19.

Student teachers were asked to reflect on the ways in which the experience may have aided their learning to teach as well as the ways in which the sudden switch to remote learning may have challenged them and their supervising practitioners.

Supervising practitioners were also asked to reflect on their relationship with their student teachers, and share their perceptions of their student teachers' readiness to teach. Supervising practitioners were also given the opportunity to reflect on how they felt they and their student teachers may have adapted to the challenges presented by distance learning. Interviews with supervising practitioners focused on the field placement experience and their relationship with their student teacher both before and after COVID-19 school closures.

While the researcher focused on the previously mentioned topics throughout the interview, the semi-structured nature of the questions also permitted discussion of unique or particularly interesting situations that arose during the student teaching semester (Barclay, 2018). This method of interviewing proved to be successful as it allowed for detailed conversations about the challenges and successes during the field placement.

Interview Timing and Scheduling

At the time of the interviews, many of the student teachers and supervising practitioners were preparing for the 2020-2021 school year, and were facing instructional uncertainties similar to those presented in the spring semester. With both student teachers and supervising practitioners, the interviews attempted to create a portrait of what it was like to be a student teacher or supervising practitioner during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were encouraged to focus on their perceptions and reflections on the spring 2020 semester, though discussion of the perceived challenges of the new school year did arise during the conversations.

All interviews were scheduled at the convenience of participants. Due to the continued concerns about COVID-19, all interviews took place using Zoom video conferencing software. For each video conference interview, a private, password protected meeting room was created. Each Zoom meeting room was unique to the participant giving the interview. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and later, coded and analyzed for common themes.

Survey Data

In addition to conducting interviews with student teachers at the end of the spring 2020 semester, the researcher developed a survey for students enrolled in the final field placement experiences at the university. This survey was intended to collect data that would yield a broader scope of preservice teachers' reflections and reactions to the student teaching experience, challenges presented by COVID-19, and the student teachers' relationships with their supervising practitioners. The researcher intended to use the survey results to triangulate the data gained from the interviews.

The survey (see Appendix B) used a five-point Likert scale and asked student teachers about their perceptions of the student teaching experience and their relationship with their supervising practitioner. The survey also asked student teachers to examine how the relationship was affected by challenges related to COVID-19.

Unfortunately, although the survey was shared with all of the student teachers at the university in the spring 2020 semester, only six participants engaged with the survey instrument. Of those six, only two completed all sections of the survey. Given the small number of respondents, survey data were not included in the study.

There are many reasons why individuals may have chosen not to respond to the survey. Since the survey was shared with student teachers in the late summer of 2020, there may have

been reluctance to respond due to time constraints with preparing for the 2020-2021 school year.

In the late summer of 2020, the study participants were still working through the challenges

presented by the COVID-19 pandemic as they prepared for the new school year. The reluctance

to complete the survey, therefore, may have also been due to potential participants were burned

out from discussing COVID-19's impact on their lives. Finally, since the survey was shared with

participants using their university email address, it is also possible that, after graduation,

participants were no longer actively using university email.

While the additional data would have been interesting to compare with the longer

responses gained through interviewing participants, the researcher does not believe that this

limitation has impacted the overall results of the study, as what little data was collected does

thematically follow many of the narratives shared by interview participants.

Data Analysis Description

Upon completion of the interviews, recordings were sent to a human transcriptionist to be

transcribed. The transcriptions were then uploaded to NVivo, a qualitative research software, for

thematic analysis. Once uploaded into the software, the interview transcripts were coded based

on the research questions. Codes connected to classroom structures both before and after

COVID, student teacher expectations, communication, efficacy, mentoring, feedback, the ST/SP

relationship, perceptions of career readiness, and communication with the university were used

to organize the data in order to answer the research question. During the coding process, three

common themes emerged, which were also used to code the data. Codes based on these

themes—communication, professional resilience, and community—were also used to compare

the different experiences of the study participants.

Participants were also asked to reflect on how pandemic closures or other challenges related to COVID-19 impacted the field placement experience. To learn more about the pandemic's impact on the field placement experience, the researcher explored themes related to overcoming obstacles within the field placement relationship. The researcher identified areas of the experience that resulted in significant uncertainty for the student teachers, supervising practitioners, and university staff. Student teachers identified that much of their uncertainty was related to the field placement expectations and meeting DESE's requirements for licensure. Supervising practitioners expressed uncertainty related to their student teachers' completion of the field placement while also expressing frustrations about ever-evolving expectations for teaching. The university field placement staff explained the challenges of navigating frequently changing guidance from the state and communicating changes in licensure and field placement guidance as an uncertain challenge that she struggled to navigate.

Codes connected with student teachers' perceived readiness to teach were also identified. Special attention was paid to identify any factors that student teachers and supervising practitioners identified as factors that significantly impacted student teachers' career readiness. During the interviews, student teachers were given the opportunity to reflect on why or why they did not feel ready to teach after experiencing the major disruption to their field placement experience. Supervising practitioners were given the same opportunity to share why they felt or why they did not feel their student teachers were ready to teach in the fall. In exploring this theme, the researcher was able to recognize ways that the challenge of completing a field placement interrupted by a global pandemic both took away from the experience but also helped prepare them for the unique challenges of pandemic teaching.

Data Coding

Codes were selected based on the questions asked during the interview process, as well as based on common themes which emerged from participants' conversations with the researcher. Since the researcher used three interview guides—one for student teachers, another for supervising practitioners, and another set of questions for university staff—some of the participants' questions varied. For example, relationships were discussed by participants in all three categories, but care was taken to separate and identify if the discussion of relationship qualities was connected with a student teacher, a supervising practitioner, or a university staff member.

Some codes for this study were used broadly across all three categories of participants, since some of the questions participants answered were the same, regardless of their role in the field placement experience. In these instances, no designation was made to determine if the code specifically connected to a specific group, allowing for exploration of broader themes regarding perceptions of career readiness and the challenges faced due to the pandemic.

Table #4 presents the categories and subcategories of codes utilized in this study:

Code	Participant Category Applied To
Career Readiness	All
Classroom • Post-COVID Structure • Pre-COVID Structure • ST Expectations	Student Teachers, Supervising Practitioners
Communication • University Communication	All
COVID-19 Challenges • Distance Challenges • Technology	All
COVID-19 Positives • Professional Growth	Student Teachers, Supervising Practitioners
Efficacy	All
Mentoring	All
Post-COVID University Success	University Staff
Reflection	Student Teachers, Supervising Practitioners
Relationship • With SP: Collaboration, Collegiality, Difficult, Encouragement, Feedback • With ST: COVID Relationship Change, Learning from ST, Prior Relationship, ST Efficacy	Student Teachers, Supervising Practitioners
SP Selection Process	University Staff
ST-SP Conflict Resolution	University Staff
ST-SP Relationship Quality	University Staff
Success Definition	All
Uncertainty	All
University Challenges	All
University Post-COVID Challenges	University Staff
University Post-COVID Role	University Staff
University Strengths	All
Unsuccessful Definition	All

Table 4: Interview Codes

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Participant confidentiality remained a top priority throughout the research study. Student

teaching is a challenging time in the teacher education process and the interviews asked

preservice teachers to reflect on conflicts that arose during the semester. Study participants'

identities were protected through the use of pseudonyms; any specific details about school

districts where the participants taught were included in the study.

Anonymity of participants was especially important since participants were asked to

reflect on potentially negative experiences due to the COVID-19 school closures. At the time of

the interviews, participants were either preparing to teach in the schools where they taught in the

spring of 2020 or were otherwise applying for new employment positions. To ensure participant

comfort and honesty, participants were not required to share any specific details which would

identify their school districts or other identifying information. While some participants freely

offered the names of schools, districts, and other details, none of this data is specifically included

in the findings of this study.

In addition to protecting the identities of the public-school-facing participants, the

university was guaranteed anonymity during the study.

All interviews were completed independently in a private, password-protected, Zoom

meeting room. Interviews were recorded only with the informed consent and permission of the

interview participant. Only the researcher and the transcriptionist has had access to the formal

recordings and transcripts of the interviews and the other interviewees were not discussed with

other participants in the study. All of this information was provided to participants through

informed consent letters, which are copied in Appendix A, as well as verbally at the start of each

interview.

Researcher Bias

As an educator who recalled my student teaching experience fondly, when engaging in

this research, I believed that establishing a strong relationship with a supervising practitioner can

help future educators to develop confidence in their teaching practice. When engaging in this

research, my assumption was that collegial relationships between preservice teachers and

supervising practitioners have major implications on the success of preservice teachers. While

conducting these interviews and engaging with the data, I was aware that this assumption was

not necessarily going to match my overall findings. I was open to exploring other perspectives on

what makes a student teaching experience successful with the hope that these perspectives would

expand my understanding of student teaching, mentoring, and teacher career readiness.

In addition, I also taught through the COVID-19 pandemic and worked through the

challenges that distance learning presented during that time. I found that being provided with a

clear learning plan for remote learning from my district and working together with co-teachers

and colleagues was extremely helpful in navigating the pandemic. Additionally, I found that the

experience of adapting my curriculum so quickly gave me the opportunity to learn more about

technology and my personal teaching practice. This may not be the experience of others during

this time period.

In response to these assumptions, I committed to studying the experiences of teachers in

districts other than my own during the completion of this study. The data for this study were

collected and analyzed with these biases in mind and interview data collected from each

participant was analyzed from the lens that each individual had a unique story to tell. I selected

codes, survey, and interview questions with the aim to collect honest, unbiased data about the

student teacher/supervising practitioner relationships. Insights from this study can be used by

teacher education programs in the future.

My professional experiences as a white, cis-gender, middle class female who teaches in a

middle-class suburban school district also informed my personal biases towards teaching,

learning, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. While COVID-19 impacted my life in

many ways, including quarantining, teaching from home, and experiencing health-related

anxiety, I was still more fortunate than many. I did not lose a loved one to the virus; I had

resources that enabled me to work from home, and only a small handful of my students were

unable, due to resources or family challenges, to connect with me during virtual learning. Due to

these biases, COVID-19 challenges presented themselves in participants' stories in a number of

ways in which I did not expect. While my personal experience is limited, I was and continue to

be, open to understanding how differences in experiences can impact and inform my own

understanding of this unique period in history.

Delimitations of the Study

This study focused on an intentionally small sample size to allow for a deeper analysis of

the interview data collected from the participating student teachers. The timing of the study was

limited to the semester which occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic to capture the

experiences of student teachers during a very specific time in our society's history. As a result,

this study is limited to the master's level teacher education program at one university in

Massachusetts. Preservice teachers in other programs and in other states were not included due to

the time and scope of the study.

Limitations of the Study

The use of qualitative interviews to obtain information based on personal perceptions of

success and the development of the relationship during the field placement experience may have

limited this study. Since interviews are subjective and reliant on participants to accurately

remember and describe the situation, some details or specific events of the spring 2020 semester

may have been, accidentally or intentionally, left out or misremembered during the discussion. In

a similar fashion, the study strongly relied on the use of perceptions, which can also be highly

subjective to an individual's experience. As a result, the definition of a successful field placement relationship tends to varied slightly, depending on the participant.

The researcher recognized the limitations of using an individual's perceptions of broad topics like the success of the field placement relationship and student teachers' career-readiness. Perceptions can also be impacted by an individual's bias, such as wanting to only share positive details about the university or a school district. Supervising practitioners, in spite of the careful efforts to protect their identities through confidentiality, may have declined participation because they did not wish to speak ill of a new teacher. While the use of self-reported data has limitations, the researcher felt strongly that the data collected in the interviews captured the challenges and successes of student teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. The stories presented in this study's findings addressed the previously mentioned guiding research questions.

In addition to the limiting human factors, another limitation of the study was the inability to recruit and interview student teachers and supervising practitioners who were directly paired with one another. In the initial message to recruit participants, student teacher/supervising practitioner pairs were encouraged to volunteer to participate in individual interviews. Since none of the volunteers were direct pairs, each participant was asked during the interview to share the information about the study with their student teacher or supervising practitioner to see if there was interest. Unfortunately, all attempts at recruiting direct pairs were unsuccessful. The study, therefore is limited to interview data and perceptions of the student teacher/supervising practitioner relationship of only one member of the pair.

As previously stated in the researcher bias and sociocultural perspectives section, it would have been preferable to acknowledge how individuals of diverse cultural, racial, ethnic, sociocultural, and gender backgrounds work together in these relationships. The participant pool,

however, was limited to the diversity of the students who were available for the final field

placement experience during the spring 2020 semester. Since the interested participants were

primarily white, middle class female student teachers and supervising practitioners, discussion of

how sociocultural factors affected the relationships established during field placement was

addressed in the literature review.

In addition to the limited sociocultural backgrounds of the participants, another limiting

factor of the convenience sampling used during this study was the fact that all participants in this

study were volunteers. It is possible that the participants interviewed specifically because they

had a certain type of experience—either positive or negative—that they wanted to share. The

researcher recognized that the stories presented in the findings of this study were unique to the

individuals who agreed to participate in the study. While the voices of the 17 individuals in this

study were representatives of the experiences of student teachers, supervising practitioners, and

university faculty who navigated the COVID-19 pandemic, the findings presented in the next

chapters were not the only stories of teacher education during COVID-19.

Finally, it is important to mention that this study only captured a snapshot of the

perceived benefits of the preservice teachers' and supervising practitioners' relationships. Since

the study concluded before the preservice teachers entered the teaching field, this study does not

assess how experience impacted the student teachers' early career readiness.

Summary

Student teaching is a powerful and important part of the teacher education experience. In

March 2020, when the world shut down to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, the student

teachers participating in this study found themselves in a unique position of learning to teach

virtually alongside their supervising practitioners. In utilizing a case study methodology with

semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to capture the stories of how 17 individuals

navigated the challenges and uncertainties of teaching and learning during a pandemic. The

semi-structured interviews allowed each participant to share their unique stories, which the

researcher was able to tie together using themes connected to relationships within the field

placement experience, the uncertainty of the pandemic, and perceptions of student teachers'

readiness to teach. The next chapter will examine the findings of this study, organized by each of

the study's five research questions.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this research was to capture a snapshot of the relationships built between student teachers and supervising practitioners, and how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the student teaching experience as a whole. This chapter will explore the study's findings, organized by each of the 5 questions. These questions examined the relationships built between student teachers and supervising practitioners, the challenges faced by student teachers and supervising practitioners due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and student teachers' and supervising practitioners' perceptions of the success of the relationship.

Each question addressed an aspect of the practicum experience. The first spoke generally about the field experience as a whole. Specifically, question one looked at the aspects of the student teacher and supervising practitioner relationship that resulted in a successful practicum relationship, as well as anything that detracted from the relationship's success. The second question focused on how relationships between student teachers and supervising practitioners were impacted by the uncertainty they experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Continuing the focus on virtual learning, the third question explored stories of how mentoring was impacted by distance learning and teaching environments. In question 4, student teachers and supervising practitioners were asked to share how they supported one another during the pandemic closures. Finally, the last question examined perceptions regarding student teachers' career readiness after experiencing the challenges presented during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data analysis resulted in 17 unique stories of eight student teachers, eight supervising practitioners, and one university field placement coordinator, and captured the challenges and successes of this time period. Captured in this study are the perceptions of the participants as

they explored and explained the successes and challenges of the field placement experience, as well as how the pandemic may have impacted student teachers' readiness to teach.

As discussed in chapter three, study participants fell into one of three categories—student teachers, supervising practitioners, and university staff. The interviews explored practicum experiences in the spring of 2020; the semester was treated and discussed as two distinct time periods—before schools closed to in-person learning and after they closed in March 2020. This was done in response to the interviews of study participants, who often referred to the student teaching semester as two parts—before and after schools closed.

In the findings, the perceptions of student teachers and supervising practitioners were separated, where appropriate, within the answers to each of the research questions in order to capture the unique experiences of each group. The perceptions of the university field placement coordinator were used to inform and contextualize the findings, and shed light on how the university supported student teachers and supervising practitioners during the semester. While some generalizations have been made, the aim was to share the unique stories of the individuals who lent their experiences to the overall study. In this way, the research provided a snapshot of student teaching during a global pandemic.

It is important to note that the student teachers and supervising practitioners participating in this study were not paired with one another, nor were they placed at the same schools or in the same school district. Within the interview excerpts presented in this chapter, student teachers and supervising practitioners shared information about their teaching partners. The individuals who participated in this research shared powerful stories and experiences based on their individual student teaching partnerships, school districts, and areas of teaching experience and expertise;

these unique stories were tied together by three clear themes: the importance of communication, professional resilience, and the positive impact of community and collaboration.

Themes

Three major themes emerged from the data: the importance of communication, professional resilience, and the positive impact of community and collaboration. Significant and most common were themes related to communication during all aspects of the student teaching experience. Communication was discussed in each section of the interview and included the importance of establishing early communication routines, the challenges presented by changing modes of communication during the pandemic, and a desire to continue communication after the student teaching experience ended.

Another common theme discussed by participants was that of professional resilience. The pandemic was defined by a great deal of uncertainty that impacted many aspects of the student teaching experience. The abrupt closure of schools caused significant uncertainty regarding how to satisfy field placement requirements. Student teachers, supervising practitioners, and university staff explained that uncertainty was ever-present as they worked through lesson plans, aimed to meet state and local school district expectations and maintained relationships with students. The student teachers and supervising practitioners who participated in this study displayed a great deal of resilience in navigating uncertain and unprecedented teaching and learning experiences.

Finally, a third theme that emerged from data analysis was the positive impacts of community and collaboration. Perhaps most frequently discussed when participants reflected on the immense challenges of the semester was an appreciation of having another individual to work closely with, and share the work load. Participants on both sides of the relationship found relief

in their ability to work in collaboration to navigate the challenges of the pandemic. Participants

spoke to the power of collegiality, especially when student teachers and supervising practitioners

can work together as co-teachers.

Research Questions and Key Findings

Q1: What factors contribute to, and detract from, the development of successful

relationships between preservice teachers and their supervising practitioners?

Key findings are organized into four sections, including:

Q1F1. When the relationship between student teachers and supervising practitioners allows

for the pair to act as colleagues, student teachers and supervising practitioners consider the

relationship to be successful.

Q1F2. Strong communication between student teachers and supervising practitioners is

important to establishing a successful relationship.

Q1F3. Frequent informal and formal feedback boosts student teacher confidence and allows

supervising practitioners to engage in more reflection on their teaching practice.

Q1F4. Long term professional relationships between student teachers and supervising

practitioners helped pairs to develop trust while in the field. This trust contributed to a

successful relationship between student teachers and supervising practitioners. Relationships

that lack trust were identified as relationships that were not successful, regardless of the

length of the relationship.

Q1F1a: Collegiality and Success: Student Teachers' Perspectives.

As student teachers became established in their supervising practitioners' classrooms, they valued being treated as an equal member of a teaching team rather than solely as a student teacher. In classrooms where the student teacher was integral to supporting the daily routine, student teachers felt comfortable to work with and build relationships with students, teach lessons and units, and work as co-teachers during the school day. In these circumstances, the student teachers reported feeling like a valued member of the teaching team. Lily explained that she appreciated her supervising practitioner "giving me as many responsibilities as she could, because she really wanted me to feel like a part of the classroom community, and for the students to know me as a respected figure (teacher) as well."

Megan, a student teacher in a high school science classroom, described her supervising practitioner as:

> very all in – let's meet, let me do whatever I wanted to do. And within the first week of school she had me teaching lessons to my own class, so I was kind of thrown right in and the kids right away saw me as another teacher in the class, rather than someone who was sitting and watching the whole time.

Courtney described a similar experience in her elementary school placement, explaining that:

> things were done together, the kids, my name on the door, my name was on the message from the beginning. I was there on Meet Your Teacher Day, like it was all inclusive, all welcoming and that was her point. They [the students] needed to see me as a teacher as much as they see her as one.

Courtney's students came to her for help just as much as they sought help from Courtney's supervising practitioner. Megan felt similarly and said that she appreciated that her supervising practitioner let her learn by doing as they worked together as co-teachers:

We were able to do a lot of collaborative learning; it was good for stations as well. And that was the same for environmental science. She would teach one, I would teach the second one. And this was especially good because I wasn't very prepared in environmental science. My background is more in human biology; so, it was really, I felt like I learned a whole new subject just by being with her (Megan).

Cara, a university field placement coordinator, echoed the power of a collaborative relationship where both the novice and experienced educator are eager to learn from the experience. She believed that both the student teacher and supervising practitioner should have "an excitement for learning, I mean, the whole experience really is about them becoming great teachers…this is really the start of that career for them and that growth into an amazing teacher." Cara shared that when these qualities exist within the relationship, then the pair can work closely together as co-teachers and have a successful experience.

When asked to explain what a successful student teacher/supervising practitioner relationship would be, Cara explained that co-teaching should be the goal. "I would think that you eventually get to the point that you're doing this co-teaching model, and that could look different depending on the classroom and the grade level, but you really are co-teachers."

Some of the student teachers had prior relationships with their supervising practitioners. In these cases, student teachers remarked that their experiences as colleagues provided a level of trust that created space for different perspectives and, in some cases, resiliency through the challenges of the pandemic. Amanda, who was student teaching in her own classroom but paired

with another teacher in her building as a supervising practitioner, explained that the relationship

was strong and easy to settle into:

> I know she was my supervising practitioner, but I see her as… a colleague and she's
>
> definitely a way more experienced teacher than me and I respect her so much, but we also
>
> have a really collaborative relationship, whereas, um, if the relationship was more of,
>
> like, supervisor-teacher, then I think there would have been a little harder of a time.

> Feelings of collegiality resulted in more teaching experiences for the student teachers,

which allowed them to gain experience while working in their field placement. In addition, these

collegial, almost co-teacher relationships created feelings of trust where the student teacher had

some autonomy to try out and share ideas for teaching. Having these experiences worked in their

favor when schools switched to a virtual model due to COVID-19.

Q1F1b: Collegiality and Success: Supervising Practitioners' Perspectives.

Supervising practitioners had many of the same perspectives as their student teachers did

about what contributed to a successful relationship. A common theme that emerged from data

collected from the supervising practitioners was that collegiality and co-teaching made the

relationship stronger, and created a relationship that was mutually beneficial to both partners.

Supervising practitioners, like Kristy, a second-grade teacher, made a conscious effort to ensure

that their student teachers were treated as equals by students and other staff in the school

building. Kristy didn't even refer to her student teacher as such:

> I mean, I really tried to make her a big part of the classroom. So, you know, when she
>
> came through the door, I tried not to call her a student teacher, even to students. I said
>
> 'we're so lucky we have a second teacher in our classroom,' you know, just using that
>
> kind of language is really important.

While Kristy only worked with her student teacher for the spring semester, she said that it was important for her to draw on her own experiences as a student teacher, where she was treated similarly. The shared, collegial experience is one reason why Kristy is encouraged to invite student teachers into her classroom. She explained that she appreciates their "fresh energy that sometimes brings to light best practices and different methods that are out there."

Larissa, a middle school science teacher, also treated her student teacher as a colleague. In her view, her student teacher entered the field placement experience ready to teach. Larissa explained that, "very soon on it became more of a co-teaching relationship because she was, she was really skilled." Larissa was able to share the workload with her student teacher, explaining that she wanted her involved in as many aspects of the teaching day as possible:

> She did everything, from you know, helping me create assessments, to helping with special education modifications, to sitting in on all the faculty and department meetings, and sometimes even parent meetings and gave perspective because she had a relationship with these students.

Although Larissa initially took the lead in the classroom and shared her perspectives on rubric creation, grading, and other classroom activities for which her student teacher took responsibility, she encouraged her student teacher to add her own input and gradually turned the majority of classroom responsibilities over to her.

Lauren, an elementary literacy specialist, valued the partnership that developed with her student teacher, explaining that it was important that her students see the student teacher as an equal adult in the classroom. Like Larissa, she, too shared planning and teaching with her student teacher, explaining:

I asked her to make a goal, what our goal would be working together in the literacy

block, in that writing time, and she picked mini-lessons; she really wanted to get better at

that. So, we actually ended up doing a lot of planning for that and actually co-taught. It

was a lot of the two of us up in the front of the room…tag-teaming, you know I would do

the connection, introduction, and teaching point, and then she'd do the active

engagement, or vice versa…the kids really saw us as a partnership for the writing.

Lauren felt that having this close, collegial relationship with her student teacher was a

learning experience for her as well. As she supported her student teacher in meeting program and

licensure requirements, Lauren's student teacher introduced her to new ways of teaching. "I

learned a lot from her, too. It went both ways which was exciting." They were able to establish a

strong teaching relationship and Lauren appreciated having the extra adult support, especially

during the pandemic.

Kristy, Lauren, and Larissa made it a point to include their student teachers in many parts

of the teaching day and worked closely with them. Supervising practitioners' ability to also gain

new knowledge about teaching and professional support from the relationship is one area where

they were able to forge a successful relationship.

Q1F2: Strong Communication Exists in Strong Relationships

Strong communication was another common theme all student teachers shared when they

identified that they had strong, successful relationships with their supervising practitioners.

Student teachers said that frequent communication was an important building block towards

establishing a strong working relationship. Before schools closed due to COVID-19, much of the

communication between student teachers and supervising practitioners happened during the

school day. For Courtney, the beginning of the school day was an important point of

communication in terms of developing a plan and setting expectations for the day. "Well before

school started, we'd get a game plan together and go from there." While Courtney and her

supervising practitioner valued before school hours to settle and prepare for the day, others

established other routines of regular communication during and after the school day.

Data analysis revealed that strong relationships were supported by ongoing

communication that took place across a variety of settings, through different means, both in and

out of the classroom. "We mostly communicated through email, but on top of it, we had one big

teacher's room, so every time we were both in there, well, she's very approachable," Katie said

of her supervising practitioner. "I could walk right up to her and talk to her." In Melissa's case,

"the teachers all ate lunch together, so…we would all eat lunch together. I also had their [the

other teachers'] phone numbers." Melissa noted that before COVID, much of the communication

took place in the lunch room or other places in the school, rather than by phone after school

hours.

In Lily's case, she had a previous professional relationship with her supervising

practitioner and explained that they:

> were friendly because we had known each other prior to the practicum starting. So, I
>
> mean, before COVID, we did a lot of texting if we weren't in school, even if we were in
>
> school and something needed to be communicated.

Cara, a field placement coordinator from the university, echoed perspectives expressed

by the student teachers and supervising practitioners about the importance of communication and

trust when building a successful relationship. Student teaching can be a challenge for both parties

because it requires the supervising practitioner to share their classroom. Cara recognized that,

"the biggest, most important quality that it [the relationship] needs to have is open

communication, and there needs to be trust between the teacher and the student." Cara's belief that communication, trust, and co-teaching are important aspects of a student teacher/supervising practitioner relationship echoed similar themes of the student teachers and their supervising practitioners when exploring the positive aspects of the relationship.

Not surprisingly, COVID changed how student teachers and supervising practitioners communicated; in relationships where strong communication norms were established early on, the student teachers continued communication with their supervising practitioners over Google Meet, Zoom, and text message. Katie explained that even though she finished her practicum requirements, she continued to communicate with her supervising practitioner. "It was a lot of email, a lot of Zoom, meeting with my program supervisor, that was all Zoom meetings, too. So, it took a lot of different routes, but we definitely communicated well given the situation."

For Courtney, COVID changed both how she communicated with her supervising practitioner and what they discussed, noting that this time period was one that seemed like a lot of waiting and meeting the demands of other colleagues' schedules:

> I think we communicated well, the problem was that a lot of the time we were waiting on other people for things. We were waiting on curriculums to be sent out, or meeting links to be sent out, or when so-and-so would be available in order to meet, because we were meeting as a whole team and our team was…at least seven of us…so it was a lot to get people together in the beginning.

Lily noticed that once schools closed, frequent communication with her supervising practitioner continued, but the interactions were often limited to planning rather than informal or casual communications. Lily said:

I think once COVID happened, it was more, it was more frequent for one and we were

planning a lot of stuff together rather than planning separately. And then we were, um,

debriefing on how things went, and then there were Zoom calls, staff meetings, and she

would forward me the links so that I could be in on what was happening with the school

and the district and see firsthand how things played out, but yeah…it was a lot.

Communication helped student teachers and supervising practitioners build strong,

collegial, professional relationships. While means of communication shifted when schools

closed, patterns of communication, in the eyes of the student teachers, remained the same.

Q1F3a: Feedback Strengthened Student Teacher Confidence

Feedback flourished in relationships with strong communication. Katie, a special

education student teacher, shared that:

it was really comfortable when she came to um, observe me and I didn't feel a lot of

pressure, you know, and then we got to talk about it…her criticism was really great to

take in, it didn't feel like I was being critiqued. It was…constructive and helpful.

Feedback occurred both formally and informally when individuals in successful

relationships were able to communicate frequently. Student teachers found that receiving in-the-

moment feedback from their supervising practitioners was incredibly useful because they could

use it immediately to improve their practice. Shannon explained:

He mentioned to me, oh I noticed that you, you avoided this one table area, and he's like

you know, those students, they both have special needs. Is there a reason you avoided

them? And I said, I didn't even realize it…so that was really good for me to know, like

am I actually meeting everyone's needs, especially those who might require extra

scaffolding? So, that was something I immediately worked on.

Amanda, a student teacher completing her practicum in her own classroom, appreciated feedback from her supervising practitioner. She explained that having her supervising practitioner come into her classroom was helpful because, "there are some things, you know, when you're in the lesson, it's hard to see." Amanda described her supervising practitioner as a colleague for whom she had a great deal of respect. Due to this relationship, Amanda explained that she appreciated having opportunities to talk and reflect:

I think it was just so surprising to know how useful it could be to take time out of the day to reflect on each other as educators. Ok, this is the student, this is a problem with this student, but maybe looking at how you're teaching and then what could change about that delivery of instruction. I didn't realize just how important it is to take time out of the day to look at all that stuff.

Amanda was able to use these feedback sessions as opportunities to talk about real-time issues that she was working through in her classroom. She explained that receiving feedback from her supervising practitioner was the most valuable part of her student teaching experience, "I definitely think if I had one thing that was the most helpful, it was definitely the observations, mostly the feedback I got from someone who knew me." Feedback, which can inspire reflective conversations or simply validate different choices, was another aspect of a strong relationship between student teacher and supervising practitioner.

Q1F3b: Feedback Gave Supervising Practitioners Opportunities to Reflect on Practice

Data revealed that balanced, collegial partnerships supported success in other aspects of the student teacher/supervising practitioner relationship, as well. In successful relationships, supervising practitioners found that the feedback process flowed smoothly in the weeks leading up to school closures. Leila, an elementary school reading specialist, explained that having a firm

sense of trust with her student teacher helped with the feedback process. "I think we developed a level of trust," Leila said. "She was also very good at what she was doing, so my feedback was mostly positive…my comments were mostly specific and about trying new things." Leila, and other supervising practitioners, were able to celebrate their student teachers' successes in the classroom during formal and informal feedback conversations.

In addition, feedback conversations provided constructive comments that student teachers were able to put into action immediately. Michelle explained how she gave constructive criticism to her student teacher:

> You know, she was in that new teacher phase of wanting to be nice, always wanting to be the nice teacher. We all want to be the nice teacher, but sometimes there's a line and you're the one who has to set it. We just have to be firm about it, so that's kind of a nuance that isn't always talked about…I just wanted her to step up and take charge more.

Michelle's trusting relationship with her student teacher permitted conversations about professional growth and reflection; she shared that her student teacher accepted critical feedback well. During the semester, Michelle "took note if she [Michelle's student teacher] changed that behavior later or made an attempt and she definitely did."

Kristy echoed the importance of trusting relationships, explaining that it was rare when her student teacher didn't immediately implement Kristy's feedback in her teaching practice. When supervising practitioners shared feedback with their student teachers, they welcomed and encouraged their student teachers to reflect and share their understanding.

Lauren shared that her student teacher was "very self-reflective," a professional quality that Lauren also recognized that she possesses. "She really wanted feedback," Lauren said. "I feel the same way as a teacher. I always want someone to tell me, you know, what I can do

better, what went well, how I could do better." Since Lauren and her student teacher did a lot of

co-teaching, she reported that there were many opportunities for these reflective conversations.

Kristy found that the feedback process with her student teacher was mutually beneficial.

Attributing this open feedback loop to the strength of their relationship, Kristy explained:

I think it was a very open and positive relationship, where she didn't feel like I was

attacking what she was doing or anything like that. It really was, here, I'm here to help

you grow just as much as I think you're here to help me grow, too."

Kristy made sure that her feedback began and ended with positives and that her

suggestions were always shared as one way of doing things, rather than the only way.

Supervising practitioners shared that, more often than not, student teachers were quick to

focus on what went wrong during a lesson. Supervising practitioners made sure that feedback

celebrated success as well, making sure they provided examples of parts of a lesson that went

well. Michelle, an elementary school special educator, shared that her student teacher:

was very hard on herself and would always first point out what she did wrong and so I

made sure to find balance between what are the areas that we work on, but also look at

these things that went well during that time.

Michelle encouraged her student teacher to focus on the positive parts of a lesson.

Kristy shared a similar experience; she explained that her student teacher was open to

"putting her own sort of spin" onto suggestions that Kristy had for her. Larissa said, "I would

say, 'this is how I do it,' and she would put her own twist on it because the way she related to

students was different than me in some ways. Similar to Kristy, Larissa focused on the positive

by encouraging her student teacher's unique voice. Lauren's celebrated her student teacher's

curiosity for learning more about teaching. Lauren explained, "She [Lauren's student teacher]

was always like, 'I know it could be better, next time what should we try?' So, it was kind of more about her own learning." Working together and having reflective conversations about teaching and learning contributed to the development of open and successful relationships between supervising practitioners and student teachers.

Q1F4a: Long Term Relationships Create Trust and Contribute to a Successful Relationship: Student Teachers' Perspectives

Student teachers cited that trust played a crucial role in the success of a relationship with their supervising practitioners. In some relationships trust was established because the student teacher and supervising practitioners had previous professional relationships. Student teachers shared that trust and a strong relationship were especially important when schools closed due to COVID-19.

Amanda was one student teacher who had an existing relationship with her supervising practitioner. Amanda felt that this existing relationship helped her to be more collaborative with her supervising practitioner. Amanda explained that her supervising practitioner was "one of the other substantially-separate teachers in the building, so we work as a team at the school. It was my second year working with her there." While she still viewed her supervising practitioner as a superior, Amanda felt that they were able to both learn from one another as part of a teaching team:

> She [Amanda's supervising practitioner] made that really clear that she is, like I said, a
> really experienced teacher, but she made me feel like some of the things she had observed
> or some of my ideas were still very helpful and that she could use them.

Amanda's relationship with her supervising practitioner was collaborative from the beginning. She felt that the trust the two had for one another allowed them to work together and mutually benefit from the experience.

Katie also knew her supervising practitioner prior to beginning her field placement. Similar to Amanda, Katie explained that she felt that the long-standing relationship with her supervising practitioner helped the relationship to be trusting and mutually beneficial:

She was actually my curriculum coordinator as well, so we had a very good relationship. It was really comfortable when she came to observe me…I think it was actually exciting for her, too, because she used to be a classroom teacher until she moved into that role. She was kind of excited to see how, you know, the curriculum she put together was being put forth. I think she got a lot out of it.

Megan and Lily also confirmed that having a prior-established, trusting relationship with their supervising practitioner contributed to the relationship's success. Both Megan and Lily spent the fall semester with their supervising practitioners completing their pre-practicum requirements. For Lily, this created a positive start to the relationship. She explained that, "at the beginning, we were friendly, you know because we'd known each other." Megan echoed these thoughts, sharing that her student teaching experience "was really, really great. I was with her [Megan's supervising practitioner] for my pre-practicum as well. So, I started off the year in the fall and then went seamlessly into student teaching in the spring."

Another student teacher who felt a similarly seamless transition was Courtney, who was completing a year-long practicum. Courtney attributed trust and hands-on experiences to the longer relationship with her supervising practitioner. In the spring, Courtney's supervising practitioner also had another intern, but Courtney explained that, due to the year-long nature of

her placement, "we had a good working relationship where she [Courtney's supervising practitioner] let me and the other intern have a lot of responsibility and take over a lot of the teaching…she trusted us completely with students." Amanda, Katie, Megan, Lily, and Courtney had successful relationships with their supervising practitioners prior to student teaching, and student teaching allowed that relationship to continue to develop both professionally and personally.

For Megan, the relationship with her student teacher during her pre-practicum and student teaching was just the beginning of something more long-term. Megan commented that her supervising practitioner "gave me all of her materials. I'm using them now to plan the year, and I was just talking to her ten minutes ago." Megan, who was spending time on her summer vacation to connect with her supervising practitioner, explained:

> I feel like I gained a really great friend and like I said we're still talking. We're meeting next week for coffee or something. And we even are sharing lessons, even though I got a job in a different district, but we still talk about lesson ideas with each other. I think that will continue for a long time.

For the student teachers discussed in this section, the success of their relationship with their supervising practitioner started before the actual student teaching experience began. Having professional connections or longer working relationships provided hands-on teaching opportunities, trust, and friendship for the student teachers as they worked through this important time in their careers.

Q1F4b: Long-Term Relationships and Trust Contributed to a Successful Relationship:

Supervising Practitioners' Perspectives

When building successful, professional relationships with their student teachers, supervising practitioners sought to provide hands-on experiences and quality feedback as frequently as possible. In addition to their commitment to providing these professional experiences, supervising practitioners shared that building a personal relationship with their student teachers also contributed to a trusting and successful relationship. Michelle reflected that it was helpful for her to know about her student teacher's life outside of school:

> You're cultivating, you know, both the personal relationship and the professional
>
> relationship and developing her as a person, you know? When I had the opportunity, I'd
>
> ask about her weekend and whatnot. I'd find out how her family that she takes care of is
>
> doing and can kind of gauge what her stress level would be like for the week.

Michelle took this time to get to know her student teacher, which proved to be beneficial when her student teacher had to step back briefly due to some personal issues. Michelle added that these conversations helped her know, "if I should not be pushing too much or anything." Michelle's understanding of her student teacher's personal life helped her have a better understanding of her student teacher's perceived levels of stress. In Michelle's eyes, their working relationship benefitted from this approach and helped her student teacher have a successful student teaching experience.

Like the student teachers discussed in the previous section, some supervising practitioners participating in the study also had student teachers with whom they had prior relationships. Martina, Larissa, and Michelle had all worked with their student teachers in different practicum or other work experiences. Larissa, who worked with her student teacher

during a pre-practicum experience, explained, "from my prior relationship with her she knew the curriculum, so I wasn't worried about the content." Continuing this prior relationship allowed Larissa to be more prepared to jump into creating more teaching opportunities for her student teacher at the start of the semester. Since the two did not need to spend time getting to know one another, Larissa was able to specifically focus on what she knew her student teacher needed— more classroom experience. "We just jumped right in and we were the dream team, and it was really fun," Larissa said.

Michelle also appreciated that there was less time needed for her and her student teacher to get to know one another. Michelle's student teacher was working on dual certification in general and special education. As a result, she spent the fall student teaching with Michelle's general education co-teacher. Michelle said, "I got to know her a lot, even just when she was doing her gen-education practicum, and then she was able to slip right into Special Education."

Martina, a middle school special educator had different professional connections to her student teacher but, like Michelle, found that this connection allowed them to slip quickly into a strong relationship. Martina reflected, "I am very fortunate that she was my aide the year before." All three of these supervising practitioners attributed much of the success of the field placement experience to the extended relationships they were able to have with their student teachers, especially considering the challenges that impacted the relationship when COVID shut down schools in mid-March.

Q1F4c: Relationships That Lack Communication, Trust, and Collegiality Are Not Identified as Successful: Student Teachers' Perspectives

Of the eight student teachers participating in this study, six shared that collegiality, hands-on teaching experience, communication, and trust contributed to strong and successful

relationships with their supervising practitioners. Shannon and Julia, however, stated that they

relied more on their own personalities and the teaching communities at their placement schools

for support rather than relying solely on their supervising practitioners.

Julia, a special education student teacher, shared that she struggled with her district's co-

teaching expectations, which she described as "complicated." She also shared that the personality

differences between her and her supervising practitioner caused her to struggle with the

professional aspects of their relationship. Julia explained that, while in a class with a general

education co-teacher, her supervising practitioner:

> Kind of took a step back and let the English teacher kind of rule the roost, which was also
>
> sort of a personality thing…the way [my district] does co-teaching um, is complicated
>
> because they're [special educators] there [in the classroom] every other day, but
>
> sometimes it's not every other day, sometimes it's like maybe just once a week, um
>
> which can be really challenging for the special education teacher to um, establish that
>
> presence in the classroom.

As a result of this aspect of her experience, Julia did not often observe her supervising

practitioner's teaching. Despite this lack of teaching opportunities, Julia said that her supervising

practitioner was supportive. As a former substitute teacher at the school where she was

completing her student teaching, Julia explained that she "had a great personal relationship with

him [her supervising practitioner]. I had known him for two years prior, and ate lunch with him

every day in that first year." Despite this, however, she described her supervising practitioner as:

> Very chill, very laid back…but I felt like there were some things I wanted to change.
>
> Like, he, a lot of the other special education teachers would describe him as lazy and a lot
>
> of the English teachers were like, 'yeah, I don't know why he's in my classroom.' So, it

was hard to really see what being a special educator in a co-taught classroom meant in observing him.

In order to create more opportunities to observe effective teaching, Julia sought out other teachers in other classrooms in her school, explaining "I did a lot of outside observations and I would go into other classrooms and kind of figure out how those co-teaching relationships worked…I got a lot of mentorship from the larger community." These experiences allowed Julia to witness other co-teaching relationships between general and special educators. While seeking out positive co-teaching experiences, Julia found opportunities to work with students in the school:

> I was still able to get the learning experience that I really wanted and I did um, I did a one-on-one lesson with the student that I worked with in the fall for my first observation and I thought that really went well. That was a great experience to be able to craft that lesson. Overall, I just felt very supported by the other members of the [school] community.

Julia explained that she thought highly of her supervising practitioner because of their previous professional relationship. Even though she held her supervising practitioner in high regard, she shared disappointment that she, "didn't feel like I got a lot of mentorship from my supervisor." Despite these challenges, Julia shared that her field placement "went well, but I think it went well because I am the person I am, and very self-motivated, and super independent, and I'm able to get positive experiences out of anything." The personality differences, which detracted from Julia's overall experience, did not negatively impact her overall experience, but she felt that she had to work harder to create meaningful learning experiences for herself.

Shannon, an elementary art student teacher, also had to overcome significant personality differences with her supervising practitioner. To navigate the semester and cultivate a successful experience, Shannon relied on prior teaching experience and her own intrinsic desire to learn. Shannon felt that her supervising practitioner's personality was initially difficult to manage and deal with. "It started out very difficult for me because, as an SP, he is a great educator, but he's, I would call him a difficult personality, very negative at times." Shannon's previous experience working with students in an afterschool setting prepared her to be "very diplomatic, maintaining positivity when it seemed difficult to do so." She also felt that her prior experience was the only reason she was invited into her supervising practitioner's classroom. "He basically didn't want to have me and that the only reason he did was because I had over 10 years of teaching experience," Shannon explained. "So, at first I was like, ok, I'm gonna keep an arms distance." Shannon said that her afterschool experience allowed her to jump into teaching in her supervising practitioner's classroom, despite having personal challenges with her supervising practitioner.

Shannon said that when her supervising practitioner noticed that she was able to connect with students, he began to come around:

> So, because of my teaching experience in afterschool, he felt comfortable letting me start classes within the first week, sort of takeover in small pieces…he noticed right off the bat how well I worked with students and how fast I made connections, so that was a really positive thing he mentioned to me.

As Shannon's relationship with her supervising practitioner began to thaw, she shared that he gave her positive feedback on her teaching as well as constructive criticism about areas

where she could improve. Interestingly, the challenges of COVID-19 eventually improved the

relationship between the two.

> There were moments where we are able to co-teach and it really felt in that moment like
>
> co-teaching, um it was right before COVID happened, and we were doing a fifth-grade
>
> lesson. And the kids were having a good time…that was a really special moment.

> Shannon felt that even though she had a rocky start, her ability to persist by relying on

past experience and opportunities to work with the students together eventually helped the

relationship become more successful.

> Shannon and Julia both identified personality differences as detractions from their student

teaching experiences. Both student teachers did not identify their student teaching experience as

a completely unsuccessful one. Relying on their own personalities and their desire to be

successful, however, they worked through the personality challenges they faced.

Q1F4d: Relationships Which Lack Communication, Trust, and Collegiality Are Not Identified as Successful: Supervising Practitioners' Perspectives

> One supervising practitioner expressed significant concerns with his student teacher

during the spring 2020 semester. Clark, a high school teacher, was unafraid to share both the

challenges of his relationship and his perceptions about why the relationship was so difficult.

When given the opportunity to reflect on his relationship with his student teacher, Clark

immediately expressed regret over not building a stronger, more trusting relationship with her.

Clark, who has worked with student teachers in the past, explained that his student teacher

seemed, "nervous around me and bonded more with my college-aged interns. She was probably

one of my youngest student teachers." He felt that the age gap between the two had a greater

impact than he anticipated, expressing that it felt different from prior relationships with other

student teachers. He explained his relationship with this student teacher was:

> Slower than normal. I don't know if it was a personality thing, I don't know if I have any
>
> good theories on this. It may be unusual that there were two Asian teachers, right?
>
> Because there are relatively few Asian teachers, especially in the humanities in [this
>
> school district]. I don't know if that was strange for her. She was enthusiastic. I have a lot
>
> of regrets. A lot of mistakes were made on my side.

Clark's previous student teachers also attended the university in this case study. He felt

that his prior experience with the university gave him a good understanding of what to expect

from the semester. He did not feel that those expectations were met in this student teaching

experience.

Clark's struggle with unmet expectations in the practicum experience are not uncommon.

In her role with the university's field placement office, Cara shared that unmet expectations are a

common reason why student teachers and supervising practitioners turn to the university for

additional support during the practicum. She explained:

> The main thing that causes conflict, again, is bad communication, especially about what's
>
> expected of each party. And also, a student's confidence, so you know, sometimes
>
> teachers want students to jump right in, they want them to…you know, be able to take
>
> initiative, take on this class, or reading group, whatever you need to do…also
>
> professionalism is a huge thing that I see becoming a challenge.

Clark admitted that his expectations from prior experiences with the university made it

more difficult to connect with his student teacher. He shared that student teachers from the

university frequently were, "really on top of things" from the beginning of the field placement.

He remarked, "I was actually a little frustrated that she came with less [sic] professional experiences." His expectation was that his student teacher, "would be more proactive in sort of growing what she wanted to do. That she would articulate what she needed…She was just very nervous."

Cara felt that student teacher confidence or lack of initiative, and a lack of professionalism typically causes the most conflicts for the relationship. According to Cara, communicating expectations was especially important when gauging a student teacher's confidence. She explained that awareness of student teacher confidence is essential; supervising practitioners want student teachers to teach and take over aspects of the classroom without being asked. In his reflections on his experience with his student teacher, Clark recognized that as a supervising practitioner, he may have played a role in his student teacher's discomfort, explaining that:

> I could've been more supportive. I'm not sure how, but given time, I could have been supportive…I think this was a very isolating couple of months for her. And I'm both frustrated and I feel really bad about my role in that experience.

Clark shared since he and his student teacher never developed the trust necessary for the relationship, the experience was an unsuccessful one over all. He struggled with the fact that there were a number of unmet expectations during the semester and with the fact that he harbored regret for not being as supportive as he could. These challenges would go on to impact their relationship during COVID, as well, which will be discussed in a later section.

Question One Summary

Successful student teacher/supervising practitioner relationships involved hands on learning experiences and the freedom to create lessons. In many instances, student teachers

found themselves being treated as an equal in the classroom, and supervising practitioners made special efforts to treat their student teachers as colleagues. In these relationships, both the supervising practitioner and the student teacher were able to feel comfortable trying new things, making teaching suggestions, and, in some cases, making mistakes.

Student teachers and supervising practitioners found that a successful relationship was one where the student teachers felt that they were treated as equals in the classroom. When student teachers were consistently included and treated as collaborators with their supervising practitioners, they were able to develop relationships with the students in their classroom community, practice different teaching methods and ideas, and get valuable feedback on their teaching.

Strong communication was also a common thread in the relationships that both supervising practitioners and student teachers defined as successful. Strong communication allowed for both realistic feedback and support for the individual during and, in some instances, after the field placement experience was over.

Despite some challenges in the field placement experience, even student teachers and supervising practitioners who did not initially feel comfortable with one another were usually able to find opportunities for success while working with their supervising practitioners. Student teachers and supervising practitioners noted that personality differences and levels of engagement in the classroom can be significant factors in creating a comfortable and safe place for a student teacher to practice. When student teachers in some of these challenging relationships, however, were self-motivated, this self-motivation allowed them to seek out better experiences, despite challenging adult relationships.

Q2: In what ways is the student teacher/supervising practitioner relationship impacted by times of uncertainty?

An unexpected turning point in the field placement experience took place in mid-March of 2020. At this point of the semester, study participants found the field placement experience disrupted when school districts across Massachusetts closed to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In the weeks that followed, districts enacted different plans to keep students as engaged as possible. General feelings of uncertainty during the spring of 2020 ranged from concerns about personal health to challenges navigating the ever-evolving plans set forth by school districts, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the university. For the student teachers specifically, the uncertainty over how they would meet their final requirements of the field placement experience was an overwhelming thought.

Key findings are organized into four sections, including:

Q2F1. Major concerns surrounding field placement experiences after schools closed were the navigation of online teaching and learning requirements, confusion surrounding state licensure and field placement requirements, and concerns about meeting students' needs in a virtual format.

Q2F2. Student teachers and supervising practitioners navigated the uncertainty of this time by learning together.

Q2F3. Navigating uncertain times can help to repair a previously difficult relationship.

Q2F4. Supervising practitioners felt great responsibility to support student teachers both professionally and personally during the school closures.

Q2F1a: School Closures, Online Teaching and Learning, and Frequently Changing

Expectations

When Massachusetts schools closed, teachers across the state waited for guidance from

Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker and Education Commissioner Jeff Reilly as to how to

proceed with teaching students from home. These decisions came in separate phases. The first

phase was a two-week closure, which expanded to a month-long block of time. Amanda, a

student teacher, described these early days of uncertainty, explaining that she, her classmates,

and colleagues, "thought it was just going to be two weeks. Then we thought it was going to be a

month. So, it was always this planning with an end in sight. I don't think there was any long-

term planning going on at this point." Katie's experience was similar. As she waited for news,

she felt that everything "was just continuously changing, every day was something different…I

just feel like it kind of turned everyone's life upside down." Lily used the term "mess" to

describe the weeks that passed. She shared frustration over the differing benchmarks and closure

dates, until it was finally announced in April that schools would be closed through the end of the

academic year. It was at this point that all instruction was expected to take place online.

Districts interpreted DESE's instructions differently. Virtual learning models varied

across the state, but many districts adopted a model that involved specific days scheduled to

deliver synchronous lessons as well as additional asynchronous learning. The synchronous

instruction took place on Zoom or Google Meet with the classroom teachers, while the

asynchronous learning was to take place while students were not directly meeting with a teacher.

Courtney recalled her district's model, explaining that she saw her students on "Tuesday,

Wednesday, and Thursday, for a half hour, and then for small groups we saw them all on

Wednesday for a half hour. And then there was some time every week where they [the students]

had to meet with one specialist."

Megan explained trying to navigate the content that she would teach, saying, "they [the

school district] told us we were not allowed to teach new content and that we would have to

come up with assignments that they could do on their own that covered past content." Unlike

Courtney, Megan's district did not initially have a set schedule for virtual meetings with

students. In her district, teachers held virtual check-ins, but students were not required to attend.

The student teachers and supervising practitioners, the majority of whom were working

in suburban districts, shared their differing experiences and expressed some frustration connected

to the uncertainty of how to reach students in an online environment. Amanda explained that her

district:

> Jumped into high gear, we sent kids home with, every kid went home with a Chromebook
>
> and every kid also went home with two weeks-worth of paper-based work…I mean that
>
> Friday was like frantic kind of, cause I was just getting binders organized for each student
>
> so they had two weeks of work to take home, and then also I was like, wait, so I also have
>
> to figure out over the weekend how to plan online material? So, there were just a lot of
>
> unknowns and a lot of questions, um at first.

Amanda also explained that her district required general education teachers to provide

three to four hours of asynchronous material for students, either in the form of pre-recorded

lessons or assignments on Google Classroom in addition to three to four hours of synchronous

time on Google Meet.

Eventually, Megan's district, along with others, began to meet more regularly on a set

schedule. She found that, while the schedule did become more regulated, what the teachers were

teaching during these times was limited. Instead of wrapping up the year with seniors involved in internships that they had prepared for to end the year, Megan explained that:

> The rest of the year was kind of taking a unit and really spreading it out over the course of the next few months. For environmental science, she [Megan's supervising practitioner] actually put me in charge of environmental science completely and…I know they're seniors, they're leaving…we were not supposed to have them anymore past um April. So, we just decided we'll just do stuff that's interesting to them and fun, so I asked them what they were interested in that we hadn't covered, and everything was about oceans. I ended up making a lot of interactive lessons on oceans for them for the next few weeks until they graduated in May and then were done.

As a special education student teacher, Amanda said that she and the other special educators in her placement school:

> Were also asked to just communicate with families weekly, so whether that be like an e-mail, phone call, Zoom, we had office hours a couple of days a week for families to sign up for… We had to log all of that and then also log all of the service delivery in these crazy Google Spreadsheets that were always, always had formatting issues [chuckles] and then I mean there was so much logging of what we were doing.

While her district had a clear plan, Amanda shared that there was a lot of confusion and frustration about the ever-changing expectations, saying that she found that "teachers were just trying to figure out what to do."

In contrast to the experiences of Amanda and Megan, Martina expressed frustration that her district kept their distance learning plans "very, very vague. And it would almost change by

the week. It was absolutely not the way I know other districts did, like you're in English at

10:30…We were not like that by any means."

Kristy summarized the challenges of this time period by explaining how surprised she

was by how quickly teachers managed to adapt. "It really was a very quick turnaround and when

I think back to it. It's [chuckles] kind of unbelievable, like how quickly it happened and how we

just adjusted and again, just kind of embraced it in some ways." Teachers were required to shift

gears throughout the months of closure quickly, with some districts focusing on enrichment

opportunities and others continuing with the curriculum and power standards. The frequent

changes posed a great deal of challenge for the participants working in schools in this study.

Q2F1b: Enduring Licensure and Field Placement Requirement Changes

The university was also impacted by the DESE's frequently changing guidance on

teaching and learning requirements. Cara said:

> I'll be very open and honest, you know, they [the Massachusetts Department of
>
> Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)] were kind of looking to the governor to
>
> mandate or to you know, from his level make decisions, and he kind of left it up to them
>
> [DESE], and they kind of left it up to us [the university]! So, this was the real
>
> downfall…DESE did leave a lot of the decisions up to universities as to what they would
>
> dictate and tell us you could waive certain pieces of the practicum and of the experiences
>
> for students, but we would be responsible for documenting all those waivers, so we
>
> would need a process for that.

Student teachers were required to submit different documentation for student teaching

hours they completed online. In addition, they worked with the university and their program

supervisors in order to navigate the changing tides of the pandemic. Shannon explained her

experience with completing her practicum requirements in this way:

> Cara gave us a virtual hours log, so it was basically, well at first it was a lot more open,
> you know, even Internet searching for lessons you know, anything you do regarding your
> practicum, as long as it's connected, start recording that.

In response to the ever-changing standards, completion of requirements was treated on an

individual basis. Megan elaborated on this, explaining that:

> There was a requirement that we do an inquiry project and I had mine about 80% done. I
> was able to do some of it in class and observe some…I had done all the background
> research and managed to implement it in one class, so basically my program supervisor
> was just, like, give me what you have, because they ended up waiving the project for
> other people.

The uncertainty regarding the requirements of the student teaching experience impacted

many of the student teachers, who turned to Cara and their program supervisors for support. Cara

explained her role:

> I worked a lot with our dean and also our associate dean on communications to go out to
> those in the field and then I worked a lot with the Department of Ed, which I always
> have, but more so in that time frame because we were looking to them for guidance.

Cara felt the pressure and frustrations of the student teachers and university faculty as

they tried to figure out observations, documentation of hours, decisions about practicum

requirements, and other concerns. "There were probably about two to three weeks of just

constant communication with the teachers, with the students, with our faculty, um to say, you

know what? Keep it together! Like, [chuckles] everything is blowing up!"

Beyond the practicum requirements, challenges with DESE, and the other logistical challenges of the remote closure of schools, Cara said her biggest concern was "the mental health of our students. The anxiety, it's, it's a very anxious time for students anyway, when they're student teaching, but to have this thrown into the mix…the anxiety level was through the roof for students." Cara said her goal was to make sure that students had what they needed or the help they were required in order to finish the practicum, despite the challenges they faced.

Cara, along with all of the student teachers participating in this study, worried about meeting the new expectations from the university and the state. At the urging of the university, student teachers continued to get as much hands-on teaching experience as possible. Julia had a number of concerns about achieving her graduation requirements:

> I was so scared and nervous that I was not going to be able to finish my program. I thought that I wasn't gonna be able to get all of the hours that I needed and there were so many questions. I am very Type A, I needed to know the answers to my questions and that's why I really appreciated the communication I had with my supervisor, cause I could just text him and he didn't have answers either.

Julia explained that some of her concerns were connected to her district's slow approach to virtual teaching, but said that the university and her supervising practitioner encouraged her not to worry about her hours.

While some of the student teachers had completed their teaching requirements before the shutdown, there were others who were keeping close track of all of their teaching opportunities in virtual logs in order to meet graduation requirements. Lily found this task frustrating. She was not initially keeping close track of her student teaching hours, because when her field experience

began, she was told "just say you hit the minimum hours, because you will, you'll exceed it."

Once schools closed she found herself suddenly needing to record hours closely:

> When they were telling us to keep track of the individual hours and what you were doing
>
> during them, they [the university] had said this was to supplement what you were already
>
> keeping track of. So, I spent like a day going back into my calendar and coming up with a
>
> log of previous hours that I didn't have…at this time they were still operating under the
>
> assumption that we were gonna go back.

Experiences like these were frustrating for the student teachers, but once DESE officially

closed schools through the rest of the academic year, the university was able to better address the

student teachers' situations. As Amanda reflected, "[The university] didn't have all the answers,

but they made sure that we were able to get things done." As a result, the student teachers

participating in this study were all able to complete their practicum hours, despite the uncertainty

they faced.

Q2F1c: Reaching Students Across Virtual Platforms.

Megan struggled with the fact that students were not required to attend or turn on their

cameras during the synchronous meetings. When describing the Google Meet classes, she

explained that they:

> Weren't mandatory; they [the students] didn't have to have their cameras on or anything.
>
> So, students didn't really come to them. And we kind of used it as a check-in time
>
> anyway, for them to check in and you know, see how they're doing on their work and see
>
> if they have any questions…I would go to the Google Meet with her [my supervising
>
> practitioner], it was usually four or five kids for a few minutes.

Megan would use the time remaining to follow up and plan with her supervising

practitioner.

Clark, also a high school teacher, shared that one of the biggest challenges in connecting

with students was not seeing them during their Zoom meetings at the end the school year. In

addition to Megan's challenges of having inconsistent or small numbers of students attending, he

shared his experience ending the school year with seniors over Zoom:

I remember saying bye to my seniors and it was 12 black squares and I was telling them

how proud I was of them, and they're gonna be okay. And just because they don't have

prom, they don't have graduation, doesn't mean they haven't accomplished something.

And it was like 1:59, class ended at 2:00, and I was like, "guys, I'm just going keep

talking, so I'm gonna let you go." One student typed "bye" and the other black squares

just left.

As a veteran teacher, Clark felt that the ending to his seniors' school year was difficult to

digest because it didn't feel like a typical end of high school. It was not celebratory, but more of

a pause.

Martina's concerns about middle school students were different. She and her colleagues

were not entirely comfortable with classroom management in a virtual space and they lacked

confidence when navigating challenges with behavior:

We ran into some really kind of tricky situations that, middle schoolers learn how to

manipulate, take advantage, be silly, play some games. They were taking the Google

Meet codes and like similar to like Zoom bombing, they were coming in on the Google

Meets under someone else's name with sexual noises, with um, some kind of scary like,

bullying.

Martina explained that she and her colleagues found themselves relying on their district

technology support staff to navigate the challenges presented during the virtual learning, but, at

the time of the interview, was still worried about some of these challenges persisting into hybrid

learning for the 2020-2021 school year.

Importantly, technology was not always accessible for students and, as Martina

explained, learning from home required teachers to "understand the sensitivity of having to show

your home and how vulnerable that makes you." Student teachers and supervising practitioners

discovered that connecting with students was often a difficult and uncertain aspect of their virtual

learning experience.

Like the supervising practitioners, three of the student teachers, Julia, Katie, and

Courtney, explicitly discussed their concerns for the students in their field placement classrooms.

In Courtney's reflection of the spring of 2020, she said:

> I think that that is something that I didn't really realize cause all the kids in my life are
>
> ok, but a lot of kids who go to school go to school to be ok and I think that that is
>
> something I really learned, to check-in and make sure that people are ok.

Courtney expressed that the early days of the pandemic taught her the importance of

checking in with colleagues and students on a more personal level. In some way, all of the

participants in this study expressed a desire to check in, both with students and colleagues. Much

of the work done by the participants during this time surrounded staying connected with students

and colleagues.

Learning was disrupted in many ways during the spring semester of 2020. Student

teachers and supervising practitioners were forced to navigate these disruptions and face the

challenges of remote teaching and learning head on without formal training. As the student

teachers witnessed their supervising practitioners navigate changing teaching expectations, new

schedules, and new methods of engaging with students, they were also facing worries and

anxieties due to the unknown status of their own graduation and program completion

assignments. The remaining findings connected to this question will explore how student

teachers and supervising practitioners found ways to provide meaningful support to one another

during this unprecedented disruption.

Q2F2: Navigating Uncertainty Through Learning Together

Since the shift to virtual learning was an abrupt one, all of the student teachers and

supervising practitioners participating in this study found themselves on a learning journey. As

school districts determined their plans for online learning, the participants explained that the

technology tools used to connect with students were new and foreign, at least in terms of

teaching and learning. Student teacher Lily reflected on her district's use of Zoom to conduct live

class check-ins with students, saying:

> I'd never heard of Zoom before so we both were learning Zoom, but there were some
>
> aspects of it that I learned a little bit quicker and so we'd have, we had a couple of Zoom
>
> calls where it was like Zoom tutorials where I taught her some things that I knew.

Lily expressed that, despite the challenges of learning new ways of teaching and connecting with

students and colleagues, she was glad she could continue to help her supervising practitioner

navigate the challenges of the pandemic.

Many of the student teacher/supervising practitioner relationships took on a reciprocal

teaching and learning model. Shannon explained that she and her supervising practitioner, in

terms of an understanding of technology:

Were on fairly equal footing. We were both learning a lot as we were going through this.

Because I was a student teacher, I wasn't allowed to actually upload the slideshows to

Google Classroom or Seesaw [digital learning tools], and so that was something he

[Shannon's supervising practitioner] was doing that I didn't have experience in, which I

totally understood because I wasn't allowed to try and pursue that.

Shannon experienced that some of the technology was inaccessible for her because of specific

district permissions. So, while she was unable to assign work on district-provided platforms like

Google Classroom, she tried to jump in where she could. She learned that she could help her

supervising practitioner by creating slideshows and other technology resources to help her

supervising practitioner reach students during the pandemic.

In these collaborative, collegial relationships, each member shared some of the load to

balance the requirements put forth by the individual districts to meet student needs. Lily

described working closely with her supervising practitioner during the early days of the shut

down as:

A lot of it was us working together to brainstorm um, you know, activities for the kids,

divide up tasks, um, you know, phone calls every Sunday to write up the schedule for the

kids and send out the parent letter, and I would proofread hers, and add anything if I felt

it needed to be added…I really felt a part of that whole transition, and just the trying to

figure it out aspect of it.

The relationships that had strong communication and feelings of collegiality before the

virtual shutdown continued to thrive under the crisis situation, and many times the responsibility

load of the new expectations was able to be split by the student teacher and supervising

practitioner.

Q2F3: Navigating Uncertainty Can Repair a Difficult Relationship.

For one student teacher in particular, the shutdown strengthened a challenging relationship. Shannon struggled with the relationship with her supervising practitioner at the beginning of the field placement, but the challenges presented by COVID-19 actually served as a means to repair it. Shannon admitted that at the initial announcement that schools would be closing, she felt that her supervising practitioner wanted to "sever all ties" with her. As the shutdown progressed into virtual learning, however:

> He [Shannon's supervising practitioner] asked if I'd like to stay on the rest of the school year, until June 21ˢᵗ, to get the extra experience, and it was clear that he wanted me to stay, very much so, so I opted absolutely. You know, this is a great opportunity and so, and then he's been emailing me throughout the summer, checking in, seeing if I need anything, so it's a huge change from telling me he doesn't want me.

While Shannon was had a rocky start to her time student teaching, through the challenges of the pandemic, her contributions of slideshows and other resources to the district's art department's weekly lessons helped her to become a valued member of her district's art teaching team. While she and her supervising practitioner were put into a difficult teaching scenario, Shannon made the best of the situation and found ways to support her supervising practitioner.

Q2F4: Supervising Practitioners Felt a Great Responsibility to Provide Professional and Emotional Support to Student Teachers

Like the student teachers, the supervising practitioners felt that the shift to virtual learning impacted the relationships they were developing in the classroom. Supervising practitioners felt that they were able to use the presence of the student teacher to enhance their virtual experience by creating breakout rooms with small groups of students and splitting some

of the load of creating virtual lessons. Even with the additional adult in the classroom, the initial

transition to virtual learning was still rocky for the supervising practitioners participating in this

study.

Kristy described feeling as though it was difficult to recreate what would have been

happening in the classroom. She said, "We tried to do small groups, it wasn't like the small

groups we had [in person]…guided reading, things like that, just weren't happening anymore."

Supervising practitioners were attempting to manage shifting expectations from schools as well

as work with and provide meaningful learning experiences for their student teachers.

Supervising practitioners expressed feelings of guilt in how their relationships with their

student teachers changed. Kristy admitted to feeling this guilt when reflecting on the waiting that

came along with the days that immediately followed the school closure announcement. She

explained, "To be very honest with you, my initial thought wasn't really on how I was gonna

support my student teacher. I certainly kept in contact and would text her and say, hey, listen, we

don't know." Kristy felt that she was unable to provide the experience she had intended for her

student teacher. She explained that she was disappointed that her student teacher missed out on

many of the exciting spring and end-of-year events that her school traditionally plans for

students:

> I feel like I certainly, probably felt like it wasn't as successful as maybe she [Kristy's
>
> student teacher] did, and I think that was maybe because I couldn't do as much for her,
>
> especially once March hit…I feel like we went remote and it was really hard to help her
>
> in the kind of way I would have envisioned.

These thoughts of disappointment were echoed in other supervising practitioners' stories of the

switch to virtual learning.

Outside stressors also had major impacts on the relationship that supervising practitioners were able to have with their student teachers. Both Clark and Martina shared that their student teachers both experienced major personal challenges as the result of the pandemic. Martina's student teacher experienced a personally traumatic event one week into virtual teaching and was forced to take some time off from her field experience. To protect her student teacher's privacy, Martina did not wish to disclose any of the details of her student teacher's experience, but did describe navigating this experience with her student teacher:

> When it happened, I said, you know, take all the time you need. And so, for a few weeks she disappeared and I would text and check in, and she needed that time. Like any professional would from their job for a few weeks. And I kind of got word out to our cooperating teachers, general education teachers, and because again we are such a community, they were very supportive of allowing her that time…I kind of made that clear to her. We'll be here when you get back, when you're ready to come back.

Martina said this experience was profound and that her student teacher's presence was missed by both Martina, the students, and the general educators that her student teacher worked with.

When Clark's student teacher's parents both lost their sources of income, his student teacher took on the primary responsibility of helping her family navigate unemployment and other resources. Clark explained:

> Both of her [Clark's student teacher] parents are immigrants…Her mom lost her income, and her dad, lost his income as well later. So, she was helping them navigate unemployment, she was doing a lot of research of them, she was their outward facing person. She was also helping her sister, who was in high school. She had a lot on her plate. She expressed some frustration that the university was not hearing this.

Due to these challenges that she was facing, Clark's student teacher would promise things to him, such as reaching out to students who had not yet logged into the virtual class sessions, but, she was not able to always follow through.

In Clark's communication with his student teacher's program supervisor, he learned that his student teacher "was actually emailing her [the program supervisor] about leaving my classroom during quarantine for mental health reasons." Clark was surprised by this, as it was not a feeling that was communicated by his student teacher. Clark attributed the continued breakdown of their relationship to the challenges of virtual teaching. He explained that his student teacher did "not have reliable Internet. She had three devices she had access to that she shared with a sibling. She had one lap top, a cell phone, and kind of a janky iPad…but she didn't have reliable Internet." Without access the Internet, the divide between Clark and his student teacher, which began before schools closed, increased.

Lauren also felt that the challenges of virtual learning impacted her relationship with her student teacher because her student teacher was working as the full-time teacher in her own classroom:

> I didn't feel like we finished strong, and I knew we would have in person. But also, she's completely overwhelmed teaching everything remotely, and even though we did have a few Zooms together, she was just really overwhelmed. I just think it was a lot.

While in the classroom, Lauren was able to connect with and work in a collegial relationship with her student teacher, but with the switch to virtual learning, and the two teachers' different schedules, she felt as though the semester did not meet the expectations that she set for herself as a supervising practitioner.

It is important to note that none of the supervising practitioners shared that their student teachers had many, or any, of their university expectations to fulfill after schools closed. The participating supervising practitioners shared that their student teachers had just finished their last observation, completed their minimum required hours, or had so few expectations remaining that the university and DESE were able to make exceptions.

For example, Cara explained that DESE was able to allow universities to make exceptions for students who were close to, but maybe not completely meeting the minimum hours requirement. Cara said this particular student (not participating in this study), "extended [their student teaching experience] by a few weeks and she was able to meet the standards, and we did waive I think a few hours, I think she only got to 358 of her hours, our requirement is 400." So, while many of the student teachers stayed on with their supervising practitioners and helped when they were able, either by creating content for synchronous or asynchronous lessons or attending virtual lessons on Zoom or Google Meeting, much of the required aspects of the relationship were over.

The supervising practitioners who expressed guilt or disappointment in the shutdown impacting their relationship with their student teachers expressed these feelings because they wanted to provide their student teachers with more hands-on experiences and a chance to see students fully grow over the course of a semester.

Question Two Summary

Student teaching practicum experiences are important, exciting, and sometimes intense experiences for all people involved in the process. When schools closed to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, the pressures of an already challenging and difficult time increased for the university, student teachers, and supervising practitioners. The student teachers in the classroom

during this time expressed a number of concerns, from meeting the ever-changing requirements

of both the university and the state, navigating and learning digital learning schedules and

requirements from school districts, and maintaining meaningful connections with students.

Supervising practitioners also expressed concern for continuing to meet and prioritize their

student teachers' needs while also navigating new teaching expectations and schedules as well as

new technology tools.

The experience of working through such unprecedented teaching and learning brought

student teachers and supervising practitioners closer together. Student teachers and supervising

practitioners learned new technology tools together. They relied on one another to experiment

with breakout rooms and new educational technology in order to continue to meet students'

needs. Supervising practitioners found opportunities to split the responsibilities of planning and

make sure that student teachers were able to continue to gain hands-on learning experiences in

order to meet graduation and licensure requirements.

Supervising practitioners expressed feelings of guilt as they tried to help student teachers

navigate such a unique student teaching experience. Supervising practitioners recognized the

importance of connecting with student teachers on professional and personal levels, but found

that balancing new teaching expectations and the needs of a student teacher at the same time to

be challenging. The guilt that they expressed related to missed opportunities and chances for the

student teacher to continue to grow.

Q3: In what ways does the practice of mentoring over virtual platforms affect the

relationship between supervising practitioners and student teachers?

When schools closed in March 2020, teachers had to quickly adapt to various methods of

online communication in order to reach students. The same was the case for student teachers and

supervising practitioners who traded their daily, in-person communication to synchronous video or phone calls and asynchronous forms of communication like text messaging and emailing.

Student teachers admitted that learning some of the virtual platforms for teaching was a learning curve for themselves and their supervising practitioners. In order for the relationship to continue to be successful during the remote closure, both parties needed to be willing to learn how to navigate the new technologies provided for communicating to other teachers and students.

Key findings are organized into two sections, including:

Q3F1. Switching to completely virtual teaching and learning platforms changed the frequency of communication between supervising practitioners and student teachers.

Q3F2. Switching to virtual teaching and learning platforms made it more difficult for supervising practitioners to give consistent feedback to their student teachers.

Q3F1: Changes in Communication Frequency.

Schools transitioning to a virtual teaching model meant that student teachers and supervising practitioners went from seeing one another on a daily basis to needing to communicate solely through digital platforms. All participants shared that the methods and frequency of communication shifted when schools closed in March, though not all in a negative way. For some, communication, particularly informal communication, actually increased when schools closed. Megan noted:

> I mean obviously we weren't face to face talking as much as we normally were, but she still made it a point to do Zoom meetings with me multiple times a week. We were texting each day. Um and you know, both of course were very confused and unsure of what was going on.

Lily experienced a similar increase in communication with her supervising practitioner.

> I think once it, COVID, happened it was more um, like, it was more frequent for one and
> we were planning a lot of stuff together rather than planning separately. Then, um,
> debriefing on how things went, it was more planning together and then of course the
> Zoom calls.

As Lily and Megan both navigated the uncertain times with their supervising

practitioners, they both noticed that they engaged in more frequent informal communication once

schools closed. While frequent, the purpose of this communication was different, as the

conversations frequently were more focused on co-planning or checking in on changing

expectations, rather than providing formal feedback on teaching. Still, this frequent

communication meant that these student teachers and their supervising practitioners were doing

more work together, instead of separately.

On the other side of the communication spectrum were Clark and Alice. These

supervising practitioners experienced a decrease in communication with their student teachers

once schools closed. Clark explained that his communication with his student teacher "really

broke down" when he was no longer seeing her face-to-face, but that he "called her a couple of

times. I emailed her, I told her to show up for classes. I asked her, 'What do you need? Do you

want to Zoom?' but she turned down those options." Clark attributed much of this breakdown to

the personal challenges that his student teacher was facing, which were discussed in the previous

sections of this chapter.

Alice's experience communicating with her student teacher also changed because so

much of her virtual teaching was done in isolation. She said, "we weren't communicating as

often, we weren't able to feed off each other in a natural way, um because she couldn't, it was

very limited in how she could learn from what I was doing every day." Still, Alice did not feel

that "the professional relationship necessarily suffered," but the overall experience was very

different from what she anticipated, given the strong start to the semester.

Q3F2: Virtual Learning Complicated Supervising Practitioners' Ability to Give Frequent Feedback

Before schools closed, student teachers and supervising practitioners cited that receiving

or giving feedback was beneficial to the overall relationship. Feedback ended up being an area

that suffered a great deal once schools closed. Before schools closed, Megan noticed a "back and

forth" dialogue that existed in the classroom between her supervising practitioner and her. It was

through this dialogue that Megan and other student teachers were able to get quick points of

informal feedback. Amanda shared that:

> It's really hard to get the same feedback when you're doing something through a camera.
>
> Like it's um, especially since we take the time to have a one on one with another staff
>
> member that we just didn't have the time to do that, so that didn't happen.

> Teaching virtually meant that Amanda and her supervising practitioner were never alone

in their classroom. Especially in Amanda's case, since she was student teaching in her own

classroom, "the support just changed," Amanda said, "because we knew that we were both

teaching in our own classes and were both super busy." Due to the nature of virtual teaching, she

and other student teachers felt that feedback could not be given as freely or frequently because,

in almost all instances the student teachers and supervising practitioners were in a classroom

with other students on the camera.

Katie's supervising practitioner tried to provide feedback opportunities. Katie said, "she

watched a few of my livestreams and she would be like, 'oh, you're trying to make that

engaging, this, that, and the other thing.' Always offering resources…more so offering help than

giving feedback." Katie explained that she felt that her supervising practitioner knew what she

was capable of in the classroom and was shifting to be more supportive rather than critical, due

to the circumstances of the pandemic.

Supervising practitioners shared feelings of guilt related specifically to feedback and their

overall ability to maintain relationships with their student teachers over virtual platforms. Like

the student teachers, they found that the feedback loop was difficult to continue through virtual

teaching. For example, while in the classroom, Clark set up a system that allowed him to give his

student teacher in-the-moment feedback. As his student teacher taught, Clark left sticky notes

about what she did well, as well as things to consider, on his student teacher's desk. After the

lesson, they were able to reflect and discuss the feedback that Clark gave. "During her teaching, I

dropped a whole bunch of Post-It Notes in real time. We didn't have an online version of that,

really," Clark explained. He missed the opportunities he had to talk with his student teacher in

the classroom.

With the switch to virtual learning, this in-the-moment informal feedback was not

possible to give. Many supervising practitioners expressed challenges similar to Clark's. Since so

much of the feedback that supervising practitioners gave was during moments in the classroom

between classes or at other times in the school day, without these moments, supervising

practitioners found it difficult to connect and take adequate time to reflect with their student

teachers.

Question Three Summary

In general, the supervising practitioners participating in this study perceived that they fell

short in their responsibilities as mentors and guides for their student teachers due to the virtual

nature of the second half of the semester. The supervising practitioners who had previously

worked with student teachers had a particular vision for the experiences they wanted to provide

during the field placement. Kristy explained, "I feel like for me the biggest challenge really was

not being able to provide the experience that I envisioned when we kind of first started it."

Uncertainty was the biggest challenge for both student teachers and supervising

practitioners. Study participants shared that they were in a state of survival as they navigated

unprecedented teaching scenarios. Suddenly, even the strongest relationships were not as rich in

communication, feedback, and collegiality, with both sides feeling the stress of missed

expectations.

Q4: In what ways can supervising practitioners support student teachers through times of

crisis? In what ways can student teachers support supervising practitioners?

Key findings are organized into two sections, including:

Q4F1. Maintaining connections with the university, the student teaching cohort, and their

supervising practitioners was most helpful in navigating the COVID-19 crisis.

Q4F2. Supervising practitioners and student teachers supported one another by providing

mindful, personal support, engaging in collaborative learning experiences, and supporting

students in the classroom.

Q4F1: Maintaining Connections with Colleagues was Most Important to Student Teachers

During the COVID-19 Crisis.

When schools shut down, student teachers found that the biggest challenges revolved around

the uncertainty caused by the abrupt and school closures. Student teachers had concerns about

completing their required teaching hours, unit takeovers, or projects connected to their

practicums. They shared their frustrations about conflicting messages from the university, as

guidelines from DESE changed frequently. School closures expanded from just a few weeks to

the end of the academic year. Student teachers frequently turned to their supervising practitioners

or their fellow student teachers in their cohort to navigate these challenges. Reflecting on the

uncertainty, Katie said:

> My colleagues and I all had like a group chat about everything in the practicum to, you
>
> know, get on the same page with all the paperwork and everything, and it was just
>
> constant 'what are we gonna do?'…It was just like a whole lot of stress throughout the
>
> whole thing. I mean I had, I was working with some really great people and, you know,
>
> my program supervisor, my supervising practitioner were really great and were
>
> constantly like, don't worry, we'll get it done, don't stress.

Maintaining connections to the university through their program supervisors and

classmates as well as with their supervising practitioners and students was crucial for student

teachers during this time. Amanda expressed similar thoughts to Katie's and appreciated the

team she had at school. Of the challenges of virtual teaching, Amanda spoke of feelings of

solidarity with her supervising practitioner:

> "It was stressful, but I definitely had the feeling that everyone knew we were doing the
>
> best we could and the team I had in the school, so my supervising practitioner, we were
>
> all close and supportive. If we had a question I would feel like, hey what are you doing,
>
> so at least we're all on the same page?

While collective feelings of stress and anxiety were expressed, student teachers identified

that maintaining connections already established with their supervising practitioners and

university colleagues helped them to navigate uncertain times. Emotional support from

supervising practitioners during the remote closure was valued by student teachers.

Q4F2a: Supervising Practitioners Received Mindful Personal Support from Student Teachers

Supervising practitioners also struggled during this time and their student teachers found their own ways to also help navigate COVID-19. Amanda, who noticed her supervising practitioner was struggling, recognized that navigating the remote closure, "affected everyone a little different," and she found that, "just being mindful of everyone's emotional well-being, too, was kind of, it was a big part of it [navigating the pandemic]." In addition to practicing mindfulness of one another's emotional well-being, participants explained that having two colleagues communicating in the classroom was beneficial to the student teacher/supervising practitioner pairs.

Megan found that she was able to be an asset to her supervising practitioner by pitching in practical support to lighten her supervising practitioner's load.

> We really tried to make sure we were spreading out work equally so that either, neither one of us became too overwhelmed, because I was in school, you know, finishing out other courses, and she's at home with two little kids. So, we tried our best to help each other out and support each other through that.

Courtney was also able to help lighten the load for her supervising practitioner by splitting up duties and responsibilities. Working with an intern in the classroom, Courtney and her supervising practitioner worked out a weekly schedule, "I would run one, we would each run one every day, since there were three of us we would each run a meeting and then participate in a meeting."

Since the student teachers had been treated as co-teachers through most of the semester, they were eager and able to support their supervising practitioners during the school closures.

Q4F2b: Student Teachers and Supervising Practitioners Provided Personal Support to One

Another

When student teachers and supervising practitioners were able to be open with one another about challenges both in and out of the classroom, the mental load of navigating the pandemic became more manageable for both partners.

Kristy was surprised with how quickly her relationship with her student teacher became supportive on a more personal level:

> I think as a teacher we're so usually organized and we try to be prepared for everything but obviously, that was nothing any of us could've prepared for…I think that reliance on each other was something that probably surprised me the most.

As previously discussed, Martina recognized that the pandemic coincided with a difficult personal situation in her student teacher's life. Martina worked to maintain contact with her student teacher during the early days of the school shutdown by offering emotional support through text messages. When her student teacher returned, Martina rallied her colleagues behind her, gradually returning her student teacher's responsibilities as the student teacher expressed readiness. She made sure not to throw her student teacher into all of the responsibilities that she assumed before the schools closed, and chose to focus on social check-ins when the Google Meet class sessions ended with students.

All of the participants in the study recognized the immense challenges that the teaching profession faced in the spring of 2020 and shared that it was an opportunity to rally together and encourage. Kristy said:

I wanted her [Kristy's student teacher] to know that this is a challenging thing, it's a

challenging job, but I feel like we are all in a position where we can all uplift one another

whenever we can…let's do our best to root for one another.

Kristy said her overall message to her student teaching during their time together

centered around importance of teachers working together as a team both in ideal situations and in

challenging teaching situations.

Supervising practitioners found that their student teachers provided additional

professional support in the virtual classroom, just as the student teachers had before schools were

forced to close. Having a student teacher allowed the supervising practitioners to have another

adult in the room who was familiar with the curriculum, the students, and the students' progress

in learning. "I think that's when it was awesome to have the student teacher because it was just

another body, too, and another adult in our Zoom meetings and we were doing breakouts and

different things like that" (Kristy). Having a student teacher allowed Kristy to run her virtual

classroom with some of her similar routines in place because she had a student teacher who

could take a group of students into a break out room to work on skills while Kristy did the same.

Q4F2c: Student Teachers and Supervising Practitioners Engaged in Collaborative Learning Experiences.

Student teachers were also valuable to their supervising practitioners as collaborative

partners in planning and navigating lesson planning in new and different ways. Some supervising

practitioners found that the pandemic challenges created a leveled playing field, as both student

teacher and supervising practitioner were learning new methods of teaching.

In some instances, student teachers became their supervising practitioners' teachers.

When it came to technology, Martina was especially grateful to have her student teacher. "She

can do anything!" she said. Martina, who was spending the summer of 2020 taking classes to

refine some of her skills with educational technology, mentioned that her student teacher was

continuing to help her navigate new technology even after the school year and field placement

ended. Kristy appreciate the chance to learn more from her student teacher:

> In some ways it [the pandemic] presented us with an opportunity maybe for her to kind of
>
> step up and be that kind of expert in some things…but it was harder for me to provide
>
> feedback because I feel like I needed the feedback!

Kristy found that she learned a great deal from her student teacher. Even though it was

difficult for Kristy to give feedback because she was also trying to learn, she still found that the

pandemic created a chance to learn new instructional methods from a new teacher.

Learning together through the experience was powerful and a frequent point discussed by

both the student teachers and supervising practitioners. Lauren felt that she had a very strong

bond with her student teacher and enjoyed learning from another adult in a professional setting.

When she was interviewed, she hoped that she would be able to continue as a professional

partner with her student teacher in the future. Some pairs were continuing their professional

development journeys together with Leila and her student teacher signing up for webinars

together during the pandemic and Michelle learning different behavior management techniques

from her student teacher.

Larissa, who has had student teachers in the past, did not think that working together

through a crisis like COVID had an impact on her desire to work with student teachers again in

the future. Larissa said that student teachers bring fresh perspectives on teaching to the field

placement. To Larissa, both in normal and abnormal teaching environments, having a student

teacher was an opportunity to see how others think and approach challenges, learn some new

skills, and spend time with someone who is energized about the teaching profession.

Q4F2d: Student Teachers and Supervising Practitioners Worked Together to Support Students

Almost all of the participants in both groups mentioned that they were most immediately

concerned about maintaining connections with their students. Continuing the relationships that

began before the school shutdowns started was another way both student teachers and

supervising practitioners were able to navigate the pandemic. Lily mentioned wanting to stay on

with her supervising practitioner after school closed. Lily was driven to maintain the

relationships she developed in her field placement and explained:

> The whole time she [Lily's supervising practitioner] was saying you don't have to do this
>
> if you don't want to…she said that frequently. But for me, like I really wanted to and I
>
> wanted to learn and stay connected with the kids.

Staying connected with students through Zoom and Google Meet helped student teachers

and supervising practitioners feel as though life was continuing on as normally as possible in

spite of difficult circumstances.

Question Four Summary

When schools closed in March, the lines blurred between student teachers and

supervising practitioners. While direct pairs were not able to be interviewed for this study, the

participants in both groups reflected that there were times when they were providing support as

well as times when they needed support. In instances where student teachers may have had more

experience with different technology tools, supervising practitioners were able to lean on this

expertise for the benefit of their students and expand their own views of online learning. Where

supervising practitioners may have had more experience with students or navigating

relationships with other professionals, they were able to help student teachers navigate the final

weeks of their field placement while also having space for the student teacher to experience

anxieties connected to the pandemic. Both student teachers and supervising practitioners had

areas of the relationship they wish they could have improved, but the participants in this study

broadly shared that they appreciated the extra support during the pandemic.

Q5: What impact does a sudden interruption of the field placement experience have on

student teachers' confidence and perceptions of their own readiness to teach?

Key findings are organized into two sections, including:

Q5F1. Student teachers felt ready to teach, especially because of the virtual teaching

experience that they gained during the end of the spring 2020 semester.

Q5F2. Supervising practitioners felt that student teachers were ready to teach, despite

missing out on some important end-of-year experiences in the classroom.

Q5F1: Student Teachers Felt Ready to Teach, Especially Using Digital Tools

The interviews for this study took place in July and August of 2020 and the student

teachers who participated in this study were preparing for teaching positions that felt just as

uncertain as the spring semester when they completed their field placements. While the

uncertainty of the pandemic caused frustration and anxiety for the student teachers, they were

able to reflect on their field placement experience and recognize areas where they felt more

prepared to tackle distance learning, hybrid learning (a combination of virtual and in-person

learning), and the potential of another school shutdown.

Student teachers did not learn about virtual teaching in an ideal situation. Still, the student

teachers appreciated the experience of teaching both in a classroom and virtually. Katie

explained that the distance learning she engaged in during her field placement "isn't going away any time soon, so if I had never done that I would be going into this year at a whole new school um, in a whole new teaching method and would be completely lost."

The unexpected challenges of their field placement experiences also allowed student teachers to grow professionally, not only through learning new technology and new methods of teaching, but also by collaborating with their supervising practitioners and other professionals in a challenging situation. Amanda shared that she experienced personal and professional growth:

> In the ways I collaborated with people and just using technology in so many different ways was like, you just had to do an exponential jump with how much you learned with all those new demands we were being asked to do.

Since the supervising practitioners were also learning the technology as they were utilizing it for the first time, it provided opportunities for collaboration that helped some student teachers feel ready for co-teaching.

Despite the positive opportunities to try new technologies and teaching methods, some student teachers still felt that the pandemic created some situations where the student teachers felt nervous about beginning their teaching careers. In reflecting on her own perceptions about how society viewed teachers during the start of the pandemic, Lily shared:

> I definitely am a lot more scared and nervous to be a teacher, um, especially right now because it was so interesting to witness society's view of teachers through the whole thing, too. Cause I feel like once schools closed and teachers immediately went into online learning they were viewed as heroes and should be paid more, and all this stuff, and now we're in a spot where [people feel that] teachers should, their funding should get cut if they're working from home then they shouldn't be paid, and it's just, it's tough.

While Lily's readiness or desire to teach was not impacted by the remote closure, she felt that a lot of the societal pressures placed on teachers were causing her to have some anxiety before the start of the 2020-2021 school year.

Q5F2: Supervising Practitioners Felt Student Teachers were Ready to Teach, Despite Missing Some End-of-Year Experiences

Supervising practitioners noted that there were many aspects of teaching at the end of the school year that the student teachers missed out on due to the closure of schools. Clark explained that his student teacher never had the opportunity to assign and grade a final project or even really take the time to establish her voice in the classroom by doing a full takeover towards the end of the school year.

Student teachers also missed out on final experiences during the school year, such as the administration of testing, data analysis, and seeing student growth come to fruition. Despite recognizing that there were many missed opportunities in the spring of 2020, Kristy and Michelle both reflected on their own first years of teaching and mentioned that it is hard to ever be truly ready to teach. Michelle asked the question, "Do any of us, though, think we're ever ready to step into that room?"

While some key experiences and opportunities were missed out on by the student teachers, the majority of supervising practitioners in this study were optimistic about their student teachers' potential for success in their first year. Martina noted that she felt her student teacher was ready to jump into the classroom, based on her ability to collaborate with general educators, establish boundaries with students, and jump into IEP meetings. Lauren felt that her student teacher was ready as well, attributing much of her readiness to her personality. "My student teacher is exceptional, to be honest with you. Like her personality from the get-go, she's

a go-getter, she's smart, she's invested, she's thoughtful…and those qualities I think helped her embrace teaching full-time." These supervising practitioners enthusiastically felt that their student teachers could be successful in their own classrooms.

Michelle applauded her student teacher's growth over the field placement, explaining that while she was shy and tentative to start, her student teacher was dedicated to having a successful field placement and was able to tackle all of the challenges that she faced, both before and after schools closed. Martina and Leila also felt that their student teachers' abilities to connect with students made them ready to begin their teaching careers. When asked if her student teacher would be ready to teach in the fall, Martina enthusiastically said, "100%. I have tremendous respect for her as an educator. I think she has a wisdom way beyond her years, as far as what kids need and that balance of kindness and compassion, but holding the expectations high."

Question Five Summary

In general, the student teachers did not feel that the pandemic changed how they felt about entering the classroom full-time, and supervising practitioners did not envision the pandemic creating many long-term challenges for student teachers in their careers. Teaching during the spring of 2020 helped the study participants realize both the power of reflection and collaboration. The pandemic forced many student teachers and supervising practitioners to reexamine their own teaching and find new ways of connecting with students. In this way, student teachers learned that reflection can be an impactful tool in a profession that is constantly changing. Finally, the importance of working with a team to exchange and share resources and also provide emotional support cannot be ignored.

As Shannon stated, "I don't think I'm ready, but I know I can do it. Um, I think having such a supportive school community has really helped me." Student teachers, despite the

uncertainty and challenges faced in their field placement, were provided opportunities to find different ways of doing things and find success in those methods. The challenges of the pandemic may have disrupted a crucial learning experience, but it did not dull the student teachers' ability to grow in their self-efficacy.

Summary

The findings explored in this chapter revealed that, despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, the spring 2020 semester was, by and far, a positive experience. Student teachers and supervising practitioners alike expressed gratitude for one another as they navigated through the challenges of remote teaching. Good communication was crucial in establishing strong working relationships where individuals were able to trust one another and grow professionally, and, in some cases, personally.

Still, the semester was difficult. For some of the participants, a lack of communication significantly impacted the overall experience. For most, rapidly changing guidelines and expectations from the state, school districts, and the university increased participants' stress and caused some frustrations. Again, community connections were vital to working through the challenges and maintaining professional flexibility.

In the end, the participants did not feel that the challenges of the semester would impact the student teachers' career readiness. From the time in the field before schools closed, to getting a front row seat to watch educators engage in creative problem solving, the student teachers in this study gained valuable skills that they did not expect.

The final chapter of this study will break down the findings of each question even further. In addition to a final discussion of the study questions and the themes that emerged from data analysis, the final chapter will also explore the implications of this research and its impact on

teacher education. Limitations and areas for future research will also be discussed before the

chapter ends with a final, personal, reflection from the researcher.

Chapter 5: Discussion

COVID-19 created immense challenges for educators to overcome in a short period. This study explored how COVID-19 impacted a crucial part of the teacher education process—the final field placement experience. Specifically, the study examined the relationships established between student teachers and supervising practitioners and how the challenges of the pandemic impacted the working relationship between the two. Participants were asked to reflect on the practicum experience during the spring 2020 semester, particularly on student teacher/supervising practitioner relationships, and encouraged to identify areas of success, areas that were not successful, and whether or not the experience resulted in the student teacher's readiness to teach, despite the pandemic and all of the frustrations connected with it.

Five questions were used to guide the study:

- What factors contribute to and detract from the development of successful relationships between preservice teachers and their supervising practitioners?

- In what ways is the student teacher/supervising practitioner relationship impacted by times of uncertainty?

- In what ways does the practice of mentoring over virtual platforms affect the relationship between supervising practitioners and student teachers?

- In what ways can supervising practitioners support student teachers through times of crisis? In what ways can student teachers support supervising practitioners?

- What impact does a sudden interruption of the field placement experience have on student teachers' confidence and perceptions of their own readiness to teach?

A total of 17 participants lent their experiences to help answer these questions. Eight student teachers, eight supervising practitioners, and one university field placement staff

reflected on the overall experience of working in a student teacher/supervising practitioner relationship during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through semi-structured interviews, the participants were asked about the practicum experience both before and after schools closed for the pandemic and how they worked to support, teach, and learn from one another. They shared their perceptions of the student teachers' career readiness and their thoughts about the overall success of the field placement experience and the relationships formed in the field. After these 17 stories were compiled, coded, and compared three important themes emerged—professional and personal resilience, the importance of communication, and the positive effects of community and collaboration.

The participants in this study, like many educators across the country, were required to rise and meet the challenges of the pandemic. Despite being thrust into a situation for which they were not adequately prepared, the student teachers and supervising practitioners in this study collaborated, created resources, taught on Google Meet or Zoom, and attempted to keep the learning environment as normal as possible for their students. In addition to managing the demands of the virtual classroom, the participants in this study were also engaged in the most crucial part of teacher education—the final field placement experience. For supervising practitioners, this meant supporting their students as well as a student teacher—attempting to continue to provide feedback, listen, mentor, and provide opportunities for hands on practice. Student teachers, in addition to learning to teach, also navigated worries about their future status as teachers when licensure expectations were in flux, tried to maintain contact with their supervising practitioners and other colleagues at their placement schools, and supported their supervising practitioner in the classroom as much as possible. The spring semester of 2020 was

not an ideal time to learn to teach, and yet, the majority of the participants in this study shared

surprisingly positive experiences.

      The supervising practitioners and student teachers in this study showed up for their

students, for their colleagues, and for themselves. They learned to embrace new ways of

communication and made sure to check in emotionally, not just professionally. In collaborating

with their teaching teams from their schools, the supervising practitioners modeled professional

resilience to their student teachers. Student teachers were able to see how teachers can work

together to support one another in a professional community.

      Through the challenges they faced, the majority of the student teachers and supervising

practitioners who lent their stories to this study found success in an imperfect situation. Student

teachers received hands-on experiences, formed strong and meaningful relationships with their

supervising practitioners, and gathered online teaching and learning experiences that they

predicted would benefit them in their first few years of teaching. Supervising practitioners also

formed strong and meaningful relationships, gained co-teaching partners, and provided feedback

for their student teachers as frequently as possible. Even in the most challenging of times,

success is possible, even if it doesn't fit the typical mold.

Chapter Organization

      This discussion in this chapter will be organized by the five research questions.

Following the discussion of the findings for each question, the chapter will discuss the three

major themes that arose from the findings. Resilience will be the first theme explored. From

navigating professional questions and concerns to banding together as communities of educators

for the greater benefit of the students, the participants in this study exhibited and modeled a great

deal of professional and personal resilience, which contributed to their success.

The importance and impact of clear and consistent communication will be discussed next, as it relates to the success of the overall student teaching experience, how the communication shifted during the pandemic, and the importance of communicating expectations.

The final theme discussed will be the positive effects of community and collaboration. The participants in this study faced significant challenges during an incredibly stressful part of the teacher education process. For the participants who identified that the spring 2020 semester was a success, community and collaboration identified as crucial factors in nurturing the student teacher/supervising practitioner relationship. Student teachers found ways to pitch in and support supervising practitioners and supervising practitioners worked hard to keep their student teachers included. Both participant populations identified that having another person to collaborate with helped them face the challenges of the semester.

Stakeholder implications will follow the thematic discussion of the findings. Implications of this study's findings for teacher education programs, K-12 educators and administrators, supervising practitioners, and preservice teachers will be explored. This section of the chapter will identify ways that various stakeholders can use the information presented in this study to both encourage student teachers and supervising practitioners in normal teaching scenarios and also foster relationships in the field should a crisis arise.

Limitations and areas for future research will follow the stakeholder implications. This section will explore how this study was limited. Additionally, this section will explore other questions and future research that have arisen due to the information presented in this study.

Finally, this section will conclude with a final, personal reflection on the research. In this section, the researcher combines her personal experiences teaching during COVID and how that

experience compares to that of the participants in this study. A final discussion of field

placement success will close the chapter.

Discussion of the Findings

In this section of the chapter, the study's findings have been organized by each of the five

guiding research questions.

Q1: What factors contribute to and detract from the development of successful relationships between preservice teachers and their supervising practitioners?

- **Key Finding #1:** When the relationship between student teachers and supervising

  practitioners allows for the pair to act as colleagues, student teachers and supervising

  practitioners consider the relationship to be successful.

- **Key Finding #2:** Strong communication between student teachers and supervising

  practitioners is important to establishing a successful relationship.

- **Key Finding #3:** Frequent informal and formal feedback boosts student teacher

  confidence.

- **Key Finding #4:** Trust and meaningful connections contributed to a successful

  relationship between student teachers and supervising practitioners, especially when the

  relationship has had time to develop over some time longer than one semester.

  Relationships that lack trust and connection were not identified as successful.

An overwhelming majority of the student teachers and supervising practitioners in this

study believed that the relationships they built and fostered in the practicum were positive. Two

student teachers, Shannon and Julia, had some complaints about the semester overall but shared

that the relationships with their supervising practitioners and overall practicum experience

improved by the end of the semester. Only one supervising practitioner, Clark, shared that the

experience was overwhelmingly negative from beginning to end. The rest of the participants, however, shared stories of communicating well, collaborating, becoming colleagues, and even becoming friends while in the field. Overall, the participants attributed communication and either providing (supervising practitioners) or taking advantage of (student teachers) hands-on experiences as some of the major factors in having a successful relationship in the field.

Contributions to the Relationship

Communication, one of the major themes that emerges from this study's findings, set the stage for successful relationships between supervising practitioners and student teachers. At the start of the semester, when schools were still in session, frequent communication helped supervising practitioners and student teachers prepare for and reflect on teaching. The student teachers and supervising practitioners who fell into a solid routine of taking time to check in built trusting relationships that benefitted both individuals.

Good communication requires trust. Due to this trust, the relationships with strong communication routines resulted in hands-on opportunities for the student teachers. Successful supervising practitioners shared that they were able to communicate clear expectations. Clearly communicated expectations, then, led to their student teachers' gradual take-over of classroom responsibilities. Student teachers who trusted their supervising practitioners shared that they were open to feedback, which improved their confidence as educators. Through communication, the practicum experience became a comfortable place to take risks and learn.

These experiences, however, are not easily established. For the study participants, immediately establishing expectations and routines was crucial to the success of the relationship. Defined roles and expectations of the experience early on help reduce potential conflict later on in the field placement. Clear communication of expectations also helped student teachers and

supervising practitioners find comfort with one another when reflecting on teaching or sharing

feedback. Like the participants in studies by both Rhoads et al. (2013) and Uusimaki (2013), the

successful student teachers and supervising practitioners in this study worked hard to establish

early routines, and define roles to foster a successful partnership.

As explained by student teacher Courtney, the communication she had with her

supervising practitioner allowed Courtney to learn "a lot about myself and I think that's because

she allowed me to just do it and didn't criticize me, didn't micromanage me and just allowed me

to do it my way." When communication was frequent and clear student teachers felt better

prepared to take on different roles in the classroom with some, eventually, becoming co-teachers

with their supervising practitioners. Lily explained that since she was comfortable and able to

communicate with her supervising practitioner, she was challenged to "take on more initiative

and more work than what was expected of me."

Self-efficacy is a person's belief that they will be successful, even when tackling a

problem or situation unknown to them. It is closely tied to mastery experiences or the modeling

of mastery experiences (Bandura, 1977). Mastery experiences come from hands-on teaching

experiences. Teacher self-efficacy, especially, is tied to mastery experiences gained during the

field placement experience (Raymond-West & Snodgrass Rangel, 2020; Rogers-Haverback &

Mee, 2015; Ronfeldt & Reininger, 2012). As student teachers worked with supervising

practitioners to teach, plan lessons, reflect on practice, and manage student behaviors, they were

gaining valuable mastery experiences, and in turn, gaining the ability to persevere through future

challenges in their teaching careers. While there were parts of the school year that student

teachers missed due to the pandemic closures, which concerned some supervising practitioners

like Kristy, the student teachers still gained valuable teaching experience in the online classroom space.

The absence of certain experiences during the semester, then, did not completely or negatively impact the student teachers' experiences and their relationships with their supervising practitioners. Instead, student teachers observed supervising practitioners as veteran educators took on new tasks. Based on self-efficacy theory, while student teachers observed supervising practitioners successfully navigating the challenges of COVID-19, the student teachers were provided a powerful lesson in resilience and flexibility—two key skills necessary for teaching. As in Taiyi Yan et al.'s 2021 study, the act of watching their supervising practitioners collaborate and work through challenges—otherwise known as observed mastery experiences— added to student teachers' efficacy by seeing others succeed.

Detractions from the Relationship

If successful relationships between student teachers and supervising practitioners involved clear communication and hands-on experiences, then a lack of communication and trust factored into negative relationships between student teachers and supervising practitioners. Perhaps the participant who struggled most during the semester experience was Clark, a high school teacher in an urban public school. He observed that a lack of communication, and therefore trust, significantly impacted his student teacher's overall practicum experience.

Clark took ownership of the early communication challenges during his student teacher's time in his classroom. Clark admitted that the relationship with his student teacher was slow to develop, especially when he compared his spring 2020 experience as a supervising practitioner to previous semesters. Of their relationship building, he said, "It was slow, we were slowly inching towards trusting one another. It was slower than normal."

One student teacher, Shannon, expressed that the first part of the semester was challenging, even though, overall, she thought her student teaching experience was positive. Shannon expressed that a relationship without communication or trust significantly detracted from her initial weeks in the field. When asked specifically about communication with her supervising practitioner, Shannon explained, "he basically told me outright he didn't want to do any of the work the SPs were supposed to do!" Initially blunt and uninterested in building a relationship, Shannon's supervising practitioner took a while to become comfortable with Shannon in his classroom. Shannon proved herself a strong educator because of her previous work background in an after-school program. Eventually, after Shannon began teaching, she felt that she earned his trust, and their communication and relationship began to thaw.

Clark explained that the slow relationship building between him and his student teacher also meant that, when it came to teaching, she "seemed nervous." Since the pair did not trust one another Clark's student teacher did not, according to Clark, "articulate what she needed. I had also thought that she would be more proactive." While Clark's student teacher did eventually create and deliver a unit, the pair had "seven weeks in person in class, at which point she hadn't gotten a lot of responsibility." These communication challenges continued into the pandemic, which will be discussed later in this chapter with question two.

Student teaching is a challenging time, but the COVID-19 pandemic added an extra layer of stress to the experience for this study's participants. For the participants who struggled with establishing a strong student teacher/supervising practitioner relationship, the semester felt even more frustrating and chaotic.

Q2: In what ways is the student teacher/supervising practitioner relationship impacted by times of uncertainty?

- **Key Finding #1:** Major concerns surrounding field placement experiences after schools closed were the navigation of online teaching and learning requirements, confusion surrounding state licensure and field placement requirements, and concerns about meeting students' needs in a virtual format.

- **Key Finding #2:** Student teachers and supervising practitioners navigated the uncertainty of this time by learning together.

- **Key Finding #3:** Navigating uncertain times can help repair a previously difficult relationship.

- **Key Finding #4:** Supervising practitioners felt a great responsibility to support student teachers both professionally and personally during school closures.

Teaching requires flexibility in even the most ideal of circumstances. Lessons need adapting for student understanding, students are absent, and there are interruptions to the school day. Teachers are quick decision makers, able to modify and change plans quickly, but COVID-19 was different. Suddenly teaching online during the pandemic required teachers and teacher educators to make decisions and be flexible on completely different levels. The sudden closure of schools had a significant impact on the practicum experience because of the rapid shift that was required in teaching practice, student teacher expectations, and even state licensure expectations. Through the stress of the pandemic, the participants in this study, as in other recent studies of student teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic, noticed that they became more reliant on their communities, be it their team of other educators, a cohort of student teachers, or

the student teacher/supervising practitioner relationship itself (Delmarter & Ewart, 2020; Ralston & Blakley, 2021).

Teaching is not a profession done in isolation. As they sat in on team meetings and brainstormed ways to support students in virtual classrooms, student teachers observed real-time examples of professional resilience and flexibility. Participants in this study were forced to become more flexible in their communication. In turn, they became more lenient with one another, with many participants emphasizing emotional check-ins, in addition to the professional conversations that were happening. Navigating the pandemic required communication, flexibility, and resilience, and the participants who exhibited these qualities found that the relationships they had with one another remained successful when schools closed to in-person learning.

Once again, while the vast majority of this study's participants found that the relationship between student teachers and supervising practitioners continued to grow after schools closed, one participant, Clark, identified that the pandemic was extremely isolating for his student teacher. He identified that a lack of trust, discussed earlier in this chapter, made it difficult to continue to connect with his student teacher after schools closed. His experience highlights the important of trust and communication in the face of crisis vividly and will be explored in this section.

Flexibility and the Power of Community

When navigating a crisis, individuals who exhibit flexibility and fluid thinking are more likely to also possess the resilience necessary to work through the crisis at hand (Bonanno et al., 2004; Cartier & Taylor, 2020). Participants in this study, like many educators working through the COVID-19 pandemic, exhibited the flexibility described in both Bonnano et al.'s (2004) and

Cartier and Taylor's (2020) studies. The stress of the pandemic was not erased through flexibility but through the ability to shift expectations and communicate clearly.

Similar to the experiences described in Delmarter and Ewart's 2020 study, the biggest obstacle faced by student teachers and supervising practitioners during the pandemic was the uncertainty surrounding all of the shifting expectations once schools closed. Student teachers and supervising practitioners experienced different frustrations, but were still able to connect and support one another through navigating the challenges that the pandemic presented. Courtney noted that her supervising practitioner approached virtual teaching with flexibility, which helped her to feel more confident in all of the changes and challenges she was facing. She explained that her supervising practitioner told her that she could, "be in the meetings, don't be in the meetings, I understand things are hard. She's super kind, super flexible." Courtney took this kindness as encouragement and remained in the virtual classroom with her supervising practitioner, attending virtual class sessions as much as possible, and running some of them on her own.

Consistent with both Delmarter and Ewar's (2020) and Ralston and Blakley's (2021) studies, student teachers in this study had several concerns about how the pandemic would impact their progress toward teacher licensure. Concerns about graduation requirements, changes to benchmarks for their coursework, making up and logging teaching hours for the university, and confusion connected to receiving their teaching license were mentioned in many student teachers' interviews. Supervising practitioners, on the other hand, were frustrated about school district distance learning guidelines shifting and changing suddenly. They wanted to be available for their student teachers but were uncertain about how to effectively include them in online learning. In addition, a desire to meet all students' needs at a distance and through new modes of teaching was at the forefront of each supervising practitioner's mind. To navigate the stress of

these uncertain moments, student teachers and supervising practitioners tried to continue to communicate and check in on a more personal, emotional level.

When schools closed, communication changed. Supervising practitioners and student teachers made the shift from solely professional check-ins to making sure that people were supported in their personal and emotional lives as well. Amanda knew that her supervising practitioner struggled with the change in classroom structure. She explained that, for her supervising practitioner, social distancing was, "a little harder…she enjoys the relationships with her students in person." To help cope, Amanda said that, "being mindful of everyone's emotional well-being, too, was kind of a big part of it." As in other crises, making and maintaining connections with other individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic proved to be important to professional stamina and resilience.

Communicating in the Face of Crisis

As explored in the literature by Cartier and Taylor (2020) and Gigliotti (2016), clear communication during times of major crisis is imperative to helping individuals and communities manage unknowns, allowing for clearer decision-making for those in charge. Clear communication builds community confidence as people navigate uncertainty. Supervising practitioners and student teachers who had clear and established routines of communication used these connections to help navigate the early days of the pandemic. Their communication, of course, shifted to digital modalities like text messages, video chat, or phone calls, but those who were comfortable with one another communicated necessary professional information, like plans for distance learning or new practicum and licensure requirements. Student teacher, Lily, shared that a lot of her communication with her supervising practitioner was to "brainstorm activities for the kids, we had phone calls every Sunday to write up the schedule for the kids and send out the

parent letter…I really felt a part of that whole transition." Lily, who had a positive relationship

with her supervising practitioner throughout the semester found that the communication the pair

shared, like that described in Thompson and Schademan's 2019 study of mentoring relationships,

helped them to transition well into remote teaching.

Communicating, setting appropriate expectations, and checking in about personal

concerns meant that student teachers and supervising practitioners in this study, and in other

studies, were able to lean on one another to stay afloat in the storm (Delmarter & Ewart, 2020;

Gierhart, 2023; Ralston & Blakley, 2021). The positive relationships between student teachers

and supervising practitioners became more collaborative during the school closures. As some of

the professional communication shifted to solving problems, supervising practitioners found

themselves learning again, alongside their student teachers. As explored in other literature about

student teaching relationships, when the student teachers in this study saw supervising

practitioners learn, tackle problems, and express vulnerability about challenges, they learned

incredibly powerful lessons about the teaching profession (Abramo & Campbell, 2019;

Hennissen et al., 2011). In these collaborative relationships, the student teachers learned a great

deal about the professional resilience it takes to be an educator.

Supervising practitioners and the university worked hard during the spring of 2020 to

check in with student teachers' emotional well-being and make sure that they weren't feeling

overloaded by their practicum expectations, just as in Delmarter and Ewart's (2020) work.

Student teachers returned these sentiments, as well, with many of the participants sharing that

they did their best to lighten the load of their supervising practitioners when they could,

recognizing that they, too, were feeling mentally burnt out by the demands of the stay-at-home

orders.

So, instead of checking in during the school day to reflect on lesson practice, student teachers and supervising practitioners stayed on Zoom and Google Meet calls a little bit longer, after the students left classes for the day. Instead of sharing lunch in the teachers' lounge or meeting up before the school day began, they checked in through text messages or phone calls, all in the name of support, resilience, and trust.

Negative Impacts of COVID-19 on the Practicum Relationship

Practicum relationships were not immune to the stresses of the COVID-19 pandemic. The additional stressors and uncertainty of the experience did strain some of the strong relationships and did not help improve some of the weaker ones. In these instances, the uncertainty of the pandemic as a whole resulted in fewer check-ins and opportunities to connect because of the overwhelming amount of stress caused by the pandemic.

Lauren cited that her relationship with her student teacher was a success, but observed that the pandemic negatively impacted the end of the semester. Since her student teacher was completing the practicum experience in her own classroom, rather than Lauren's, they had fewer chances to communicate and share feedback. Both individuals were feeling overwhelmed. Lauren said, "I didn't feel like we finished strong, and I knew we would have in person." Lauren's observation that her student teacher was overwhelmed impacted the frequency of their communication as a pair. Due to fewer check-ins, she felt that the distance caused by the pandemic resulted in distance between the individuals in the relationship as well.

Clark, who already did not find success with his student teacher, noted that the crisis of COVID-19 made the experience significantly worse. Like the student teachers in Delmarter and Ewart's (2020) research, Clark's student teacher struggled with many personal challenges connected to the pandemic, including a lack of reliable technology and having to help at home

when family members lost their sources of income. As a result of this stress, and a lack of

communication, Clark noted that the relationship fell apart when schools closed. Clark's student

teacher even expressed to the university that she wanted to end the student teaching experience

early for her mental health, which was something that she did not communicate with Clark.

Noting that the pandemic was isolating for his student teacher, Clark expressed regret, saying

that his lack of awareness about his student teacher's emotional well-being, "really kind of

underlines how badly I botched building up this trust between us."

For some of the participants in this study, navigating and communicating through the

challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic allowed strong relationships to continue growing. Where

there was trust, communication, and co-teaching, the participants in this study were able to lean

one on another throughout the semester. The relationships that were already struggling, however,

continued to be negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. More about how the pandemic

impacted the participants' ability to mentor or be mentored, and work with one another is

discussed next.

Q3: In what ways does the practice of mentoring over virtual platforms affect the relationship between supervising practitioners and student teachers?

- **Key Finding #1:** Switching to completely virtual teaching and learning platforms changed the frequency of communication between student teachers and supervising practitioners.

- **Key Finding #2:** Switching to virtual teaching and learning platforms made it more difficult for supervising practitioners to give feedback to their student teachers.

COVID-19 disrupted all aspects of the normal school routine that many of the

supervising practitioners and student teachers had settled into by March 2020. Pandemic school

closures significantly shifted the modality of communication between supervising practitioners

and student teachers. Megan, a student teacher, specifically lamented the loss of the days of

touching base before the school day began or the "back and forth of teaching"—the side

conversations in the classroom while students were engaged in other activities. Instead,

communication happened via text, Zoom or Google Meet calls, and email. In many instances, the

strong relationships going into the school closures continued through the pandemic with the

same level of strength, and the individuals in those relationships found ways to navigate through

the big shift in modes of communication. Student teachers and supervising practitioners had to

learn how to work together and communicate in different ways.

When communication shifted to completely virtual modalities, participants shared that

feedback was challenging to give and receive. Amanda observed that "it's really hard to get the

same feedback when you're doing something through a camera." For the participants in this

study, the virtual shift was not planned or thought out. It was not possible for supervising

practitioners to adequately gain training or professional development in working with student

teachers in the virtual space. Successful mentoring in a virtual space requires careful

consideration of how pairs communicate, either synchronously or asynchronously, when they

can share feedback and other information, and the types of platforms that will be used to connect

(Cothran et al., 2009; Wilbanks, 2014). Unlike the intentional virtual mentoring that took place

in Cothran et al. (2009) and Wilbanks (2014), the virtual relationships during the spring of 2020

lacked proper training, resulting in missing out on opportunities for the same rich feedback that

came out of the classroom before schools closed. In the field placement, feedback and self-

reflection on feedback are crucial to developing student teacher confidence (James et al., 2015;

Ralston & Blakley, 2021; Runyan et al., 2017; Warhurst & Black, 2019). Recognizing this,

Michelle, a supervising practitioner, expressed guilt over how feedback and support changed for

her student teacher once schools closed, explaining:

> I feel badly about it, but I know my attention was not focused on her…at school, it's one
>
> thing because you're in your regular routine and you're dealing with all the pressures of
>
> everything, but everything is still working how it's supposed to work. And then all of a
>
> sudden, I had to do everything differently as well.

Proper and adequate training, and practice navigating different means of synchronous

online communication tools, like Zoom or Google Meet, and asynchronous communication tools

like journals or email, could have helped the supervising practitioners continue to provide the

same rich feedback that they were providing in the classroom (Cothran et al., 2009; Wilbanks,

2014). Like in-person mentoring, future teacher education programs may consider emergency

protocols for instances where supervising practitioners and student teachers are required to divert

from the norms of daily teaching.

Q4: In what ways can supervising practitioners support student teachers through times of crisis? In what ways can student teachers support supervising practitioners?

- **Key Finding #1:** Maintaining connections with the university, the student teaching

  cohort, and their supervising practitioners was most helpful in helping student teachers

  navigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Key Finding #2:** Supervising practitioners and student teachers supported one another by

  providing mindful, personal support, engaging in collaborative learning experiences, and

  supporting students in the classroom.

Frequent communication, trust, and collaboration created professional opportunities for

both the student teachers and the supervising practitioners. As Jones et al. (2016) explore,

frequent and clear communication builds trust between individuals and, in turn, creates

opportunities for collaboration, which was also true for the participants in this study. Open,

honest, and frequent communication was found to be crucial to the relationships and experiences

that were described as successful. It was through this clear communication, as described in

studies by Guise et al. (2017) and Thompson and Schademan (2019), that student teachers and

supervising practitioners found they could open themselves up to collaboration, co-teaching, and

mentoring.

When responding to the crisis of the pandemic, student teachers and supervising

practitioners in this study found that they grew closer. Combining professional and personal

check-ins during the field placement experience allowed the relationships to remain strong and,

for many, move from simply a student teacher/supervising practitioner relationship to one where

the supervising practitioner became the mentor, like in relationships described in Rhoads et al.,

(2013) and Uusimaki (2013).

Martina's student teacher experienced a significant personal tragedy just a few weeks

after schools closed. She explained that "it absolutely did bring us closer…we would have our

Google Meets with our kids, and [she] and I, we would usually stay on for another hour or hour

and a half." Crisis responses required of the participants when schools closed reinforced the

importance of emotional check-ins. In a similar fashion to Delmarter and Ewart (2020), the

participants in this study found that to adequately meet the needs of students, educators also

required the emotional and mental capacity to make the necessary shifts in learning.

During this time, the supervising practitioners and student teachers went beyond a

professional relationship and embraced the emotional aspect of the relationship to work together,

but also respected one another's boundaries so that they were not feeling overburdened by the pandemic's challenges (Gierhart, 2023).

Like the participants in the Gierhart (2023) study, Megan recognized that her supervising practitioner was trying to navigate a completely new form of work/life balance. In response to her supervising practitioner's challenges at home, she explained that they worked to spread "the work out equally so that neither one of us became too overwhelmed, because I was in school you know, finishing out other courses and she's at home with 2 little kids." As they navigated the pandemic, many of the participants found the relationship mutually beneficial through both professional and also personal support.

COVID-19 forced even the most confident of educators outside of their comfort zones. The veteran educators in this study were outside of their comfort zones while also trying to inspire and lead student teachers. Due to the nature of the pandemic and the sudden disruptions and challenges, there were many opportunities for both the student teacher and supervising practitioner to experiment with new teaching modalities (Delmarter & Ewart, 2020; Gierhart, 2023).

The student teaching experience can be rich and beneficial for all of those involved. Strong student teacher and supervising practitioner relationships involve critical feedback and reflection (James et al., 2015; Ralston & Blakley, 2021; Runyan et al., 2017; Warhurst & Black, 2019). The student teachers in this study are no exception to this. Kristy explained that when schools shifted to the virtual model, she was well out of her comfort zone, but turned to her student teacher and appreciated the guidance. She said:

> I was learning as I went, too, and where, in the classroom, I really do try to say I'm not
>
> the expert at all, but I feel like I, 100%, was not the expert in any of that, so I mean in

some ways that presented us with an opportunity maybe for her to kind of step up and be

that kind of expert in somethings.

Successful partnerships were ones where student teachers and supervising practitioners

felt both supported in the classroom and also felt personal connections outside of the classroom.

While still in the physical classroom, feedback in these relationships was given to student

teachers frequently and used to improve practice. When schools switched to distance learning,

student teachers and supervising practitioners in successful relationships found themselves

working together to collaborate and learn about online teaching.

Q5: What impact does a sudden interruption of the field placement experience have on student teachers' confidence and perceptions of their own readiness to teach?

- **Key Finding #1:** Student teachers felt ready to teach, especially because of the virtual teaching experience they gained at the end of the spring 2020 semester.

- **Key Finding #2:** Supervising practitioners felt that the student teachers were ready to teach, despite missing out on some important end-of-year experiences in the classroom.

Almost all of the participants in this study identified that the semester was a successful

one, despite the challenges that they faced during the experience. Supervising practitioners,

especially, admitted that there were some significant end-of-year experiences that the student

teachers missed out on, but still shared that the overall experience was successful for the growth

and development of the student teachers they worked with. For this study, success in the field

placement experience is specifically tied to hands-on learning experiences that student teachers

were able to engage with and reflect on in their growth as educators.

Mastery Experiences and Self-Efficacy

Student teachers shared that the biggest success of the semester was their ability to gain teaching experience and mastery experiences that will later lend themselves to building teacher self-efficacy. Some of the mastery experiences, like planning instruction, behavior management, and working with students in large and small groups, were expected parts of the practicum experiences. Some, however, like preparing for online instruction, working with a teaching team to create digital resources for students, and navigating different online teaching schedules, were not expected but still proved valuable. Like other student teachers from other COVID-19 pandemic research, student teachers found the online learning experiences especially valuable as they geared up to begin their teaching careers facing more online learning related to the continued impacts of the pandemic (Delmarter & Ewart, 2020; Ralston & Blakley, 2021, Gierhart, 2023).

Expected or not, student teachers gained a wide variety of different mastery experiences during the semester and, connecting with a number of studies about student teaching and confidence, all of these experiences helped build student teachers' confidence for their futures as full-time educators (Rogers-Haverback & Mee, 2015, Evans-Palmer, 2016). Student teachers shared that the experiences they had in their field placement would be beneficial, and that they had more confidence for the virtual learning that was to take place in the 2021-2022 school year.

Not everything that the supervising practitioners and student teachers tried in their online classrooms was successful. In this study, the success of the overall practicum experience was also identified by the participants who met challenges with teamwork and persistence. So, even when some ideas did not pan out, or if more support than expected was required, student

teachers, as well as their supervising practitioners, were still gathering incredibly valuable, professional hands-on experience.

Social Learning and Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory

Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory suggests that learning is a social experience that can be shared between the mentor and mentee, or even others involved in the learning experience who are at varying levels of expertise (Caskey & Swanson, 2020). The pandemic provided student teachers with the opportunity to work with their supervising practitioners and other educators in their placement schools to collaborate on resources and make plans for teaching online. Student teachers attended meetings, tried new things, and even engaged in professional development together. As they worked with teachers with different levels of comfort with digital teaching tools and shared their insights, student teachers in this study learned valuable lessons about working with a teaching team to navigate a challenge, similar to the student teachers in other work about the COVID-19 pandemic (Gierhart, 2023; Ralston & Blakley, 2021; Varela & Desiderio, 2021).

While the social learning that took place during this semester was not what was initially planned, both student teachers and supervising practitioners still gained an understanding, were encouraged to lean on one another and persevere for the benefit of the students in the classroom.

Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory's model of teaching complex tasks, critical thinking, and problem-solving through modeling, scaffolding, fading, and coaching (Collins et al., 1991) was alive and well in these successful relationships between student teachers and supervising practitioners. Student teachers in these strong relationships were able to learn from their supervising practitioners through these models in two distinctly different circumstances.

In one circumstance, the student teachers viewed and learned from supervising practitioners who were completely comfortable in their teaching situation. Before schools closed, supervising practitioners modeled professional practices like lesson planning, classroom management, working with co-teachers, and assessments. They gradually turned over their control of their classrooms, through fading and coaching, and allowed their student teachers to gain experience in these areas (Caskey & Swanson, 2020). In these early months of the semester, supervising practitioners could provide confident coaching that allowed student teachers to explore their learning and growth as educators.

The second circumstance was remote teaching when supervising practitioners were forced outside of their comfort zone. At this point in the semester, student teachers and supervising practitioners experienced the Cognitive Apprenticeship Model at work. When schools closed all participants were much less confident in their teaching and the expectations, but supervising practitioners still provided opportunities for professional growth for their student teachers. Supervising practitioners' modeling looked different after COVID-19 closed the schools. Instead of classroom tasks, supervising practitioners modeled problem-solving techniques and critical thinking, engaged in trial and error, and had reflective conversations with student teachers. Working and problem-solving together, the novice and the veteran coached one another, just like in the field placement experiences described by Caskey and Swanson (2020).

Student teachers shared that they felt that the semester was still a success because of the valuable opportunities they had to engage in online teaching after schools closed, like in Gierhart's (2023), Ralston and Blakley's (2021) and Varela and Desiderio's (2021) research. Student teachers participating in this study were interviewed in the summer of 2020, when many of them were preparing to start their teaching careers, which would likely be, at least in part,

online due to the hybrid teaching models that many Massachusetts schools employed during the

2020-2021 school year. The student teachers found that simply having exposure to the different

methods of online learning in the spring meant they had some of the experience necessary to

engage in virtual or solely online learning in the fall.

These varied experiences, from being able to build on their confidence in the classroom

before schools closed to learning how to engage with students online, all helped to build on the

student teachers' self-efficacy. In Raymond-West and Snodgrass Rangel's 2020 study, it was

identified that student teachers who are exposed to a variety of different teaching experiences

develop stronger feelings of self-efficacy. Darling-Hammond (2014) and Montecinos et al.

(2011) also explored the benefits that student teachers reap from varied classroom experiences.

Successful practicum experiences for the student teachers participating in this study are directly

tied to the different experiences they were able to have with students and other educators.

In addition to modeling the teamwork that many teachers rely on in their careers, the

supervising practitioners also modeled the importance of asking questions and being open to new

learning experiences (Varela & Desiderio, 2021). During the pandemic, even the most veteran

educators were pushed into a situation where they needed to quickly adopt new teaching

practices and materials to adequately meet student needs. Student teachers observed veteran

teachers asking questions, inquiring, and making changes to adapt to the situation at hand

(Varela & Desiderio, 2021). In doing so, supervising practitioners modeled asking questions,

seeking support, and trying new methods of teaching. Some student teachers, like Julia, sought

out opportunities to learn from other educators in their placement schools. Julia turned to the

social support she received from other educators when she did not get the most valuable

observation opportunities from her supervising practitioner. Through socializing with

supervising practitioners and other educators, student teachers were able to witness the

importance of keeping an open mind and a willingness to try new things to connect with

students.

Interpretations of the Findings

In this section, the three major themes that emerged from data analysis—the impact of

professional resilience, the importance of communication, and the positive impact of community

and collegiality are discussed. This section ends with a reflection on success and the different

ways the supervising practitioners and student teachers identified a successful field placement

relationship.

The Impact of Professional Resilience

Teaching in all circumstances requires resilience. During the COVID-19 pandemic,

however, many educators found that their resilience was being tested frequently. From

navigating rapidly changing expectations for teaching to learning new technology and classroom

management in a digital space, the pandemic tested teachers' ability to adapt and change to a

situation. The student teachers who were in their practicum experiences during this time did not

just get to gain valuable distance and digital learning experience, but they also got to see

educators' professional resilience in action.

Teaching virtually due to the pandemic was certainly not something that was planned for

and also not the only disruption that could potentially take place during a student teaching

semester. Uncertainty is stressful and can make the field placement experience more challenging.

An important understanding from this study, however, is the fact that unexpected crises do not

have to mean that the field experience as a whole cannot be successful. The student teachers in

this study watched their supervising practitioners face challenges. They heard their frustrations about the pandemic and worked with them to solve the problems that the pandemic presented.

Just as their student teaching semester existed in a world marred by uncertainty, so will these student teachers' careers as educators. Perhaps not by a global pandemic, but by personal crises, disruptions to the learning environment because of natural disasters, threats of violence, and other challenging world events. In all of these situations, educators are required to adapt their plans to do what is best for meeting students' needs. To have seen their supervising practitioners' professional resilience firsthand and to work together to navigate a difficult teaching situation, these student teachers have witnessed and utilized the skills required to navigate issues that the future may put in their paths.

Vulnerability, however, requires a comfortable relationship. The student teachers and supervising practitioners who learned well from one another during the school closures had strong, supportive, and communicative relationships. While these lessons in resilience are powerful and important, they are also not guaranteed if the relationship is not fostered carefully during the whole field placement experience. Without communication and a community to learn in, future student teachers may not get to witness resilience as shown by the supervising practitioners in this study.

The Importance of Communication

Communication that is established early on in the practicum experience can be powerful. Through clear routines and roles, confident and comfortable feedback, and the flexibility to change routines once they are established, student teachers and supervising practitioners can give one another a great deal of support and encouragement during all parts of the practicum. Allowing communication and strong relationships to shift and change throughout the experience

can be beneficial to both parties in typical teaching circumstances as well as in teaching

situations marked by uncertainty, like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many factors contributed to the success of most of the relationships described in this

study. As the overwhelming majority of participants shared, communication and gaining positive

and powerful teaching experiences contributed strongly to the success of the practicum

relationship. Field experiences can be a challenging time for both the student teacher and the

supervising practitioner. Student teachers and supervising practitioners should both enter the

experience of the practicum with a desire to grow, share, and learn from one another

(Aderibigbe, 2013; Johnson, 2011; Land, 2018; Thompson & Schademan, 2019). Without these

opportunities, student teachers and supervising practitioners miss out on moments to build and

create efficacy experiences, reflect on teaching practices, and establish collegial relationships.

Many of the supervising practitioners and student teachers in this study had prior

relationships with their partners. These individuals did not need to spend time getting to know

one another in the field and could jump right into communicating the expectations of the field

placement experience. With a deeper understanding of their partners, the supervising

practitioners and student teachers who knew each other over a longer period than just the spring

semester could jump into the work with more confidence than those who did not know their

counterparts. The comfort that the student teachers and supervising practitioners had would

continue throughout the semester and help the relationship through the most difficult parts of the

pandemic. They were able to switch modalities of communication to remain in contact with one

another, check in on both professional and personal levels, and continue the trust that they built

in the field before schools closed once they were home.

Communication, both in long-term relationships and also in shorter ones, is not and

cannot be fixed. So, while it is true that successful student teacher/supervising practitioner

pairings established and stuck to consistent routines of communication and feedback, flexibility

in this routine is also crucial. The COVID-19 pandemic required the participants in this study to

jump into new ways of not only teaching and communicating with students, but with colleagues

as well. Even the best communicators in the study found that they had to learn how to better

utilize virtual means of communication and find new ways to support one another. It is not just

the amount of communication that makes a difference, but the ability to be open and flexible in

modes of communication. Student teachers and supervising practitioners who can adapt to the

circumstances with which they are presented can have a successful student teaching experience

that allows for change, collaboration, and growth.

Community and Collegiality Promote Success for Student Teaching

Perhaps the primary takeaway from the stories shared during this study is the importance

of community. From establishing trusting, communicative relationships in typical situations to

having another professional to rely upon in times of great stress, the importance of having a

community of educators cannot be ignored. To learn how to work together in a professional

setting is a vital tool for any novice educator to learn. In addition, it is also an important reminder

that even veteran educators can thrive in community settings.

Community support is important in navigating crises. For the student teachers in this

study, their communities with their fellow student teachers and their supervising practitioners

helped them work through the rapid changes and confusion during the semester. Supervising

practitioners leaned on their teaching colleagues and their student teachers for support during the

remote closures. This is the power of the field experience. Student teachers are, of course there to

learn from supervising practitioners, but so, too, can supervising practitioners learn from student teachers. The collaboration that took place during this particular semester, especially after schools closed, allowed for a great deal of professional growth for everyone involved.

"Was the semester a success?"

Toward the end of each interview, each supervising practitioner and student teacher participant was asked the same question—was the semester a success? Of the sixteen participants directly working in a field placement experience in the spring 2020 semester, all but one answered affirmatively to this question. When asked why they felt this way, the participants answered in a variety of ways—some shared that they felt that, despite the school closures, there were still opportunities to learn about teaching while others appreciated the relationships that they built while working in the practicum.

Just as the experiences of the participants were varied, so were the definitions of success. Based on the stories shared in this study, success is not necessarily one specific outcome, but the journey that an individual takes on the way to their end goal. For the participants in this study, success was marked by gaining different classroom experiences, gaining a colleague or friend, or simply seeing what can be accomplished when one is put to the test. As one of the supervising practitioners noted in her interview, no one is truly ready to begin teaching, but the student teachers in this study gained tools and support that they and the supervising practitioners believed would be helpful tools as they entered their careers in the fall of 2020.

Implications

The next section will explore the implications of this research for the stakeholders who stand to benefit most from the research presented in this case study. Implications of this research

for teacher education programs, K-12 educators and administrators, future and current

supervising practitioners, and future and current student teachers will be explained.

Implications for Teacher Education Programs

An overwhelming majority of the self-selected student teachers and supervising

practitioners in this study expressed that the practicum experience was a positive one. As they

identified the success of the relationships they established while in the field placement, student

teachers and supervising practitioners identified the aspects of the relationship and the semester

overall that made the experience positive. Student teachers shared that they appreciated having

hands on experiences, responsibility in the classroom, and a trusting relationship with their

supervising practitioners. It would benefit teacher education programs to select and partner with

schools and individual teachers who are willing to provide these positive experiences to future

student teachers.

Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory suggests that teaching challenging skills like critical

thinking and problem-solving requires modeling, scaffolding, and then slowly releasing

responsibility (Collins et al., 1991; Kirschner & Hendrick, 2020). Teacher education programs

should prepare materials, like handbooks, that can help supervising practitioners identify the

different routines that may be helpful in gradually releasing teaching responsibilities to student

teachers.

One area where student teachers reported challenges during the remote learning portion

of the semester was in accessing classroom technology resources. Consistent with the findings of

Varela and Desiderio (2021), when student teachers do not have school district email addresses,

they are unable to access common district technology resources like Google Classroom or

SeeSaw. To gain real-world experience working with common classroom technology, teacher

education programs would benefit from partnering with school districts to grant student teachers

access to create lessons and teach on these platforms. Providing this access will provide even

more hands-on opportunities for student teachers and allow them to have more responsibility for

their tasks in the classroom (Varela & Desiderio, 2021).

In addition to hands-on experiences, teacher education programs should also encourage

supervising practitioners, program supervisors, and any other program personnel who work with

student teachers to establish frequent and clear lines of communication (Runyan et al., 2017).

When teacher education programs match supervising practitioners, care should be taken to

ensure that the pairs have similar values, work styles, and communication expectations so that

the pair can be comfortable with one another (Bailey et al., 2016). Working with university

supervisors may also help communication stay effective throughout the student teaching

semester, especially in the event of a major disruption to the field placement.

Other relationship-based considerations that teacher education programs may take would

be to explore the idea of pairing student teachers with individuals with whom they have a pre-

established relationship. For an overwhelming number of participants in this study, their paired

student teacher or supervising practitioner was a former colleague or someone that they knew

from a prior pre-practicum experience. These longer-termed relationships were able to skip

getting to know one another and dive straight into the student teaching expectations, resulting in

more hands-on opportunities for student teachers, and more opportunities for feedback and

reflection for the supervising practitioners.

Disruptions to the student teaching experience happened in March of 2020 and they are

likely to happen again. It is not possible to outline emergency protocol for every potential crisis

in supervising practitioner training. What is possible, however, is educating supervising

practitioners on the qualities that create a strong relationship in the field and providing

suggestions to navigate difficult scenarios. Recruiting supervising practitioners who are

communicative, confident, and who express a desire to learn is just one step in providing a

positive field experience in all situations (Abramo & Campbell, 2019; Bailey et al., 2016;

Hennissen et al., 2011; Jones et al., 2016; Orland-Barak & Rachamim, 2018; Runyan et al.,

2017). When communication is valued by all members of the practicum experience team, then

both typical practicum experiences and experiences disrupted by crisis situations are able to

move forward smoothly.

        In the event that a significant disruption takes place that impacts the practicum

experience, it is crucial for the teacher education program to communicate as clearly and

frequently as possible with both student teachers and supervising practitioners regarding changes

or other important information. In a crisis, it is crucial for leadership to be calm, consistent, and

focused (Cartier & Taylor, 2020, Gigliotti, 2016). This communication should come from an

individual within the teacher education program who is familiar to those in the field, such as a

practicum supervisor. Establishing clear, consistent communication early on in the semester can

be helpful in the event of a major disruption. The field placement coordinator who participated in

this study shared that communication was important but also difficult during the COVID-19

pandemic. She expressed frustration over changing guidelines and expectations, but also

expressed that communication with students about these guidelines was her priority. She

expressed a desire to keep student morale as positive as possible, which she did through frequent

communication with participants.

        Early communication and frequent communication about expectations and

responsibilities should be encouraged by the teacher education program. It is crucial that

supervising practitioners and student teachers are comfortable and open with one another, because comfort provides safety in an experience that can be quite challenging, especially for the student teacher. In this study, the major disruption to the student teaching experience caused a great deal of stress for both the supervising practitioner and the student teacher. For those who were comfortable with one another and had strong lines of communication, they found that they were able to navigate the challenges together.

All people will respond to crisis differently. It is important for that those involved in teacher education programs understand these differences and act as leaders during the crisis (Delmarter & Ewart, 2020). Taking the lead from the participants in this study and the crisis response in Delmarter and Ewart's (2020) examination of navigating student teaching in spring 2020, teacher education programs should encourage the various communities—cohorts of student teachers, supervising practitioners and their teaching teams, program supervisors and their students—to communicate, listen, and practice resilience in the face of challenge. Community and support go a long way to help individuals manage a crisis.

Finally, it is crucial for teacher education programs to view the pairs working in practicum as a partnership and encourage collegial partnerships to develop over the course of the experience (Guise et al., 2017; Thompson & Schademan, 2019). The few participants who shared that the semester was either not successful at all or challenging in parts revealed that personality differences contributed to some of their struggles. Recognizing the importance of the relationship between student teachers and supervising practitioners, it would be important for teacher education programs to put deep thought into pairings during the semester. Individuals who may have similar working styles, personalities, and communication styles could be better suited to work together and learn from one another. This could be established by interviews,

questionnaires, or working with school administration to make strong practicum pairings. There

is great benefit to student teachers and supervising practitioners who become co-teachers and

learn from one another (Abramo & Campbell, 2019; Bailey et al., 2016; Hennissen et al., 2011;

Jones et al., 2016; Orland-Barak & Rachamim, 2018; Runyan et al., 2017). In addition to the

confidence that student teachers gain from being treated as a member of a teaching team,

supervising practitioners earn another member of a collegial community who can become

invaluable in typical and disrupted teaching experiences.

Implications for K-12 Teachers and Administrators

Establishing connections with teacher education programs and inviting in student

teachers at all stages of their teacher education programs greatly benefits both the K-12 school as

well as the student teachers who are invited in. K-12 staff who are willing to work closely with

student teachers and open up their classrooms should be encouraged to invite these future

educators into their classrooms and involve them in as many aspects of the school day as is

appropriate.

Community is a powerful learning tool. During the pandemic, student teachers found

community, not only with their supervising practitioners, but with their supervising practitioners'

teaching team or other educators in the building (Gierhart, 2023; Ralston & Blakley, 2021;

Varela & Desiderio, 2021). Developing partnerships with school districts near the university can

be powerful, especially in a potential crisis situation where community connections are vital.

One of the major frustrations expressed by supervising practitioners and student teachers alike

was not having a clear understanding of the expectations and changes taking place when schools

closed to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Firm relationships between teacher education

program and school district can help clarify blurred lines during a crisis. A university with an

understanding of the school district in which student teachers are placed, and vice versa, is a university or school district that can best serve student teachers and supervising practitioners.

Student teachers should feel a part of the teaching community and can even have more valuable learning experiences when other educators in the building are open to letting student teachers observe or help in a classroom. K-12 staff, not just the supervising practitioner, should be encouraged to be welcoming to the student teachers and treat them as one of the school community. When schools closed during the pandemic, the student teachers in this study jumped right into action with their supervising practitioners and became part of the team with some student teachers helping teaching teams make resources or simply attending meetings to help brainstorm.

K-12 administrators should recognize the confident, collaborative, and open-minded educators in their schools and encourage these teachers to work with student teachers. It is from teachers who are open to learning and collaboration that student teachers will be able to gain valuable pedagogical skills as well as observe models of professionalism and resilience (Runyan et al., 2017; Varela & Desiderio, 2021). When the strongest educators in the building are open to these opportunities, then future educators can leave their practicum experiences with skills that they can immediately give back to their hiring school districts.

It should be noted that K-12 administrators who are hiring new educators who completed their student teaching during the pandemic may be coming into their new schools with a different set of skills than previous student teachers (Delmarter & Ewart, 2020; Gierhart, 2023). The student teachers who worked with supervising practitioners through the pandemic gained valuable virtual teaching experience and may be more familiar with classroom management in a digital space (Gierhart, 2023). Additionally, they worked with supervising practitioners who

were reacting quickly to change and modeling professional flexibility. Their mastery experiences

in this area may increase their self-efficacy to be able to handle unpredictable challenges during

the regular school year.

On the other hand, supervising practitioners did admit that there were some experiences

that student teachers missed out on because schools closed to in-person learning mid-way

through the student teaching semester. In a 2020 study by Delmarter and Ewart, student teachers

worried that missed classroom experience during the pandemic would impact their

employability. The novice educators who completed their student teaching in the spring of 2020

did not experience MCAS testing, attend and plan end-of-school-year events, and may not have

as much experience with data analysis. It is important to note that, while these new educators

may need more support from mentors in some areas, these missed events do not necessarily

equate to a lack of skills. As many of the supervising practitioners in this study observed, the

student teachers, despite all that they did not experience, still appeared ready to teach. Like any

other year, new hires will have areas of strength and places to grow, but proper mentoring and

collaboration within the school building can bridge many of these gaps.

Implications for Supervising Practitioners

For supervising practitioners, opening the classroom to student teachers can be a

powerful learning experience. Student teachers come to the practicum experience ready to learn

about teaching and working in a school environment. Supervising practitioners in this study

shared that what they enjoyed most about working with student teachers was the excitement that

the student teachers had about teaching as well as the new knowledge about teaching that they

had to share. They claimed that student teachers helped them to reflect more on their teaching

practices and helped them think about new ways to teach their content (James et al., 2015; Ralston & Blakley, 2021; Runyan et al., 2017; Warhurst & Black, 2019).

Supervising practitioners who are working with student teachers should be clear about expectations and responsibilities early in the relationship to avoid conflict and confusion during the practicum (Rhoads et al, 2013; Uusimaki, 2013). Training for supervising practitioners in the form of meetings with the teacher education program, handbooks, or professional development can go far in defining a supervising practitioner's role as both supervisor and mentor of a preservice teacher (Abramo & Campbell, 2019; Becker et al., 2019; Curcio & Adams, 2019; McGee, 2019; Stanulis et al., 2019; Uusimaki, 2013). In addition to clear expectations with the student teacher, supervising practitioners should also have a clear understanding of the teacher education program's expectations of student teachers while in the practicum (Nielsen et al., 2017; Wang & Ha, 2012).

Communication with student teachers should occur frequently both formally and informally. Supervising practitioners need to be made aware that feedback, both formal and informal, is one of the key functions of a supervising practitioner's role (Kwan & Lopez-Real, 2005; McGee, 2019; Orland-Barak & Rachamim, 2018; Range et al., 2013; Stanulis et al, 2019). In-the-moment feedback, like touching base during and after lessons, can provide student teachers with small improvements and suggestions that can be used immediately. Supervising practitioners should be encouraged to develop systems that help provide immediate feedback to their student teachers. One such system that worked for Clark before schools closed was jotting down feedback on sticky notes to leave on his student teacher's desk so no one forgot what was being observed.

It is also important for supervising practitioners to share both areas of strength and areas of growth. Many supervising practitioners in this study mentioned that their student teachers were most critical of themselves, so providing positive feedback in addition to constructive criticism helps to build student teachers' confidence.

Sharing a classroom with a student teacher can be a powerful learning experience for a supervising practitioner. With a strong relationship, they can help to build the confidence of future educators, learn new pedagogical information, and engage in more reflective conversations (Abramo & Campbell, 2019; Bailey et al., 2016; Hennissen et al., 2011; Jones et al., 2016; Orland-Barak & Rachamim, 2018; Runyan et al., 2017, Varela & Desiderio, 2021).

Implications for Preservice Teachers

The student teaching experience is a crucial turning point in an educator's career, and student teachers should be prepared to play an active role in the experience. Student teachers must advocate and communicate their needs during this experience so that they can grow and become confident educators. Communication, then, is also important on the part of the student teacher. Student teachers should be clear about the expectations of the teacher education program so that the supervising practitioner can help them meet their professional goals. Student teachers should also be open on a personal level and speak up if they are feeling overwhelmed. In this study, one of the unsuccessful relationships was the result of poor communication of both professional and personal needs. Student teachers also have the responsibility of staying in close communication with the university throughout the semester, making sure that they are meeting expectations and understanding what is expected of them.

While the student teacher is in the classroom to observe and gradually take over teaching responsibilities, an important takeaway from this study for future preservice educators is the

value that student teachers can bring to their student teaching experience. When the right communication and connections are established in the field placement, the student teacher can be a major asset to the classroom (Abramo & Campbell, 2019; Gierhart, 2023; Ralston & Blakley, 2021; Runyan et al., 2017; Valera & Desiderio, 2021). Student teachers bring ideas and excitement to the classroom, and the supervising practitioners can learn from these ideas. The supervising practitioners in this study valued their student teachers, especially during the crisis of COVID. Even before schools closed, however, student teachers were valued and became co-teachers with the right supports and connections (Guise et al., 2017; Thompson & Schademan, 2019). Student teachers should feel encouraged to share and try out what they have learned. Like the student teachers in this study, they should not be afraid to try new teaching methods and instructional ideas. Following the lead of their supervising practitioners, they, too should feel comfortable sharing resources and ideas for teaching and learning.

Beyond anything else, student teachers should give themselves grace and space to learn, try, fail, and reflect. Both Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory embrace the idea of gaining mastery through trial, error, and trying again. The supervising practitioners in this study shared that they found that their student teachers were their own biggest critics. Student teachers need to understand that feedback and reflection are always part of a teacher's career. Student teaching is just the first step in being a lifelong learner (James et al., 2015; Ralston & Blakley, 2021; Runyan et al., 2017; Warhurst & Black, 2019). The student teaching experiences shared by the study participants were significantly marked by disruptions and missed opportunities, and yet, they were still identified as successful. At the end of the experience, supervising practitioners should feel encouraged to continue growing and learning. It is

important to view the practicum experience as an opportunity for student teachers to learn and

collect mastery experiences that will help them grow as educators in years to come.

Limitations and Areas of Future Research

From the research presented in this study, several questions and areas of additional

research remain. These questions, which come in part from some of the limiting factors of the

study's timeline and participant pool and in part from questions that this study's participants did

not completely answer, could serve to add even more information to help understand how the

COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the teaching profession. Additionally, this research provides

valuable information about establishing positive relationships between student teachers and

supervising practitioners in the field placement, while simultaneously opening up new questions

and ideas about the best ways to nourish these relationships.

A major limiting factor of this research is that of the selection of participants. As has

been previously stated, the overwhelming majority of the experiences shared by participants in

this study were positive. Participants in this study were volunteers from the pool of student

teachers and supervising practitioners at the university. There are two extreme stories in this

study, those stories of satisfaction and success, and those of frustration and a significant lack of

success. It is possible that those willing to volunteer to participate in this study did so because

they had a memorable experience that they wished to share. It may well be the case that the

majority of the positive stories came from individuals who did not feel burned out by discussing

the challenges and frustrations of the pandemic. On the other side, it is also possible that Clark

wanted to make his challenging experience known. Those who did not respond may not have

wanted to continue to linger on an uncomfortable or upsetting topic through their participation or

may not have felt that their experience was anything significant to share.

In addition to a potential bias in the stories shared due to participant self-selection, the participant pool was also made up of majority white, female educators and preservice educators. The only exception to this was Clark, who was an Asian male who was also paired with an Asian, female student teacher. Clark shared some of his student teacher's challenges during the pandemic—including, but not limited to, her role as a daughter of immigrant parents requiring her to assist her family when her parents lost their jobs due to COVID, lacking consistent Internet access, and struggling to complete her student teaching requirements due to other challenges in her personal life. Clark's student teacher's story is more representative of the challenges faced by minority communities during the pandemic. Obtaining more stories from BIPOC educators or student teachers may give a more complete view of the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges that educators were required to overcome.

One area where the participant pool was diverse was in regards to the grade levels and content areas taught. This, unfortunately, was also limiting, as it was difficult to compare the experiences of the educators, due to their vastly different teaching expectations. For example, the expectations of an urban high school teacher are vastly different from that of a suburban special educator in a sub-separate classroom. Additionally, some of the special educators and reading or literacy specialists had different pandemic experiences due to not being the general educator of a classroom. Future research may consider comparing similar educators' experiences, for example, comparing the experiences of general educators working in middle school placement experiences. Comparing similar expectations may make some of the challenges and victories of the semester clear, and offer more generalized takes on the student teacher/supervising practitioner relationship.

One of the student teachers, Amanda, was completing her field placement in her classroom where she was a teacher of record. Others were working in schools where they had previously been employed as substitute teachers or paraprofessionals. In these instances, especially in the case of Amanda, the relationships between student teacher and supervising practitioner were already collegial. Future research may compare the student teaching experiences of teachers of record and traditional student teachers to examine how the relationships with supervising practitioners develop.

Student teachers and supervising practitioners both shared that they felt the student teachers were ready to teach and the end of this experience. This study, however, did not provide an opportunity to follow the student teachers into their first year of teaching. Future research may look to examine the first years of novice teachers who student taught during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research could examine the novice teachers' confidence in teaching after a disrupted student teaching experience and potential challenges that they experienced potentially related to missed opportunities and experiences during their student teaching semesters.

Another limitation of this study was the inability to interview direct pairs of student teachers and supervising practitioners. As a result, much of the discussion about the success of the relationship was based on the perceptions of one person in the pair. Future research could specifically include paired student teachers and supervising practitioners who could speak about their relationships, providing deeper insight into the success of the overall relationship.

While technology was discussed at length by both student teachers and supervising practitioners, most of the technology discussed was new for both student teachers and supervising practitioners. Since the switch to virtual learning was so sudden, student teachers and supervising practitioners learned about the new virtual learning technology, like Zoom, Google

Meet, and other digital tech tools, together. Future research may explore differences in

understanding classroom technology possessed by student teachers and supervising practitioners.

This research could explore whether or not student teachers can assist supervising practitioners

in their understanding of classroom technology. In addition, this research can also explore the

types of technologies that can be used in teacher education programs, either for mentoring

purposes, feedback and evaluation, or familiarizing preservice educators with common

educational technology.

While the semi-structured interviews for this case study offered rich, detailed

explanations of the field placement experience from the participants' perspectives, perspectives

can be limiting. Adding classroom observations or survey data from more student teachers and

supervising practitioners would have rounded out the study. It would have been interesting to see

the classroom interactions between student teachers and supervising practitioners to see how the

described co-teaching relationships worked while engaging with students. Additionally, survey

data could have provided additional insights into the semester to triangulate the participant

surveys.

A major missing voice from this study was that of the university supervisor. While

student teachers mentioned that university supervisors provided answers and support during the

pandemic, there were not any university supervisors who opted into participating in the study.

University supervisors take on a unique role, often acting as a liaison between the university and

the K-12 school. The role of the supervisor was important during the pandemic, as they worked

with the student teachers to be sure that they were able to meet the changing graduation

requirements. Interviewing the supervisors would have added to a greater understanding of how

universities act in partnership with K-12 schools to ensure that the field placement experience is

a successful one.

Finally, future research may also explore different types of field placement experiences

during the March 2020 semester. This study was limited to a semester-long student teaching

experience. Many of the participants, however, shared that they had prior either professional

relationships with their supervising practitioners or that they had worked together in a different

practicum experience. Other research could explore year-long field placements or internship

programs where student teachers and supervising practitioners are paired for an entire school

year. This research could compare the experiences of individuals in longer-term placements with

that of the traditional semester-long placements, to identify differences in feelings of success and

confidence.

Final Reflection

As vividly as I remember hearing that the 2019-2020 school year would end teaching

virtually from a table in my living room, I also remember the day I returned to my classroom to

clean and pack for the summer. In May 2020, my colleagues and I were assigned times to stagger

into the building, wearing our makeshift masks, to bring home any personal items or teaching

materials that we left on that last day in March. I remember walking into my room, noting the

date written on my board with my lesson objectives and agenda for the day—a memory frozen in

time. While I didn't yet know the long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, I packed away

my classroom for the year feeling that whatever it was that we were all experiencing would

profoundly influence education. To revisit this time through this research reminded me of many

of my successes and struggles during the early days of remote teaching.

As an educator who taught during the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the feelings of frustration and confusion shared by the study participants were also true of my own experience. In March of 2020, all teachers suddenly felt like new teachers all over again and teamwork was crucial to approaching the sudden, new expectations for teaching. My personal memories of the spring of 2020 involved virtual meetings with my colleagues where we shared ideas, celebrated victories, and problem-solved our way through the challenges that we faced while trying to teach our students online. Working together, each of us found our own paths to success, much like the participants in this study.

In education, success is not only the end point of a journey. Success is not only the outcome of a lesson, unit, or school year. Success in education is found in the opportunities that are presented along the way, small moments, and the opportunities that arise when educators collaborate and work together. For many of these participants, and in my own teaching experience, great success lies in professional resilience that happens when educators work together, support one another, and achieve the common goal of meeting students' needs.

Student teachers had their critically important practicum experiences disrupted by a global pandemic that was well beyond anyone's control. Yet, despite the challenges, they still achieved self-efficacy through hands-on learning experiences in the classroom. Student teachers developed and fostered relationships with students and their fellow educators as they worked through challenges with their colleagues.

Supervising practitioners were able to show their student teachers that education is perpetually changing and evolving. They modeled the resilience that educators have every day, in and out of a global pandemic, to meet the needs of students in an ever-changing world. Educators are always ready to adapt and change, and the COVID-19 pandemic was no exception.

In the spring of 2023, teaching was, if not back to normal, back in a state of familiarity after the challenges of virtual and hybrid learning. I was given the opportunity to invite a student teacher into my 7th grade classroom. The stories of the supervising practitioners and student teachers echoed in my mind as I worked with her, helped build her confidence, provide feedback, and learn from her. Like Kristy, I introduced her to my students as a visiting teacher, gave her a desk in the back of my classroom, and included her on the bulletin board where I share my reading choices with students. We practiced Cognitive Apprenticeship Theory as I first modeled my lessons while gradually releasing responsibility. I employed the quick feedback that Clark described and left sticky notes on her desk or typed notes onto a shared Google Document while she taught. Most importantly, I included her in our school community as often as possible. I made it my goal to nurture our professional and personal relationship.

I wanted to emulate the positive experiences shared by the supervising practitioners and student teachers that I interviewed and avoid the negative. In many ways, our relationship was a success. I learned some new methods for teaching that I wasn't familiar with and got to see how different students connected with my student teacher and I in different ways. By the end of the semester, when I was regaining the classroom responsibilities, we had a fun rapport that mimicked some of my best relationships with my co-teachers. In some ways, of course, I could have improved. I was not always clear in my expectations and found it hard sometimes to explain certain parts of the school day or curriculum to her. Feedback was challenging to give at times because I wanted to help my student teacher grow, but also not hurt her self-esteem. I wanted more time to talk to her about all aspects of teaching, not just what she saw in the classroom. I learned that the student teacher/supervising practitioner relationship is rich and rewarding, but also wrought with challenge. I gained even more appreciation for these

participants who did all of this while also managing a pandemic. I remained certain that

communication, professional resilience, and community are crucial parts of the field experience

relationship.

Education does not happen in a vacuum. Teachers cannot be successful alone. This study

has shown just a small percentage of educators who used their collective commitment to student

success to make the best of a difficult situation. As supervising practitioner Kristy said, "it's a

challenging job but you know, I feel like we all are in a position where we can uplift one another

whenever we can, and it's best to do that…my success doesn't take away from yours, and vice

versa, so, let's do our best to root for one another." While the semester wasn't perfect for all of

the participants, rooting for one another and celebrating our community resilience allows us to

better teach one another and our students.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Letters: Invitation and Consent Letters

Informed Consent for Student Teachers – Spring 2020

Dear --- :

You are invited to participate in research for the dissertation titled "Learning Disrupted: COVID-19's Effects on the Student Teacher/Supervising Practitioner Relationship." The intent of this research study is to satisfy the degree fulfillment requirements set by the Graduate School of Education for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at Lesley University.

Your participation will entail the completion of an anonymous post-student teaching survey and an interview after your student teaching semester. The interview is not expected to last more than one hour and will be scheduled to take place via Zoom at your convenience. You will be asked to reflect on your student teaching semester and how the process affected your practice as a future educator. Since your student teaching experience coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, you will also be asked to reflect on how the challenges presented by COVID-19 impacted your experience as a student teacher. An educator herself, the researcher understands that this is a challenging time for you as you are about to embark on your journey as a new educator. To thank you for your time, you will be compensated with a $25 Amazon gift card to be used for books to further your education practice or for supplies to furnish your future classroom.

You are free to choose not to participate in the research and to discontinue your participation in the research at any time without facing negative consequences. Identifying details will be kept confidential by the researcher. Data collected will be coded with a pseudonym and your identity will never be revealed by the researcher. Only the researcher will have access to the data collected.

Any and all questions will be answered at any time and you are free to consult with anyone (i.e., friend, family) about your decision to participate in the research and/or the choice to discontinue your participation.

Participation in this research does not pose any immediate risk to you as a future educator, but should you feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions or participating in the interviews, you will be permitted to skip questions or end an interview early.

If any problem in connection to the research arises, you can address the researcher, Bethany Tremblay-Price at (443) 528-2642 and by email at btrembla@lesley.edu or Lesley University sponsoring faculty, Dr. Marcia Bromfield at mbromfie@lesley.edu.

The researcher may present the outcomes of this study for academic purposes (i.e., articles, teaching, conference presentations, supervision etc.).

I am 18 years of age or older. My consent to participate has been given at my own free will and I understand all that is stated above. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____	_____	_____
Participant's Signature	Date	Researcher's Signature

There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should be, reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairpersons at irb@lesley.edu.

Informed Consent for Supervising Practitioners – Spring 2020

Dear --- :

You are invited to participate in research for the dissertation titled "Learning Disrupted: COVID-19's Effects on the Student Teacher/Supervising Practitioner Relationship." The intent of this research study is to satisfy the degree fulfillment requirements set by the Graduate School of Education for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at Lesley University.

Your participation will entail the completion of an interview at the end of your student teacher's practicum semester. The interview is not expected to last more than one hour and will be scheduled to take place via Zoom at your convenience. You will be asked to reflect on your time with your student teacher during the spring 2020 semester and how this relationship may have been impacted by the COVID-19 school closures. An educator herself, the researcher understands that this semester was a challenging one and that you may be busy ending your school year or preparing for next year. To thank you for your time, you will be compensated with a $25 Amazon gift card to be used for professional materials or other supplies for your classroom.

You are free to choose not to participate in the research and to discontinue your participation in the research at any time without facing negative consequences. Identifying details will be kept confidential by the researcher. Data collected will be coded with a pseudonym and your identity will never be revealed by the researcher. Only the researcher will have access to the data collected.

Any and all questions will be answered at any time and you are free to consult with anyone (i.e., friend, family) about your decision to participate in the research and/or the choice to discontinue your participation.

Participation in this research does not pose any immediate risk to you as an educator, but should you feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions or participating in the interviews, you will be permitted to skip questions or end an interview early.

If any problem in connection to the research arises, you can address the researcher, Bethany Tremblay-Price at (443) 528-2642 and by email at btrembla@lesley.edu or Lesley University sponsoring faculty, Dr. Marcia Bromfield at mbromfie@lesley.edu.

The researcher may present the outcomes of this study for academic purposes (i.e., articles, teaching, conference presentations, supervision etc.).

I am 18 years of age or older. My consent to participate has been given at my own free will and I understand all that is stated above. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____   _____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date   Researcher's Signature

There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should be, reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairpersons at irb@lesley.edu.

Informed Consent for Field Placement Coordinators

Dear --- :

You are invited to participate in research for the dissertation titled "Learning Disrupted: COVID-19's Effects on the Student Teacher/Supervising Practitioner Relationship." The intent of this research study is to satisfy the degree fulfillment requirements set by the Graduate School of Education for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at Lesley University.

Your participation will entail participation in one interview at the end of the spring 2020 semester as well as working with the researcher to identify potential student teacher, supervising practitioner, seminar instructor, and program supervisor participants. The interview is not expected to last more than one hour and will take place via Zoom. You will be asked to reflect on how, in your perspective, the student teaching experience was impacted by the COVID-19 school closures and on the impact of the student teacher/supervising practitioner relationship. The researcher understands that this has been a challenging time for you in your position. Your time will be deeply appreciated as the researcher looks to understand how the university responded to the challenges and supported student teachers during this unique time.

You are free to choose not to participate in the research and to discontinue your participation in the research at any time without facing negative consequences. Identifying details will be kept confidential by the researcher. Data collected will be coded with a pseudonym and your identity will never be revealed by the researcher. Only the researcher will have access to the data collected.

Any and all questions will be answered at any time and you are free to consult with anyone (i.e., friend, family) about your decision to participate in the research and/or the choice to discontinue your participation.

Participation in this research does not pose any immediate risk to your professional or personal life, but should you feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions or participating in the interviews, you will be permitted to skip questions or end an interview early.

If any problem in connection to the research arises, you can address the researcher, Bethany Tremblay-Price at (443) 528-2642 and by email at btrembla@lesley.edu or Lesley University sponsoring faculty, Dr. Marcia Bromfield at mbromfie@lesley.edu.

The researcher may present the outcomes of this study for academic purposes (i.e., articles, teaching, conference presentations, supervision etc.)

I am 18 years of age or older. My consent to participate has been given at my own free will and I understand all that is stated above. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____   _____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date   Researcher's Signature

There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should be, reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairpersons at irb@lesley.edu.

Informed Consent for University Supervisors and/or Seminar Instructors

Dear --- :

You are invited to participate in research for the dissertation titled "Learning Disrupted: COVID-19's Effects on the Student Teacher/Supervising Practitioner Relationship." The intent of this research study is to satisfy the degree fulfillment requirements set by the Graduate School of Education for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at Lesley University.

Your participation will entail participation in one interview at the end of the spring 2020 semester. The interview is not expected to last more than one hour and will take place via Zoom. You will be asked to reflect on how, in your perspective, the student teaching experience was impacted by the COVID-19 school closures. The researcher understands that this has been a challenging time for you in your position. Your time will be deeply appreciated as the researcher looks to understand how the university responded to the challenges and supported student teachers during this unique time.

You are free to choose not to participate in the research and to discontinue your participation in the research at any time without facing negative consequences. Identifying details will be kept confidential by the researcher. Data collected will be coded with a pseudonym and your identity will never be revealed by the researcher. Only the researcher will have access to the data collected.

Any and all questions will be answered at any time and you are free to consult with anyone (i.e., friend, family) about your decision to participate in the research and/or the choice to discontinue your participation.

Participation in this research does not pose any immediate risk to your professional or personal life, but should you feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions or participating in the interviews, you will be permitted to skip questions or end an interview early.

If any problem in connection to the research arises, you can address the researcher, Bethany Tremblay-Price at (443) 528-2642 and by email at btrembla@lesley.edu or Lesley University sponsoring faculty, Dr. Marcia Bromfield at mbromfie@lesley.edu.

The researcher may present the outcomes of this study for academic purposes (i.e., articles, teaching, conference presentations, supervision etc.)

I am 18 years of age or older. My consent to participate has been given at my own free will and I understand all that is stated above. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____   _____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date   Researcher's Signature

There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should be, reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairpersons at irb@lesley.edu.

Digital Survey Consent Letters

Dear --- :

You are invited to participate in research for the dissertation titled "Learning Disrupted: COVID-19's Effects on the Student Teacher/Supervising Practitioner Relationship." This research study is being completed to satisfy the degree fulfillment requirements set by the Graduate School of Education for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at Lesley University The intent of this research study is to explore the relationship established between student teachers and supervising practitioners during a final field placement experience as well as explore how COVID-19 may have impacted your student teaching experience. Your participation will entail one online questionnaire at the end of your student teaching experience consisting of 20 questions. It should take no longer than 30-45 minutes.

- Prior student teaching experience is not necessary.
- Participation is strictly anonymous.
- You are free to choose not to participate in the research and to discontinue your participation at any time by quitting the survey.
- No personal information will be collected by the researchers, but you may be asked to volunteer demographics such as race, age (range), or cultural background.
- If any problem in connection to the research arises, you can contact the researcher, Bethany Tremblay-Price at (443) 528-2642 or by email at btrembla@lesley.edu.

There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should be, reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairpersons at irb@lesley.edu.

Participation in this online questionnaire by clicking "next" will constitute consent.

Appendix B: Instruments: Survey and Interview Questions

Questions for Student Teachers

- How did the semester go? In your eyes, was it successful? How do you define your

  success?

- Describe a typical day at the beginning of the semester, before COVID-19 began closing

  schools and universities.

  - What was your relationship with your supervising practitioner like at this time?

  - What were your daily routines and structures?

  - What did your supervising practitioner expect of you?

- Think about the initial announcement that schools would close due to COVID-19.

  - How did you feel?

  - What were your supervising practitioner's expectations for you when school

    initially closed?

  - What were your university's expectations for you when school initially closed?

  - What concerns did you have about school closures?

- Think about when you realized that schools would continue online for the duration of the

  school year.

  - How did you feel?

  - What were your supervising practitioner's expectations for you at this point?

  - What were your university's expectations for you?

  - What concerns did you have about school being closed long-term?

- Overall, how would you describe your relationship with your supervising practitioner? Is

  there anything you wish were different? What?

- How did you communicate with your supervising practitioner after schools closed due to COVID-19? Did you feel this change impacted your relationship with them? How?

- Was there any difference in comfort levels with technology between you and your supervising practitioner? Who was more comfortable? Did these comfort levels change how you worked together? Why?

- What surprised you most about working with your supervising practitioner?

- How did your supervising practitioner support you over the course of the semester?

- Did the university communicate with you during the semester? What did that communication consist of? Did you use any handbooks or other materials given to you at the start of the semester to help you during the field placement?

- What kind of feedback has been most helpful for you this semester? Do you think your supervising practitioner was comfortable giving feedback? Were you comfortable receiving it, even if it was negative? How did you use this feedback after it was given? How might this have gone differently?

- What was the greatest success of your relationship with your supervising practitioner? Why do you feel this way?

- What was the biggest challenge of your relationship with your supervising practitioner? Why do you feel this way?

- How were you splitting the classroom responsibilities by the end of the semester? Why did you choose to do things this way?

- How did communication work between you and your supervising practitioner this semester? Explain how this changed when the stay-at-home advisories were enacted.

- Describe, in your own words your relationship with your supervising practitioner this semester?

- Were you able to meet all of the required expectations set by the university this semester? If not, what would have helped you meet the expectations.

- At any point in the semester were you able to make suggestions to your supervising practitioner about pedagogy, materials, or other teaching practices? What did you suggest? How did your supervising practitioner receive this information?

- Would you ever consider you and your supervising practitioner to be co-teachers? What makes you say this?

- Do you still want to teach? Why do you feel like this?

- Do you think you are ready to teach in a classroom full time? Why do you feel this way?

Questions for Supervising Practitioners

- How did the semester go? In your eyes, was it successful? How do you define success?

- Describe a typical day at the beginning of the semester, before COVID-19 began closing schools and universities.

  o What was your relationship with your student teacher like at this time?

  o What were your daily routines and structures?

  o What were your expectations of your student teacher?

  o What did your student teacher expect of you?

- Think about the initial announcement that schools would close due to COVID-19.

  o How did you feel?

  o What were your expectations for your student teacher?

- What were your student teacher's expectations for you when school initially closed?

- What were your school/district's expectations for you when school initially closed?

- How did you support your student teacher when schools closed?

- What concerns did you have about school closures?

- Think about when you realized that schools would continue online for the duration of the school year.

  - How did you feel?

  - What were your student teacher's expectations for you at this point?

  - What were your school/district's expectations for you?

  - What concerns did you have about school being closed long-term?

- Overall, how would you describe your relationship with your student teacher? Is there anything you wish were different? What?

- How did you communicate with your student teacher after schools closed due to COVID-19? Do you think this had any impact on your relationship with them? How?

- Was there any difference in comfort levels with technology between you and your student teacher? Who was more comfortable? Did these comfort levels change how you worked together? Why?

- The switch to distance learning was a sudden one. Do you think the task of exploring a new way of teaching impacted your relationship with your student teacher? How? Why do you think this was?

- What surprised you most about working with your student teacher during this time?

- How did your student teacher support you over the course of the semester?

- Did the university communicate with you during the semester? What did that communication consist of? Was more information provided after schools switched to distance learning?

- Were you comfortable giving feedback about teaching to your student teacher? How did they react to feedback you gave? Did this change when you switched to online learning?

- What was the greatest success of your relationship with your student teacher? Why do you feel this way?

- What was the biggest challenge of your relationship with your student teacher? Why do you feel this way?

- How were you splitting the classroom responsibilities by the end of the semester? Why did you choose to do things this way?

- How did communication work between you and your student teacher this semester? Explain how this changed when the stay-at-home advisories were enacted.

- Describe, in your own words your relationship with your student teacher this semester.

- Were you able to meet all of the required expectations set by the university this semester? If not, what would have helped you meet the expectations.

- Would you ever consider you and your student teacher to be co-teachers? What makes you say this?

- Were there any key experiences that you believe your student teacher missed out on due to the switch to distance learning? What are they? Will this impact them at all when they are teaching full time?

- Do you think your student teacher is ready to teach in a classroom full time? Why do you feel this way?

Questions for Field Placement Coordinators/University Faculty and Staff

- Could you walk me through the selection process that Lesley uses to select supervising practitioners?

- Once supervising practitioners are selected, are they given any sort of preparation, training, or orientation to the program or expectations to work in this role? Explain

- How are student teachers matched with the supervising practitioners in the schools?

- Describe, in your opinion, an ideal relationship between student teacher and supervising practitioner. What qualities does this relationship have? How does this relationship "look?"

- What typically causes conflict between student teachers and supervising practitioners?

  o Should conflicts arise, how are they resolved?

- What happens if a conflict is so severe that either the supervising practitioner or student teacher do not want to continue the relationship?

- What, in your opinion, are the major strengths of your student teaching program?

- What, in your opinion, are the challenges of your student teaching program? Is anything being done to change this?

- Anything else you would like to share about the teacher education program at Lesley?

- In your own words, how would you define a successful relationship between the student teacher and the supervising practitioner?

- I would like you to reflect on everything that happened when COVID-19 closed the university and the schools. What was your role in helping student teachers navigate these challenges?

- How do you think COVID-19 impacted the student teaching experience?

    o Were all students able to complete their student teaching experience?

    o What will happen to any student teachers who were unable to complete the student teaching experience?

    o How did student teachers meet some of the challenges presented by COVID-19?

    o Did any students struggle to meet the expectations of distance learning? How did they work through those challenges?

    o Do you have any concerns about this semester's student teachers' readiness to teach? If so, what are they? If not, why not?

Questions for Field Placement Supervisors and/or Seminar nstructors

- Briefly describe your role during the field placement experience.

- What are your expectations of the student teacher over the course of the semester? Do these expectations change as the semester progresses? How do you expect the supervising practitioner to support these expectations?

- How often do you typically work with student teachers during the semester?

- How did COVID-19 impact the student teaching experience?

    o If you have worked in this role before, how did COVID-19 change this experience?

    o How did your role within the field placement experience change due to COVID-19?

- o What changed for student teachers after the university and schools closed?

- o What supports do you feel student teachers needed most when navigating school

  closures?

- o Were any student teachers unable to complete their student teaching as a result of

  COVID-19? What will happen to those student teachers?

- o What major successes were celebrated by student teachers during this time?

- o Did any students have significant struggles during distance learning? What were

  they? How were you able to support?

- o Do you have any concerns about this semester's student teachers' readiness to

  teach? If so, what are they? If not, why not?

- Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your position during the field

  placement process?

General Survey for Student Teachers (Given via Qualtrics)

Demographic Information:

Gender	Race/Ethnicity (select all that apply)	Age
[ ] Male [ ] Female [ ] Non-Binary [ ] Choose not to answer	[ ] Asian [ ] Black/African [ ] White [ ] Hispanic/Latinx [ ] Pacific Islander [ ] Prefer not to answer [ ] Other _____	[ ] 18-20 [ ] 20-25 [ ] 36-30 [ ] 31-35 [ ] 36-40 [ ] 41-45 [ ] 46-50 [ ] 50+

Please rank how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

5   = Strongly Agree 4 = Agree 3 = Neutral 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree

The expectations set by my supervising practitioner at the beginning of the semester reflected what I accomplished during my student teaching semester.

5   4   3   2   1

I feel confident in my teaching practice.

5   4   3   2   1

My confidence in my teaching practice grew during this semester.

5   4   3   2   1

My confidence in my teaching practice grew beyond what I expected during this semester.

5   4   3   2   1

My supervising practitioner provided feedback that improved my teaching practice.

5   4   3   2   1

My university provided clear expectations for me during my student teaching semester.

5   4   3   2   1

If a conflict arose during my student teaching semester, I felt comfortable addressing the

conflict with my supervising practitioner.

5   4   3   2   1

I felt comfortable going to my university for help if I experienced a conflict during my student

teaching semester that I could not work through with my supervising practitioner.

5   4   3   2   1

My supervising practitioner outlined specific expectations and responsibilities for me during

this semester.

5   4   3   2   1

I felt comfortable asking for more responsibilities in my supervising practitioner's classroom

if I wanted them.

5   4   3   2   1

I was be able to learn from my supervising practitioner.

5   4   3   2   1

I gained lessons and resources from my supervising practitioner that I may be able to use in

my teaching practice after graduation.

5   4   3   2   1

I felt comfortable sharing ideas and resources that I have created with my supervising

practitioner for use in their classroom after I leave.

5   4   3   2   1

I successfully dealt with professional conflicts during my student teaching semester.

5   4   3   2   1

I successfully dealt with personal conflicts during my student teaching semester.

5   4   3   2   1

I hope that my relationship with my supervising practitioner will continue after I graduate.

5   4   3   2   1

I felt like a member of a professional team at the school where I was placed.

5   4   3   2   1

I was included in many parts of my supervising practitioner's day, such as meetings, planning, parent events, etc.

5   4   3   2   1

How did COVID-19 impact your student teaching semester? Please reflect on any positive and negative impacts of the pandemic on your experience.

[Open Response]

What sort of information did you receive from your university supervisor in terms of feedback, support, etc.?

[Open Response]

Was your student teaching experience successful? How do you, personally, define success?

[Open Response]

Appendix C: IRB Application

Application for Review of Human Subjects Research

Date Submitted _____

Application for: ☐ Exemption from IRB Review ☐ Expedited Review **X** Full Review

Lead Researcher *:
Bethany Tremblay-Price
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Brookline, MA 02446
(443) 528-2642
btrembla@lesley.edu

Faculty Supervisor* (only if student researcher):
Marcia Bromfield, Ph.D.
85 Newtonville Ave.
Newton, MA 02458
(617) 763-2714
mbromfie@lesley.edu

*Faculty Supervisor is the official Principal Investigator under Federal Regulations

Investigator(s) status – indicate all that apply:

☐ Faculty ☐ Staff **X** Graduate student(s) ☐ Undergraduate

Title of the Project: Learning Disrupted: COVID-19's Effects on the Student
Teacher/Supervising Practitioner Relationship

Proposed Project Dates: June 2020-January 2021
Type of Project:

☐ Faculty research **X** Thesis/Dissertation ☐ Independent Study ☐ Other (please describe)

1.1 Briefly describe the purpose of the study
 The purpose of the study is to determine how the student teaching experience was impacted by university and public/private K-12 school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The study will explore the relationships between student teachers and supervising practitioners as well as examine one university's response to the pandemic, school closures, and distance learning plans set by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary education. Student teachers (ST) and supervising practitioners (SP) will be given the opportunity to reflect on how the experience may have impacted ST and SP perceptions of a successful field placement experience. Success will be defined by a relationship which results in both competence and confidence in the preservice teachers' teaching practice during and after the field placement experience. The relationships between preservice and supervising practitioners will be explored in order to make suggestions that will

inform teacher education programs, school administrators, and supervising practitioners, and other teacher education stakeholders on ways to improve the relationships between these individuals as well as share how one university navigated significant disruptions to the learning environment.

1.2 Provide the number of adults, and the number and ages of minors
 Approximately 12-20 (5-10 student teachers, 3-5 supervising practitioners, university personnel (field placement director, student teacher seminar instructor(s), program supervisor(s), student teacher supervisor(s), etc.)) adults will be closely interviewed during the course of this study.

A general survey will be offered to all students involved in the final field placement experience at the university studied.

No minors will participate in this study.

1.3 Briefly describe the project design (e.g., experimental, ethnographic, etc.):
The project will consist of a case study which will be completed at Lesley University. This site will be chosen because of the university's long history as an education school, familiarity of access, and because it is known that there were student teachers still working in field placement experiences after COVID-19 caused the closure of the university and public/private K-12 schools. The study will ask the student teachers who had their student teaching disrupted by COVID-19 to reflect on their experience as a whole and share information about their relationships with supervising practitioners and their personal evaluation of their own readiness to teach. Supervising practitioners will also be invited to share their perspective of the experience and discuss the success of the relationship and their perceptions of student teachers' readiness to teach. University faculty and staff, such as the field placement director, a student teacher faculty supervisor, and a seminar instructor will also have the opportunity to reflect on how they feel the COVID-19 pandemic affected student teaching. All interview participants will be interviewed once at the close of the 2019-2020 school year.

1.4 Indicate whether the study involves any of the following:

X Case Studies   ☐ Experimental intervention   ☐ Task performance
☐ Educational tests   ☐ Standard psychological tests   **X** Survey or questionnaire
X Interviews   ☐ Observations   ☐ Analysis of existing data

1.5 How will subjects be recruited?
Subjects will be recruited with the assistance of field placement faculty and staff at Lesley University. Field placement staff will assist by suggesting student teachers and supervising practitioners who may be interested in participating in the study. Students and supervising practitioners who are representative of the university will be preferred. Student teachers and supervising practitioners who participate will each receive a $25 gift card to Amazon for classroom supplies or pedagogical books for their time commitment to the study.

1.6 Do subjects risk *any* stress or harm by participating in this research? If so, why are they necessary. How will they be assessed? What safeguards minimize the risks? [*It is not necessary to eliminate all risks, only to be clear and explicit about what the risks may be. The IRB is alert to any tendency to suggest that risks are lower than they may actually be.*]
 The study may require time outside of any regularly scheduled commitments to school and university life for those who are participating, which may result in stress in scheduling so that

information can be collected at a time when participants will most clearly remember the spring 2020 semester. In addition, preservice teachers, who may not yet be hired as teachers-of-record may be vulnerable and fearful of speaking up, especially if they experience any negative experiences with the student teaching experience. The researcher will make every effort to schedule interviews at times most convenient to the participants so that they do not feel that the interview is a time burden. Participants will be informed of their rights to anonymity, including the use of pseudonyms in coding and reporting data and interviews will be conducted in a private, password protected meeting room on Zoom. Participants will be permitted to skip any research questions they wish to skip or end an interview, should they feel uncomfortable.

1.7 Describe the data that will be collected:
 Data will be collected through a post-student teaching survey offered to all members of the student teaching cohort in the spring 2020 semester. This survey will be made up of 20 questions with a Likert scale identifying if participants agree or disagree with statements about student teaching. The responses to this survey will be compared.

In addition, data will be collected through individual interviews with student teachers, supervising practitioners, the university field placement director, a student teacher supervisor, and a student teaching seminar instructor. These interviews will be coded using Nvivo for common themes, specifically those which lend themselves to exploring the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and examining the relationship between preservice teachers and supervising practitioners. Due to the current stay-at-home advisory issued for the state of Massachusetts, all interviews will take place using the Zoom video conferencing platform.

1.8 Describe the steps to be taken to respect subject's rights and expectations of privacy, confidentiality and anonymity:
Subjects will be informed of their right to anonymity and confidentiality before agreeing to participate in the study. The general teaching survey will be given digitally without collecting participants' personal information. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the interview participants during coding and reporting of data. Additionally, the name of the university and any other individuals who influence the study will not be reported. Each participant will be given their own unique meeting ID on Zoom which will be password protected for privacy. Zoom meetings will be recorded with participant approval and recordings will be stored in a password protected file on the researcher's computer and discarded when no longer necessary for completion of the dissertation or for future study.

1.9 Will subjects' identities or private information be revealed if this study be reported through publication or public presentation?
 No. Participants will be named by pseudonym only.

If this application is seeking an **exemption from IRB Review**, please check the policy in the Faculty Handbook. Please see the worksheet on the criteria for an exemption. If you believe that the proposed research qualifies for an exemption, you may end the application here and submit these two pages to irb@lesley.edu . You will be notified whether your application for exemption has been approved. If it is not approved, you will be asked to complete the remaining sections of this application.
_____

Applicants seeking either expedited or full IRB review are required to complete the remainder

of this form.

2.1 Identify the institutional affiliation of the Principal Investigator (including School, Division, Center or Office). Also identify the affiliation and status of the co-investigator who is a student.
Principal Investigator: Marcia Bromfield, Ph.D., Professor Emerita of the Graduate School of Education at Lesley University.
Co-Investigator: Bethany Tremblay-Price, Doctoral Candidate in the Graduate School of Education at Lesley University

2.2 Identify the institutional affiliation of other participants on the project who are not members of the Lesley University community.
n/a

2.3 If the principal investigator is not a member of the Lesley community, then a Lesley faculty or staff must be a co-sponsor of the research project. Please identify that person.
 n/a

2.4 Identify the funding source and any relevant restrictions on the research, if applicable.
 n/a

2.5 If the proposed project involves collaboration with another institution, please identify and indicate if IRB review from that institution and been sought and granted. Include the IRB review number. Include relevant contact information.
n/a

2.6 Location(s) of the research activity:
Lesley University

3.1 Provide further details on the characteristics of the human subjects. Please describe in greater detail the numbers of subjects, the range of ages, gender, and other relevant demographic characteristics that may define the sample being studied.
Student teachers (5-10 of the total participants) will be selected from Lesley University's masters' teacher education program. Supervising practitioners (3-5 of the total participants) are current teachers in local public or private school districts, becoming affiliated with Lesley through a student teaching partnership. All other participants will be Lesley faculty/staff, with individuals working with student teachers as field placement directors, student teaching seminar instructors, and student teaching supervisors.

3.2 How are subjects to be chosen or recruited? Describe sampling procedures.
Recruitment will take place working closely with the university field placement director, student teachers and supervising practitioners who worked with the university through the field placement experience during the spring 2020 semester. The field placement director will provide contact information for the student teachers and supervising practitioners who were affected by COVID-19 and the researcher will reach out and invite them to participate in the study. Additionally, the field placement director will assist the researcher in contacting some of the seminar instructors and field placement supervisors who worked with the student teachers/supervising practitioners during the

semester and they will also be invited to participate in the study.

All student teachers involved in the elementary and secondary field placement program will be given the option to complete a general, 20-question survey at the end of the semester.

3.3 What will subjects be asked to do, what will be done to them, or what information will be gathered? (Append copies of interview guides, instructions, tests, or questionnaires.)
Participants who are only electing to participate in the survey will be asked to complete a 20-question survey at the end of their student teaching semester.

All other participants will be interviewed once at the end of the spring 2020 semester. These interviews will be scheduled as close to the end of the school year as possible in order to capture an accurate understanding of how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the school year. All participants will be asked about how COVID-19 affected their role in the field placement experience. Student teachers and supervising practitioners will specifically be asked to reflect on how COVID-19 affected professional relationships established in the field and how each party felt about the student teachers' readiness to teach, despite missing part of a semester due to the school closures.

Interview and survey questions are in the attached appendix to this application.

3.4 If interviews are planned, identify the interviewers and how will they be trained?
The interviews will be completed by the lead researcher, Bethany Tremblay-Price. The interviewer has completed coursework in qualitative research methods to prepare for the interview and has completed the required human subjects training (certificate attached to this application).

3.5 If an intervention is planned, please describe and include the number of times intervention will be made and over what period of time (see policy guidelines for the definition of 'intervention'): n/a

4.1 How do you explain the research to subjects and obtain their informed consent to participate? (It is essential to allow participants to ask questions at any point. Be sure to append your Informed Consent Form.)
 Before participating in the study, the purpose of the study and the areas of interest to the researcher will be outlined through an initial letter to all students participating in the field placement experience for the spring 2020 semester. Throughout the process, participants will be permitted to ask questions about the project.

4.2 If subjects are minors or not competent to provide consent, how will parent or guardian permission be obtained? How will verbal assent of the participants be obtained? n/a

4.3 How will subjects be informed that they be can refuse to participate in aspects of the study or may terminate participation whenever they please?
 The Informed Consent Form will explain to participants that they are able to refuse to participate in any aspects of the study and that they can terminate participation. This information will be reinforced at the start of each interview so that participants understand that they do not have to answer interview questions that may make them feel uncomfortable or end the interview should they see fit.

4.4 If subjects are students or clients, how will you protect them against feeling coerced into participation?
The Informed Consent Form and Information Letter will provide information to students about their participation in the study. They will be informed that they do not have to participate in the interview portion of the study should they choose to complete the survey. They will be encouraged to discuss participation in the study with the individuals close to them, both personally and professionally, to be sure they are comfortable working with the researcher during their field placement experience. The information they provide during the interview sessions will remain confidential, not being shared with their universities or supervising practitioners.

4.5 Are subjects deliberately deceived in *any* way? If so, provide rationale. Describe the deception, its likely impact on participants, and how they will be debriefed upon completion of the research. Subjects will not be deceived in any way.

4.6 How might participation in this study benefit subjects?
 Participation in this study may benefit subjects because the act of reflection on the progress of learning and teaching may help teachers and future teachers to grow as educators. For supervising practitioners, they may benefit in that reflecting critically on their relationship with their spring 2020 student teacher may help them to change their practice and approach to working with a student teacher in the future. Student teachers may benefit from reflecting on their growth as future educators during the field placement experience. University faculty and staff may benefit from this study in reflecting on the field placement experience and identifying areas of strength and areas that could be strengthened. In addition, the university's response to a major disruption to the learning environment will be specifically highlighted during the study. Since COVID-19 brought on a number of changes, mostly revolving around distance/remote learning and communicating solely through digital platforms, the university will have the opportunity to reflect on the changes made during this time to help determine if they would be helpful for future student teachers or if use of digital technology during the field placement experience should be revised. All participants will be able to participate on the use of digital technology in a mentoring experience.

4.7 Will participants receive a summary of results? If yes, please describe.
 If requested, participants may receive a transcript of their interview. They may also request a summary of the study. They will not, however, receive transcripts of interviews conducted with other participants. Upon completion of the study, the researcher will offer the final results of the study to be read by all participants.

5.1 How will the following be protected?

 a. <u>Privacy</u>: Protecting *information* about participants.
> Any specific indicators that would identify participants in the study – the name of the school where student teaching is taking place, the name of the university, etc. will be omitted from the study or changed using a pseudonym. Interviews will be done individually in private meeting rooms using the Zoom video conferencing platform. Information collected will only be seen by the researcher.
> For individuals participating just in the survey portion of the study, personal information will

not be required to collected.

b. <u>Anonymity</u>: Protecting *names* and other *unique identifiers* of participants. Names should not be attached to the data, <u>unless</u> subjects choose to be identified, <u>and</u> the identification of subjects is essential to the proposed project.
Pseudonyms will be used to protect the names of participants, schools, and universities involved in the study. Information will only be used this way if specific quotes from interviews are used in the final analysis and write-up of the research data.

c. <u>Confidentiality</u>: Protecting *data* about participants. How is access to data limited? Consider how coding will be kept separate from information obtained; how data will be stored and when will it be destroyed; whether data will be used in the future and, if so, how permission for further use will be obtained?
Only the researcher will have access to the data from interviews. Coding will take place in Nvivo, separate from the original transcripts from the interviews. Data will be stored in the researcher's personal computer and discarded at the end of seven years. Should the researcher wish to use the data in the future, the researcher will send a separate consent form before the study that will use the data a second time.

5.2 Are there any other procedures or details of the study the Human Subjects Committee should use to assess how your study protects human subjects?
 N/A

Attachments, as appropriate (Please include all attachments in one file labeled by the author's last name, as shown below):

- Written Informed Consent Form. The consent form must include contact information for the applicant, the faculty supervisor (if the applicant is a student), and the IRB. Include this text:

  There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairpersons at irb@lesley.edu

- Recruitment letters or flyers
- Instructions to informants
- Interview Guide
- Compensation information
- Data collection instrument, e.g., test
- List of all co-investigators (including contact information)
- Description of any experimental manipulation
- Information sheets or debriefing method
- Letters of IRB approval from cooperating institution(s)

Send the completed form as an email attachment to irb@lesley.edu.

Applicants are requested to send the application electronically, with all accompanying documents, in **one file**, with the following format for the file: <u>Last Name of Applicant</u> IRB Application <u>Date Submitted</u>. The email that accompanies the application will serve as an electronic signature.