

Journal
of the
Effective
Schools
Project
Volume XXVII
2020



“Classroom Interrupted”



Tarleton State University

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Journal of the Effective Schools Project

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Director's Note
Journal of the Effective Schools Project
"Special Edition - Classroom Interrupted"

Dear Readers,

The 2019-2020 Effective School Project seminars inspired member campuses to plan and share a vision for the year 2020, which fit the theme, Moving Forward: Vision 2020. In our ESP seminars, we provided a New Teacher Academy for those who wanted tips and tricks to use in their classroom. We engaged with Ms. Robyn Jackson as she taught us about helping students to become motivated, confident, and self-directed learners. In February, Mr. Jimmy Casas motivated us about learning with passion, which was right before our world turned upside-down as COVID-19 came into play. As we all know, in March of 2020, the world we knew changed drastically. Many of us left for spring break and didn't return for the remainder of the school year. We transformed the way we taught to a virtual learning environment. We missed our kiddos and tried our best to teach, nurture, and love them virtually. Because of the mandated lockdown, we were not able to host our annual retreat, so the culmination of our year was abruptly ended.

It is both an honor and privilege to work with The Effective Schools Project. I am continually inspired by the passionate, committed educators who are members of this collaborative learning community. It is our goal to provide ongoing professional development for educators so they may continue to serve students. This year's special edition journal focuses on the success stories of educators who were thrust into a virtual environment as our classrooms were interrupted. I hope you enjoy the engaging and informational articles included!

Sincerely,

Julie M. Howell

Julie M. Howell, EdD, Director
Jim Boyd Effective Schools Project



Editors' Note
Journal of the Effective Schools Project
“Special Edition – Classroom Interrupted”

Dear Readers,

Who knew a world pandemic would result in the creation of a special edition in the ESP journal? As teachers anticipated a well-deserved time of relaxation in March, the unpredicted global effects of COVID-19 presented an enormous obstacle in education. When life delivered lemons, educators used their creativity to “make lemonade” by developing innovative solutions. What was thought to be a temporary situation has become a prolonged “new normal.” Yet, with their unwavering flexibility, educators around the country and the globe adjusted overnight. Yes, overnight! Educators are the only professionals who can completely reinvent their work location and adapt their pedagogy to ensure objectives and student needs are still being met. Therefore, to say we are inspired by this issue is an understatement. We are honored to showcase the hard work and determination of life changers across the state.

Sincerely,

Erin Pearce, Ph.D., Coeditor
Journal of Effective Schools

Robin Pate, Ph.D., Coeditor
Journal of Effective Schools



Science in the Time of a Pandemic

Morgan Stewart and Jennifer Knight

This article provides insight into the virtual science classroom of two co-teaching elementary educators in a North Texas school district. While the district was prepared to roll out an at-home learning model in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, science content needed to be designed in such a way as to provide equity in lessons and content to all students. Online management systems provided support and enhanced the assigned science content presented through virtual field trips and investigations. Virtual office hours provided time for synchronous learning. Quizzes and digital worksheets served as periodic checks for understanding. Even though a distance-learning model had never been used by the district, the teachers believed the students were successful in this design based on work completed and informal conversations with students.

Little did teachers in our North Texas district know that when we left for spring break at the conclusion of the first week of March 2020, we would not be stepping back into our classrooms with students for the remainder of the year in an effort to slow down the spread of the COVID-19 virus (Germann et al., 2019). Those first few weeks of at-home instruction are a haze now, but we can still easily recall the frantic feelings during our planning and preparation. Students perceived this as an “extended spring break.” Teachers were reminded that we were “on-call” during the school day, even though information and direction were slow coming.

As the week progressed, Google Hangouts and Zoom meetings began to rise to the forefront of the conversation as we prepared for what we thought was one, maybe two, weeks of at-home instruction. Even though distance learning has become normalized in the 21st century, nothing of this magnitude had ever impacted education so quickly and drastically as the cancellation of physical schooling nationwide. Though there is minimal research investigating the effectiveness of synchronous and asynchronous instruction on popula-

tions younger than high school, Wallace (2009) conducted a study with a group of gifted and talented elementary students. In this study, 690 students ranging in age from five to 17 participated in a distance learning experience. The results of the research indicated that when provided with appropriate technology, support, and guidance, students in elementary school and their parents disclosed favorable experiences to the distance learning model provided. Even though Wallace’s research examined a subset of students (those identified as gifted and talented), the results of the study provide evidence that elementary students can be successful learning at home via distant or remote learning modalities.

When the governor issued stay-at-home orders in late March, it quickly became apparent that virtual learning would not be going away any time soon. How could educators adapt the traditional in-person model of science learning in a physical building to one conducted in personal living rooms where helpful classroom materials were just out of reach in locked-up buildings? How could teachers navigate this unfamiliar environment while also taking care of their own families in a time of cri-

sis? Islam and Andersson (2016) conducted a thorough review of various types of one-to-one devices utilized in education across the globe to determine the benefits and drawbacks to each technological decision. Following this study, our district incorporated two different technology choices. Every elementary student from preschool to fifth-grade had access to a tablet, and every middle and high school student was assigned a personal laptop. The technology department, not teachers, was expected to maintain the devices remotely and created a task force with a hotline to do so. However, teachers quickly assumed the role of technology support in addition to instructor when students would join a virtual office hour time to ask for help. In 2007, Wong conducted a study exploring the limitations of e-Learning. This study found that network structure, lesson design, technology issues, and student self-discipline limited the effectiveness of e-Learning. Therefore, it is unsurprising that our district also encountered similar limitations with the network, firewalls, and Wi-Fi and planned for ways to provide internet access to all students. Eventually, hotspots were checked out to families without internet access to decrease some of the barriers to at-home instruction.

As expected, there were still issues even though students were familiar with their devices and the learning management systems such as Canvas or SeeSaw. Teachers at our school took all of these issues in stride. Courses like reading and mathematics lent themselves to at-home instruction easier with the utilization of already-purchased, individually-tailored intervention applications like iStation and Education Galaxy; however, science was more difficult to adapt. Complex topics typically introduced in the spring (i.e., life cycles, ecosys-

tems) now needed to be taught remotely with no existing programs that were comparable to the reading and mathematics intervention applications. Virtually meeting with science teachers from across the district, educators looked at the Texas Essential Skills and Knowledge (TEKS) covered in the spring to determine which TEKS could be taught with limited hands-on investigations or direct teaching. After much discussion, this group of teachers decided to focus on the Earth and space TEKS as well as the life cycles and ecosystem TEKS. Once these two topics were decided upon, the committee created an outline for at-home instruction using the district science curriculum (STEMscopes) and supplemented as necessary with other internet resources.

Several years ago, our district adopted STEMscopes (STEMscopes, 2020) for the science curriculum and it does have some virtual content embedded within. However, STEMscopes is based on the 5E model and still relies heavily on face-to-face instruction for the Engage and Explore modules. Furthermore, not every student had access to the same laboratory supplies to recreate the investigations in STEMscopes at home. Science teachers did not want to endanger families by requiring them to venture out to grocery stores or have families incur additional financial stress by buying supplies needed to recreate hands-on activities. Instead, in the early weeks of at-home instruction, time was spent reviewing previously taught concepts (such as matter and energy) using slide presentations shared via the District Learning Management System. When teachers realized at-home instruction was continuing for the year, we began to include digital inquiries to introduce and reinforce new concepts as well as assign virtual fieldtrips. To demon-

strate learning within the digital management system, students responded to question prompts and interactive polls, completed digital worksheets, and participated in conversations during virtual face-to-face times. Periodically, students would complete a quiz at the conclusion of their lesson. Including an ability for students to routinely respond in a variety of ways not only helped reinforce the learning outcomes but also provided variability and accountability for the students.

To provide support to these students, most of whom were responsible for self-learning since their parents had multiple children or were considered essential employees, two blocks of time were set aside as virtual, synchronous office hours. Using the Google Hangout App on their tablets, students had the ability to log in and ask clarifying questions pertaining to the assignments or quizzes or share learning with their teachers. When virtual instruction first started, these office hours were 60 minutes long occurring once in the morning and once in the afternoon. They were held at an assigned time for each grade level across the district. When physical school buildings closed for the remainder of the year, the district sent out a survey to assess stakeholders (parents and teachers) and decided to decrease the virtual office hours to 30 minutes once in the morning and in the afternoon based on feedback received. Many parents and teachers of younger grades surveyed expressed concern that the allotted two hours each day were unproductive since students that were participating signed at the beginning of the session, received the help needed, and then signed off, leaving the later portion of the assigned time with little to no student attendance. Since this was a decision from administration,

teachers reminded parents and students that they were always available via email during the school day.

Finally, virtual 360 field trips and investigations that mirrored the weekly PowerPoint focus were offered to the students using Google Arts and Culture or Google Expeditions. During a traditional school year, our students are limited to one field trip per grade level. The closure of schools meant the cancellation of field trips, but that did not mean students no longer had a chance participate in virtual learning “trips”. Results from a study conducted by Zhao et al. (2020) indicated that virtual field trips were comparable to traditional field trips and in some cases provided greater engagement. Long after the novelty of at-home learning wore off, we observed that students remained engaged most likely because the inclusion of the Google applications provided chances to view places our students would typically not have visited during a school field trip. The experiences assigned to the students also consisted of places family outings typically neglect or places families cannot attend due to financial circumstances. Now students were able to go on weekly field trips to places such as the Museum of Natural Sciences, the Jurassic Coast, or to a paleontological site using the Google Arts and Culture application. Students used the Google Expeditions application to explore animal relationships, Earth’s geology, and plant adaptations using augmented reality. Students expressed enjoyment after completing various field trips or experiences in conversations during office hours. One such student was particularly interested in the field trip to a paleontological Titanosaurus site and took it upon herself to further her knowledge on the subject. She shared everything

she learned verbatim in virtual office hours the next day.

While students did not get the full, traditional fifth-grade science experience they would have generally had in a classroom, they did have access to a full and robust virtual science experience. Semester grading period and end of year grading periods revealed that most students were successful during at-home instruction. As the 2019-2020 school year ended, the lessons learned during this pandemic will change the way we approach time spent in the physical classroom in the future. Already, teachers in our school are collaborating and developing plans to incorporate technology more fully into our classrooms. Even though our district has used one-to-one devices for several years, the technology was only utilized to replace physical textbooks or act as a word processor. Assigning and returning work through digital management systems, creating a digital classroom community in addition to the physical community, designing and developing digital interactive science notebooks, and incorporating virtual field trips from the very beginning of the fall school year will better prepare us should we need to return to at-home instruction in the future. However, beyond mere preparation, the COVID-19 pandemic forced educators out of the comfort of traditional classrooms and into the 21st century. It is up to educators everywhere to continue with this forward momentum and to not slip back into what has always been done and is comfortable. We should strive to try out new and novel ways to include digital learning without the four walls of the classroom.

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Social and Emotional Support during Distance Learning

Kimberly Huffman, Anna Fox, and Lisa Colvin

As the COVID-19 pandemic emerged in America, schools across the nation immediately closed their doors and scrambled to put plans in place for students to continue learning from home through a distance learning model. Educational leaders accomplished what had never been done before in record-breaking time to ensure students would continue receiving the academic instruction needed while away from school. However, one important piece was overlooked: Teachers were thinking of their students and what social and emotional supports they could provide (Fagell, 2020). The third grade teacher featured in this article was able to connect with her students socially and emotionally despite the distance using a variety of strategies. By doing this, she learned the importance of intentional communication and creating strong bonds with students that could overcome the challenges of physical isolation (Pitts, 2020).

Time Stamp: March 2020

When the COVID-19 pandemic suddenly and unexpectedly closed school buildings across the nation, policymakers and educational leaders began putting measures in place to ensure students would continue to gain the academic knowledge they needed to be successful. Plans were made to continue teaching content, and guidelines were created for collecting grades and determining a student's eligibility to pass to the next grade level. Behind the politics and academic decision-making stood the front line educators, the classroom teachers, who knew their students on a personal level and worried less about the academic impact this pandemic may cause and more about the social-emotional impact they knew it would have on their students.

According to Gosner (2020), "When kids spend their daytime hours in safe, supportive schools where adults work every day to build strong relationships with every student, they are simply better, more engaged learners" (p. 2). Teachers understand the importance of building and maintaining relationships with students in

order for them to be successful. While in the classroom, teachers are able to support students socially and emotionally by greeting them as they enter the room each morning and by wishing them well as they leave in the afternoon. In-class instruction provides time to have casual conversations with students in order to get to know them personally and provides opportunities for collaborative games that help build a classroom community. Face-to-face learning also provides opportunities for physical contact, such as a handshake before class begins, a fist-bump to celebrate an accomplishment, or a hug at the end of the day. The challenge faced by teachers was determining how to continue fostering these relationships while teaching virtually.

Overnight, our students went from having a safe and supportive school environment with predictable routines to being required to stay at home and complete assignments on a computer. Because of that lost sense of connection, many students became disengaged and unmotivated to reach their academic goals (Marrow, 2020). Classroom teachers knew they had to


respond creatively to maintain the relationships they had worked to build with their students thus far during the school year.

No Time to Waste

As one of these educators, I immediately jumped into action. This situation required that I demonstrate to my students how much they were cared for and valued. I reached out to my third grade students and their families through phone calls, emails, and text messages. I asked about their well-being, what needs they had, and how I could help. My efforts reached beyond the students' academic goals. I successfully connected with them through Zoom meetings, handwritten notes, and a class Facebook page. Additionally, I created a *Flat Teacher* version of myself, to share and mail to my students (see Figure 1). Finally, to celebrate the end of this unprecedented year, our campus held a drive-by parade at the school for students and families.

Nationally, stories emerged highlighting efforts made by teachers to keep relationships strong through distance learning. Through thoughtful collaboration, teachers designed creative ways to connect with students during a time of social distancing. Local and national news stations reported on the efforts being made by school districts to encourage students while they were learning from home. Social media sites, such as Facebook and Instagram, offered a platform for teachers to share ideas and printable materials, including postcards with creative phrases letting students know how much they were missed. I eagerly followed the ideas generated among teachers from across the nation on these sites as they began to unfold and used many of their ideas while reaching out to my own students. Having the ability to follow the

Figure 1. Flat Teacher Instructions

A graphic for the Flat Teacher Project. On the left, a cartoon female teacher with brown hair, wearing a blue jacket and black pants, stands with hands on hips inside a blue oval. On the right, a blue rectangular box contains white text.

Flat Teacher Project

Create your Teacher Bitmoji by using these sources:

How to make a Flat Teacher Bitmoji
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3fqwYHm0GxY>

Facebook Group Page
Bitmoji Craze for Educators
(this group does require a request to join)

Write a personalized letter to your students to encourage them and let them know you care.

conversations among these classroom teachers was particularly helpful because the ideas were practical and came directly from other educators who were facing similar challenges in finding ways to connect with students.

The teachers on my campus immediately began holding class meetings with students through online video conferencing platforms, such as Zoom and Google Meets. I quickly put a schedule in place to meet virtually with my class twice a week, including evening meetings to accommodate those students who had working parents. I also scheduled one-on-one and small group virtual meetings for students who needed more academic support, needed to learn how to navigate the numerous web-based applications, or simply needed to see a friendly face from school. While academic lessons were being taught during these online meetings, the main focus was the personal contact made with my students and the effort to help them continue to feel connected to their classroom and school.

In the first week of the school closures, I began sending handwritten notes and postcards to students to give them a tangible reminder that they were thought about and loved. Students and parents often expressed their excitement with receiving weekly postcards containing simple, encouraging notes. One parent sent a message letting me know the handwritten letters were her child's favorite part of distance learning. She shared with me how delighted he felt when he received mail from me and would

spend time reading my letters over and over. This knowledge supported what I already knew about the importance of strong teacher-child relationships. Rucinski et al. (2018) concluded, "to the best of their abilities, teachers should purposefully ensure that every child in their classroom knows that their teacher cares about them as an individual, likes them, and is available to them as a dependable source of support" (p. 1002).

Another way I strived to support my students socially and emotionally was by creating a class Facebook page as an additional tool to keep us connected. By doing this, I was able to share important information about assignments, as well as announcements made by our campus and school district. We were also able to connect as a school family by celebrating birthdays and themed spirit days. Students were encouraged to participate in these virtual spirit days by posting photos of themselves that corresponded with the theme of the day. This included *Make Something Mondays* for students to show off some of their favorite artwork and *Throwback Thursdays* when students wrote letters to some of their past teachers.



A student in Mrs. Huffman's class completes a writing assignment with his "Flat Teacher".

Students also shared pictures of themselves reading to stuffed animals, dressed as their teacher, and working diligently on their assignments.

As I continued to search for new ways to engage my students, I discovered a Facebook page dedicated to the use of Bitmojis in a virtual classroom, titled *Bitmoji Craze for Educators* (n.d). After reading about the success other teachers had on this page with increasing student engagement through the use of Bitmojis, I decided to create my own version of a *Flat Teacher* based on a popular children's book, *Flat Stanley* (Brown, 1964). I constructed a Bitmoji of myself and mailed it to my students along with a letter explaining how they could have me with them while they completed school work or could take me with them on their adventures. Students were excited to write about our adventures to-

gether in their journals, read their favorite books to my Bitmoji, and have the flat teacher version of myself watch as they completed their daily math facts assignments. Many students also made sure that Flat Mrs. Huffman attended our virtual class meetings. Wittrup and Willingham (2019) stated that this type of direct interaction “demonstrates your care and thoughtfulness, and students who feel a personal connection to their teacher are more likely to be actively engaged” (p. 14).

To celebrate the culmination of the school year, our campus held an End-of-the-Year parade, which was announced on the school Facebook page and through other social media posts. Students and families were encouraged to drive by our school at a designated time to wave goodbye to the teachers. Staff members lined up along the perimeter of the building holding signs

and shouting their goodbyes as the students passed slowly by in their vehicles. Families expressed their gratitude by decorating their cars with balloons and signs, shouting encouraging words, and even throwing candy and handing out gifts. It was a bittersweet time for all who attended. We were all so happy to see each other in person, but we also felt disappointed that we could not give our usual hugs and high fives.

Moving Forward with New Insights

Some adults outside of education may have viewed these tasks designed to connect with students as an unnecessary use of time and energy since such efforts may be perceived to have little academic impact, but great teachers realize academics is only a part of an educator's job. Woodward (2019) stated, “All students deserve to have adults in their schools who



Mrs. Huffman and other third grade teachers wish their students a “Happy Summer” during the End of the Year parade.

care about them enough to be intentional about building positive relationships” and if “we truly expect our students to learn with us, they need to know that we care about them” (para. 12). Furthermore, according to Sparks (2019), “strong teacher-student relationships were associated in both the short- and long-term with improvements on practically every measure schools care about: higher student academic engagement, attendance, grades, fewer disruptive behaviors and suspensions, and lower school dropout rates” (p. 1). Building and fostering relationships, making social and emotional connections, and guiding students with compassion and love is what allows teachers the opportunity to change lives.

After teaching virtually due to the pandemic, I am forever changed in the way I approach building relationships with my students. I am now much more attuned to the social and emotional needs of my students and am determined to be more purposeful in getting to know each of my students as individuals. I plan to immediately reach out by phone to any families who are not able to attend *Meet the Teacher Night* in order to begin the year with an open line of communication. I will be more diligent in setting aside time at the beginning of each day to allow students the chance to share about themselves and participate in activities that will help to create a sense of community within our classroom. A bulletin board will be used in our classroom for students to post pictures of themselves with the people they care about. I will also strive to find opportunities each day to encourage and praise students individually. In the event that that distance learning becomes necessary in the future, I want to ensure my students know they are supported

and cared for in all aspects of their development.

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School Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Two Case Studies

Jesse D. Brock, Mandy Musselwhite, Ikie Holder, and Don M. Beach

Schools have been faced with several important questions during the COVID-19 crisis including: (a) How will instruction be delivered as classes; (b) How can learning assessments be made; (c) How do teachers maintain communication, contact, and relationships with students; (d) How will important ceremonies such as graduations be conducted and students recognized; (e) How do we focus on educating and providing for the whole child/student while engaged in remote or online learning; and (f) How do we plan for the next steps? Guided by the scholar-practitioner framework, two principals in Texas individually narrate how their schools and districts addressed each of these six questions. Their responses provide reflections and analyses of the lessons learned and insights gained over the past few months. The actions described in the case studies should be utilized as historical accounts, meaning that leaders should learn from their successes and mistakes.

Over these past few months, there were rapid and significant changes to the United States' primary and secondary public-school systems as educators responded to the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the spring semester progressed, plans for schools often felt like they were evolving minute-by-minute. Generally, school administrators, state legislatures, and governing boards started reacting to COVID-19 during the month of March 2020. An overarching response was the physical closure of schools to slow the spread of the virus. According to a recent report conducted by the National Conference of State Legislatures (2020), "governors and legislatures have called for the statewide closure of at least 124,000 public schools in 48 states and every U.S. territory" (para. 1).

As a result of the physical closures, schools were tasked almost immediately with creating virtual learning experiences and moving classes to an online learning platform for students. While the challenges and successes vary across each school, the move from face-to

-face learning to complete online learning was not always a smooth transition. For many teachers, the switch to the new delivery of lessons proved challenging, not only in the preparation of learning activities and experiences, but in the students' understanding and use of the technology.

There have been serious implications due to this dramatic response of physically closing schools for the remainder of the spring semester. Some of the most pressing concerns have involved student mental and physical health, accessibility to resources such as technological devices accountability associated with completing assignments, and the negative impact on education attainment and academic outcomes similar to those associated with summer learning loss (Kuhfeld & Tarasawa, 2020). These concerns are not only revealing and widening equity gaps across ethnic groups and socioeconomic classes, but also creating new gaps within sub-student populations. In essence, scholars and practitioners are concerned that the COVID-19 crisis "could become a

social crisis that will have long-lasting consequences" (Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020, p. 243).

These implications and gaps are present in schools across the state of Texas (Swaby, 2020a; 2020b). A brief timeline of Texas' response to COVID-19 is both appropriate and beneficial, as this paper highlights two schools located in the state. Two days after waiving the state-wide assessment tests on March 19, 2020, Governor Abbott signed an executive order that temporarily closed all schools. Over the course of subsequent weeks, the temporary closure was extended. Less than one month after his closure decision, Governor Abbott signed Executive Order GA-16 (2020), stating that "schools shall remain temporarily closed to in-person classroom attendance by students and shall not recommence before the end of the 2019-2020 year" (p. 4).

K-12 administrators in Texas and beyond have had to learn through experience and have realized that leading during what has been called an unprecedented crisis is not easy. Scholars have written about crisis leadership prior to the current pandemic (Crandall, Parnell, & Spillan, 2014; George, 2009; Johnson, 2017; Smith & Riley, 2012). Each of these authors offer unique perspectives and strategies facing adversity and uncertainty. Focusing on public school administrators, Smith & Riley (2012) wrote "in the context of a crisis, however, school leadership must also be about providing certainty, engendering hope, engaging a rallying point for effective and efficient effort, and ensuring open and credible communication to and for all affected members of the school community" (p.57). In light of COVID-19, Nevins (2020) published a call-to-action for effective crisis claiming

that “Right now, we really need sober, smart, values-driven, and focused leadership” (para. 1).

For schools to prosper during the current times and the forthcoming challenge of normalcy, administrators need to have the skills, abilities, and mindset associated with the type of crisis leadership portrayed by Smith & Riley (2012) and Nevin (2020). This is especially true regarding the key, broad decisions. In all, this paper addresses six questions schools have been faced with during the COVID-19 crisis: (a) How will instruction be delivered as classes and meetings; (b) How can learning assessments be made; (c) How do teachers maintain communication, contact, and relationships with students; (d) How will important ceremonies such as graduations be conducted and students recognized; (e) How do we focus on educating and providing for the whole child/student while engaged in remote or online learning; and (f) How do we plan for the next steps? The answers to these questions are not outlined in a guidebook. Instead, answers have emerged from a process that includes collaborating, learning from experiences, and conducting critical reflections.

The purpose of this paper is to use the scholar-practitioner framework to examine the lived experiences of two campus level leaders and provide a narrative for how two principals in Texas approached each of the six main questions above. Utilizing an autoethnography case study research design (Patton, 2002), each principal individually details in his and her own words their lived experiences and responses associated with COVID-19. The following sections of this article provide individual and collaborative reflections, analysis of the lessons learned, and insights

gained regarding future leadership implications, which consider an educational setting impacted by the novel and threatening virus.

Case Study 1– Aledo Middle School

Aledo Middle School is a fast-growing campus, located west of Fort Worth, Texas. The current student enrollment is 1,014 students in grades 7 and 8. For the 2019-2020 school year, the student population at [Removed for peer review] Middle School was 45.7% female and 54.3% male. The ethnic breakdown for the current school year was as follows: African American-1.68%; Asian-0.1%; American Indian-0.1%; Two or More Races-4.27%; White-77.15%; and Hispanic-15.8%. The economically disadvantaged population was 16.7%. The percent of students receiving special education services was 7.4% and the percentage of students receiving ESL services was 3.6%.

Timing

The initial school closure was announced prior to students being released for spring break, and families were notified that in an abundance of caution, and in line with the recommendations of public health officials, all campuses would be closed for two additional weeks after spring break. Given this announcement, students took home instructional materials that would be needed for distance learning. The week of spring break allowed time for collaboration with surrounding districts and logistical planning. In the preliminary phases of planning, it became increasingly evident that meeting the basic needs, primarily access to food, was of high priority. District and campus leaders focused on meal delivery and curbside pick-up for breakfast and lunch, and began

working with faith-based organizations and other local charities to provide meals for evenings and weekends. Additional emphasis was placed on securing devices and accessibility for families as remote or distance learning was inevitable. To determine the level of technological support needed, surveys were developed and distributed to all families.

Consideration for Instruction

The leadership team was aware that the transition from face-to-face traditional instruction, to online, asynchronous learning would be a dramatic change for teachers, students, and families. Careful consideration was taken in regard to the most at-risk populations on the campus. Thus, we opted to transition in phases - phase 1 being driven by student choice and aimed toward building teacher and student capacity and phase 2 being driven by standards-based instruction and aimed at cementing essential skills.

Phase 1 of Instructional Delivery

During phase 1, students were provided choice boards and encouraged to select activities over topics they may have struggled with previously in the year. The choice boards included both digital and non-digital resources and were designed to build student independence and confidence. During this time, teachers were engaged in professional learning to build capacity as distance learning educators. All teachers completed modules covering learning platforms, instructional design for distance learning, and video conferencing tools. A resource website was also created to provide staff with additional support.

While teachers and students engaged in this work, the district continued to meet the needs of families through device distribu-

tion and technological support. Families were provided multiple opportunities for no-contact device pick-up. Counselors and administrators continued to contact most at-risk families and ensured that devices were delivered. Hotspot delivery was also the goal so all students in the district were equipped with the tools needed for distance learning.

Phase 2 of Instructional Delivery

During phase 2, students were provided weekly assignments from all teachers. The expectation was that lessons were derived from state and district standards. At the secondary level, students received one weekly lesson for each core subject. Each lesson was expected to take up to two hours to complete. Students also received one weekly lesson from each elective course; these lessons were expected to take up to one hour to complete. The lesson also included optional extension activities to support students needing more challenging work. Special education staff worked closely with general education teams to ensure accommodations were being implemented. Teachers also established virtual office hours for students who needed assistance. To streamline the process for families, all teachers utilized a standardized lesson planning template. After two weeks of this type of delivery, families were surveyed, and adjustments were made to both instructional delivery and time commitments.

Assessment and Grading Guidelines

As assessment practices and grading guidelines were developed for distance learning, it was imperative to consider the unique situations families were facing and the varied levels of stress families were enduring. Therefore, in order to establish grading guidelines that

best met the needs of students and families, feedback was solicited from teachers, campus administrators, instructional specialists, parents, and students. After reviewing the feedback received, district level distance learning grading practices were established with the intent to remain flexible and to support the home learning environment. The primary focus of assessment was on student understanding and mastery of essential standards rather than on numerical grades. Teachers were also committed to providing timely feedback and allowing students multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery.

Maintaining Contact and Relationships

To maintain relationships and support students socially, teachers held weekly video-conference check-ins. While these check-ins were optional for students, it allowed opportunities for socialization with both teachers and classmates. Additionally, administrators and counselors made phone calls and scheduled virtual meetings with students who were disengaged or needed more extensive support. While teaching and learning are critical, it was imperative to remember,

Perhaps a more important but easily neglected issue is the psychological impact on children and adolescents. Stressors such as prolonged duration, fears of infection, frustration and boredom, inadequate information, lack of in-person contact with classmates, friends, and teachers, lack of personal space at home, and family financial loss can have even more problematic and enduring effects on children and adolescents. (Wang, Zhang, Zhao, Zhang, & Jian, 2020, p. 946)

Therefore, maintaining contact with students and offering opportunities for social dialogue with

peers was a high priority for our campus.

Recognizing Accomplishments and Milestones

Similarly, it was important to recognize the accomplishments and milestones of our students. Typically, group and individual accomplishments are recognized at a yearly awards ceremony. Given the unique circumstances, the presentations were conducted virtually. The presentations were then sent out via email and posted to social media pages and our campus website.

Future Planning

While there were certainly successes during distance learning, there were lessons learned as well. Given the uncertainty and changing recommendations regarding school operations, the district has already begun work to prepare for a return to face-to-face learning with restrictions, continued distance learning, or a hybrid of both face-to-face and virtual learning. To provide our students with the most advantageous learning opportunities, campus and district leaders are researching leading practices, and continuing to seek opportunities to build teacher and student capacity. Teachers, students, families, and other stakeholders are being surveyed as to what was beneficial and what could be changed to best support students both academically and socially.

Through our process thus far, it has become apparent that while many students thrive with independent learning opportunities and benefit from self-pacing and choice, others desperately need structure and support. Additionally, there is a need for grace and flexibility in terms of assessment and grading; accountability is important in terms of motivation. For example, while every effort was

made to put tools in the hands of students, not all students utilized these tools, and many were academically disengaged. However, with the grading guidelines established, many were still able to pass the class, given their academic performance prior to engaging in distance learning. But of all the lessons learned, it has become most apparent that students, teachers, and families need the communal, social support of school. While efforts were made to replicate social interaction, these efforts fell short. In conversations with both parents and students, this was the most pressing concern moving forward.

Case Study 2 – Centennial High School

Centennial High School is the second, and largest of two high schools in **Burleson ISD**, which is located just south of Fort Worth, Texas. The campus has been steadily growing for the 10 years of its existence. During the 2019-2020 school year, the campus had an enrollment of approximately 1,900 students in grades 9 through 12. The gender make-up of the campus was 48.4% female and 51.6% male. The ethnic breakdown of our students for the past year was: African American-8.6%; Asian-0.6%; American Indian-0.4%; Two or More Races-3.2%; White-65.5%; and Hispanic-21.6%. The economically disadvantaged population was 32.8%. The percent of students receiving special education services is 6.5% and the percentage of students receiving ESL services was 3.2%.

Instructional Delivery

By deliberating the various models suggested by the Texas Education Agency, and utilizing the information gleaned from local school districts, our district decided to utilize a split online delivery mod-

el based on grade level. At the high school, instruction was based on a direct online lesson structure that asked students to commit to two required lessons each week based on state and district standards of the curriculum.

Assessment of Learning

A choice was made to limit grading of assignments in order to minimize potential anxiety for students who were being asked to move to the unfamiliar online learning environment. This choice limited the grade-based norm of the typical classroom environment. To assess mastery of the curriculum standards, the teachers were asked to input personal commentary for students within the online learning platform used for all coursework. Teacher commentary was a major shift in teacher assessment, but it served to create better feedback loops between teacher and students.

Maintaining Contact and Relationships

The online learning platform chosen by the district contained internet applications that allowed for online video conferencing which enabled teachers to connect a single student or multiple students and multiple classes at one time. These video conferences were used as a visual teaching mechanism as well as a personal and general communication avenue. The video conferencing application had a recording feature which permitted teachers to save the online discussions. Those online discussions could then be posted to the online classroom platform and be viewed by any student who missed the meeting. It enabled students to stay connected to relevant classroom content even if they missed the original meeting.

Though teachers continued to utilize the usual communication tools

of email and telephone calls to stay in communication with students and parents, the conferencing application's video component allowed for a face-to-face connection to be maintained between teacher and student, as well as student to student. For the students who were not reached by teacher communication methods, the administrative and secretarial staffs created a contact log. The staff worked to reach out to students, parents, family or friends in an effort to connect students to the online learning opportunities. The contact log was updated daily to reflect any changes in student contact.

Recognizing Accomplishments and Milestones

Initially, state guidelines limited the possibility of our district having a normal graduation ceremony with all students present and the normal number of friends and family in attendance. In order to give the students and families some semblance of a graduation, the district decided to create a virtual graduation ceremony. The ceremony would be composed of recorded speeches typically given at a graduation ceremony. In addition, individual pictures taken of each senior in graduation regalia were included. The virtual graduation ceremony would be posted to social media and online platforms at the exact time of the originally scheduled graduation.

After the virtual video was created, state health guidelines were eased which allowed for the potential for an in-person graduation ceremony with limited seating for family and friends. This ceremony would be later than the originally scheduled graduation. The district secured a site and date, but in order to ensure the maximum amount of exposure for the graduating seniors, the district decided to release the virtual

graduation ceremony in case some family members could not attend. An additional recognition for all graduating seniors was done by placing individual signs in each senior's yard of their home. The district also arranged parades to drive through local neighborhoods to celebrate the graduates.

Addressing Student Needs

To ensure a focus on the whole student during online learning, the district conducted weekly surveys of students and parents to determine positives and negatives of the online learning model employed. The survey results were communicated to the appropriate campus leadership to allow them to address student and campus concerns.

The administration and counseling staff also communicated with teachers and students to determine any academic, personal, or emotional needs which arose while quarantined from campus. If parents or students related potential concerns, one-on-one video conferences were arranged to determine the exact issues or concerns of the students. The staff then utilized their training and resources to assist them.

Future Planning

Our district, along with others, is looking at the next school year to determine how learning will be delivered, and what changes might be considered based on lessons learned from the current online learning experiences. State agencies have offered little guidance for the next school year, so our district is looking at creating multiple contingency plans in preparation for the various scenarios that could present. The multiple scenario approach has been difficult as it limits the ability of a district to focus attention and resources on the desired learning model.

Summary

The case studies presented in this paper highlighted two principals who have been leading within two different districts and in different grade levels. Their stories illustrate the shared similar experiences and plans of actions with administration, staff, students, and parents regarding the six key decisions addressed in this paper. Evident by their narratives, the principals shared plans for the Fall 2020 semester, as both schools are utilizing a multiple scenario approach regarding instructional methods. However, one of the most important lessons learned over the course of the past few months has been that schools are social centers of support. As the nation loosens its quarantine guidelines, attention will be placed on the decision-making policies from the education sector, especially as implementation occurs at the local level. The actions described in the case studies presented here should be utilized as historical accounts, meaning that leaders should learn from their successes and their mistakes. To be successful in the future process of re-opening schools, principals and district leaders must be able to engage in the scholar-practitioner model of critical reflection and analysis to ascertain what worked and did not work regarding the implemented action plans during the Spring 2020 semester. While it is hoped that a crisis such as the one associated with COVID-19 does not re-emerge, we have to keep in mind that the COVID-19 crisis has yet to conclude and continues to present logistical issues for school leaders.

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Clinical Teaching during COVID-19: How COVID-19 Helped Reveal the Invisible Side of Teaching

Rebecca S. Putman and Kim Harris

As a non-traditional college student, it is only fitting that Kim Harris had a non-traditional clinical teaching experience, one that will have a lasting impact on her career as a teacher. While the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic and teaching online were a challenge, clinical teacher, Kim Harris, soon began to see an opportunity to observe the invisible side of teaching. Because both Kim and her mentor teachers were new to online education, she experienced first-hand how veteran teachers think, adapt, transform, learn, and apply knowledge in a novel situation. In the end, Kim witnessed both the challenges and the opportunities that come with being a classroom teacher, which were magnified by the pandemic and online education. The experience transformed her thinking about what it means to be a teacher.

By definition, Kim Harris is a non-traditional college student. She is a mom to six adult children and a grandmother to thirteen. Before returning to college to pursue her dream of becoming an elementary teacher, Kim worked for almost 30 years in a variety of jobs, primarily as an accountant and office manager. Kim's clinical teaching semester began just as she expected. She was assigned to complete her 16-week clinical teaching experience in a medium-sized suburban district in North Texas. Kim had completed her field experience the previous semester in the same classrooms and had already built relationships with the students and her mentor teachers. She taught for eight weeks in a third-grade classroom, learning alongside her amazing mentor teacher. As planned, she then switched to her second placement in a first-grade classroom at the beginning of March and spent her first week with the students, reestablishing bonds and getting to know their routines. Then... everything changed.

COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020

Reports of COVID-19 illnesses were first detected in Wuhan, China and reported to the World

Health Organization on December 31, 2019 (WHO, 2020). The outbreak was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern a month later, on January 30, 2020 (WHO, 2020). The first reported case of COVID-19 in the United States was reported in Washington State at the end of January, while the first cases of community transmission of the virus in the United States were confirmed at the end of February (CDC, 2020). When most North Texas school districts left for spring break near the beginning of March 2020, concerns about the spread of the virus were beginning to grow. Within a few days of the start of spring break, it was evident to community leaders that school districts would need to delay the return of students and staff to protect the health of the public and vulnerable populations. In the beginning, most assumed the school closures would be temporary; however, it was soon apparent that students and their families would need to shelter in place and remain at home for an extended time to curb the spread of the virus. At this point, public education generally shifted from a brick and mortar operation to an online format. With little notice, teachers (and

their clinical teachers) had to reimagine public education and figure out how to instruct their students using remote technology. Thus began a new era in the history of education.

Review of the Literature

A review of the literature revealed very little research has been done on the effects of school closures due to pandemics. To be fair, there have been very few pandemics in the modern era of education to warrant extended closure of schools. A search of the H1N1 global pandemic of 2009 provided a couple of periodical articles that cursorily addressed some of the educational challenges during a pandemic, including continuity of instruction and lack of technology resources (Ash & Davis, 2009; Davis & Ash, 2009; Robelen, 2009). The search also yielded a few articles that considered the benefits and consequences of school closures in terms of public health (Cauchemez et al., 2009; Howard & Howard, 2012; Patterson et al., 2009; Wong et al., 2010); however, these articles generally ignored the effects of the closure on both students and teachers. An expanded search of school closures during emergencies and crises such as hurricanes and tornadoes also found very little research on the experiences of teachers and students (Foster, 2009). The purpose of this article is to describe the lived experiences of one clinical teacher during the COVID-19 pandemic and attempt to capture the essence of what she learned. The author felt that the clinical teaching experience was an important one to capture as the clinical teacher's voice was essentially relegated to the sidelines during the pandemic because the voices of parents, teachers, and students were given more attention and weight.

Clinical Teaching during a Pandemic

The Early Days

At the beginning of her clinical teaching experience in a third-grade classroom, Kim Harris described herself as a “sponge, trying to absorb as much as I could and observe different situations” (K. Harris, personal communication, May 14, 2020). She said she was most interested in getting hands-on experience with the students. One aspect of the classroom she was particularly interested in was how technology could be used to instruct students (little did she know that she would soon get a crash course in online teaching.) From the first day of her placement, Kim worked with the children and was actively involved in their learning. Her first mentor teacher was very supportive and gave her permission to do whatever she felt comfortable doing, including small group and whole group instruction. When asked about Kim, her mentor teacher remarked, “The first time I met Kim, she had the same excitement and eagerness as I remember when I first started my clinical teaching. Her energy was a great reminder on how important it is to have excitement in your classroom. You have to go all in or not at all when it comes to teaching and Kim definitely has that quality” (B. Mahaffey, personal communication, May 26, 2020).

After her great experience in third-grade, Kim was excited about switching to her next placement in a first-grade classroom. From the first day, she noticed her mentor teacher had incredibly high expectations, and the kids always seemed to meet those expectations. Kim noted how she liked seeing a real-life example of this phenomenon after discussing the importance and research on high expectations in her teacher education courses at Tarleton State Universi-

ty. Her first-grade mentor teacher described Kim as “always willing to help in any way, and she always tried her hardest...it was nice having her in the classroom to help and encourage the students” (C. Logsdon, personal communication, May 30, 2020).

Learning New Technologies

When Kim and her first-grade mentor teacher walked out of the classroom the Friday before spring break, they had no inclination school plans would not return to normal the Monday following spring break. Kim said when she found out they would not be returning to school, she immediately reached out to both of her mentor teachers. Kim’s second mentor teacher welcomed her help. She said, “When COVID-19 shut down the schools, Kim reached out to me. She offered to help with anything I needed” (C. Logsdon, personal communication, May 30, 2020). Kim’s clinical teaching experience did not end when her classroom shifted to online learning; rather, she continued to observe, learn, and teach.

During the first week of online teaching, Kim started slowly. Her mentor teacher asked her to record a read aloud of a book and make a video for their phonics lesson. Kim said that while she was comfortable with a variety of educational technology, she still felt like the switch to online learning was an opportunity to expand her knowledge and skills even further. The first-grade team at her school had previously dabbled with using Seesaw in the classroom, so when they switched to online learning, the first-grade teachers decided to use Seesaw as their primary learning platform. Kim noted,

Originally, I had done some research while in one of my university classes on Seesaw and created a presentation, so I

was fairly familiar with it. Little did I know how much I would be using it one day! Because of my familiarity with the platform, I was able to help my mentor teacher understand it more. I ended up creating a bunch of extra stuff for her on Seesaw. We were actually discussing how to give effective feedback, and I told her that I could make virtual distance learning awards for reading and other assignments. I also created a toolbox with writing tools for the students. I ended up creating around 100 digital badges, and then I went in and showed her via Zoom how to assign challenges and digital badges to certain students. I also created some digital stickers for her to add to the students’ assignments, as well (K. Harris, personal communication, May 14, 2020).

In this case, the mentor became the mentee. Kim said when learning went online, she saw exponential growth in the use of technology. She saw this growth as an opportunity to become Seesaw certified and Google Classroom certified. Kim is currently a Seesaw Pioneer and is working on becoming a Seesaw Ambassador. In addition, she also learned how to use a variety of other tools including Jamboard (an interactive collaborative white board), Loom, Adobe Illustrator, and Adobe Photoshop. She noted, “Overall, I think a lot of the teachers who were a bit fearful of technology before the pandemic have been forced to learn technology, and it has opened up a whole new world of how to teach” (K. Harris, personal communication, May 14, 2020). Going forward, Kim is hopeful that all educators (including herself) will feel a lot more comfortable and confident using technology in the classroom for instruction and assessment.

Expert Blindness

Teaching is a complex and demanding task. Veteran teachers are often considered experts in their field and have a deep understanding of this complex task. The notion of “expert blindness” in education means that much of what veteran teachers think and do is invisible and they have limited consciousness of their day-to-day decisions (Berliner, 1986; Ericsson & Lehmann, 1996; Leinhardt & Greeno, 1986; Nathan & Koedinger, 2000). Because of this expertise, mentor teachers can become “blind”; they forget how difficult it was to initially learn to be a teacher. They may inadvertently omit steps, thinking, rationale, and information that clinical teachers need in order to fully understand the roles, responsibilities, and skills of an effective teacher.

The Invisible Side of Teaching

While the early days of the pandemic and teaching online were a challenge, Kim Harris soon began to see an opportunity to observe the invisible side of teaching. She noted, “As a clinical teacher, this pandemic allowed me to see some of the invisible aspects of teaching that I’m not sure I would normally have access to. It was kind of like I got a behind-the-scenes tour of what it means to be a teacher” (K. Harris, personal communication, May14, 2020). Because both Kim and her mentor teachers were new to online teaching, she was able to experience first-hand how veteran teachers think, adapt, transform, learn, and apply knowledge in a novel situation. Online teaching was an experience with which neither novice nor veteran teacher had familiarity. Kim and her mentor teacher were suddenly on equal ground, both learning how to do something completely new and unexpected together--there was no expert blindness. Nothing was automatic, which meant they had to

think aloud, discuss, and make decisions together, carefully considering and weighing each of their choices and options. They collectively explored how to ask higher-level questions of students, differentiate the content in an online environment, and give effective feedback. She said, “I got to participate, observe, and learn as veteran teachers joined forces, shared information, and supported each other like never before” (K. Harris, personal communication, May14, 2020). This experience transformed Kim’s thinking about what it means to be a teacher and helped build her confidence.

The Whole Child

The other invisible side of teaching Kim experienced was what she described as the “whole child”. She said, “One of the biggest gifts from this pandemic is that I got to see the whole child, whereas before, I was only seeing the child that was in front of me in the classroom. I got to see their environment and what they had (or didn’t have) at home” (K. Harris, personal communication, May14, 2020). Kim further explained how she observed many interactions between students and their families via Zoom that she otherwise would not have experienced in a traditional classroom. She also noted how teachers no longer had access to manipulatives, textbooks, and anchor charts, items deemed “essential” before the pandemic. Instead, as educators, their “essentials” during the pandemic were making sure the students were fed and were emotionally healthy. Going forward, Kim feels like she will be better able to take into consideration her students’ home environments and family situations and better teach the whole child

Conclusion

As a non-traditional student, it is

only fitting Kim Harris had a non-traditional clinical teaching experience, one that will have a lasting impact on her career as a teacher. Kim witnessed both the challenges and the opportunities that come with being a classroom teacher, which were magnified by the pandemic and online teaching. On the one hand, Kim felt she was short-changed because she did not get to say goodbye to the students in person or have the interactions with them in the classroom. On the other hand, she had the opportunity to observe an invisible side of teaching and learn the importance of educating the whole child. Kim reflected,

Teaching during the pandemic further instilled the lessons we learned in the classroom at Tarleton State University. When we were instructed to shelter in place, we were physically removed from the brick and mortar building, but we continued to nurture and teach remotely. After the initial fear, technology allowed us to communicate, educate, and strengthen the bonds with the community to raise up the whole child (K. Harris, personal communication, May 14, 2020).

Overall, Kim sees her experience as a blessing because she was exposed to online teaching, technology, and the expertise of her mentor teachers. Before clinical teaching, she described herself as “half a teacher”, not fully understanding what she really needed. Kim said that teaching during the pandemic, “made me whole” and noted how she may need to apply her new knowledge again sooner than later as she begins her first year of teaching in the fall. No matter what, Kim Harris will be forever changed by her experience of clinical teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 1.
Clinical Teacher, Kim Harris (L),
and her Mentor Teacher, Connie
Logsdon (R)



Note. This photo was taken before a school-wide parade in the students' neighborhoods during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Students EXCEL in Online Classroom

Lyndsey Garcia and Melissa Roberts Becker

In March 2020, Gilbert Intermediate School's classrooms were interrupted. The pandemic posed many challenges for a fifth grade social studies teacher as she sought to maintain essential academic elements so her students could EXCEL (Engage, X-plore, Communicate, Empower, and Launch). The EXCEL model is part of Flippen's Capturing Kids' Hearts program which enables students to develop self-managing, high-performing skills using Social Contracts and team-building experiences. Continued support for student success in these areas drastically changed as students could no longer meet face-to-face. Effective application of technology tools, intentional and creative methods of family communication and innovative teaching strategies enabled students to finish strong!

Classroom as Usual

On a typical day in Gilbert Intermediate School fifth grade classrooms, learning involves hands-on, face-to-face interactions that address not only social studies content but the social and emotional needs of students as well. Dunlosky et al. (2013) conducted extensive studies which indicated student learning was improved with similar interactive learning techniques. A seminal study completed by Park (2003) highlighted the need to encourage and empower students to take responsibility for learning as he incorporated specific interactive experiences for students. Based on the tenants of Flip Flippen (2018, p.37), "Connected kids are happier, healthier and more productive people. And when we win their hearts, we also win their minds..." Mrs. Lyndsey Garcia created a learning environment where her students EXCEL (Engage, X-plore, Communicate, Empower, and Launch). The EXCEL model is part of Flippen's Capturing Kids' Hearts program which enables students to develop self-managing, high-performing skills using Social Contracts and team-building experiences. Gilbert Intermediate School was honored to be named a *Capturing Kids' Hearts National Showcase School*. The

award was earned because over 75% of the campus participates in the *Capturing Kids' Hearts* processes and has seen "measurable increases in attendance, advancement rate, climate/culture, and academic performance, as well as decreases in discipline referrals" (Flippen Group, 2020, August 1).

When students arrive in the classroom, they are greeted by Garcia with a handshake or elbow bump. After the bell, students share affirmations such as vacation plans or their love for the cafeteria corn dogs (Engage). The class shares the affirmation together by celebrating with a "1, 2, 3...CLAP." The class then reviews the class Social Contract. The classroom Social Contract is a living document utilized to create accountability between all who enter, and it is reviewed regularly so adjustments can be made or questions asked. The Social Contract is the basis for all behavior and is authored by all stakeholders: students, teacher, and principal (Xplore). Next, the social studies lesson objectives are explored and goals planned for learning (Communicate). Students divide into heterogeneous teams, often with other 5th grade social studies classes in the building. Students

are encouraged to work together to accomplish lesson goals. If a learning obstacle develops, teams request support from other teams. This way, every student is a resource and a teacher for other students (Empower). At the end of class, each student shares a positive statement related to the lesson learned. Garcia always says, "I love you..." and the students replied, "And there's nothing we can do about it" (Launch).

Classroom Interrupted

During spring break 2020, the school district decided to move learning online due to the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). Communication with families rapidly increased. While methods for communication were routine before the pandemic, families had an urgent need for a connection with Mrs. Garcia (Engage). Additional communication tools were implemented such as Seesaw, Remind, Skyward, Google Voice, S'more digital newsletters, as well as good old-fashioned email and phone calls (Xplore).

Many research studies endorse strong parent and teacher relationships to improve student learning (Chen et al., 2016; Gu & Yawkey, 2010; Sadiku, 2020). As such, Garcia believed it was imperative to meet families where they were, so she spent hours on the phone establishing and engaging in new forms of family communication. Some parents sent late-night messages through Remind and Google Voice, which appeared as text messages on her personal cell phone. At first, Garcia tried to maintain office hours, but she believed it was important to be available to families when students were able to complete schoolwork. As a result, she responded to many requests for support throughout evening hours (Communication).

Fortunately, the district was well-equipped to manage distance learning from a technology efficacy perspective. The responsibility to ensure students were completing academic work fell to families. Some openly made the choice not to engage in learning. Some students were very responsible with their schoolwork, but the majority of students were somewhere in the middle of the accountability scale. Some students became technology teachers for their parents, and when students' abilities lacked, students contacted Garcia for assistance.

The most important lesson students learned during the pandemic was critical thinking. Of course, this was taught and supported at school, but students were required to problem solve independently because the teacher was not immediately present to answer questions. Students learned to troubleshoot when technology did not work correctly. Students who did not often ask for help in face-to-face settings found their voice and articulated their request for support. They came up with ways to share issues that they were experiencing. For example, students would take screenshots of their iPads and upload them to Seesaw for Garcia to review (Empower).

As most districts across the nation are in the process of determining 2020-2021 protocols, Garcia considers innovative ways to ensure her new fifth grade students EXCEL in her online classroom, if needed. The following ideas serve as Garcia's Launch from spring 2020 into the next academic year.

EXCEL Possibilities for the 2020-2021 Academic Year

Engage. To Engage her students, Garcia will use platforms for teacher-monitored interaction like Flipgrid, where students can record

a video of themselves sharing affirmations and other information. Google Classroom allows students to view content provided by their teacher and utilize safe comment threads. Garcia will continue to reach their hearts and support engagement in learning.

Xplore. To Xplore students' ideas, Garcia will ask questions about the content on Google Classroom. This allows students to engage in academic conversations and consider others' ideas. This strategy can be applied as a method of assessment by asking questions about the previous weeks' lessons.

Communicate. To Communicate with her students, Garcia will host Zoom meetings and participate through other online methods of communication such as Seesaw and Google Classroom. She plans to speak with many students and families on the phone to walk them through various processes.

Empower. Students will be Empowered to work in teams asynchronously through real time collaboration tools such as Google Docs or Google Slides. Through these online tools, students will demonstrate learning and meet their need to socialize and learn with peers. Each team member could create a ChatterPix, an app that provides a fun way to share information by creating a character, drawing a mouth, and recording their voice to make the character speak. The ChatterPix characters could combine for a "show" at a point in the day when Garcia will attend. Students could also create Flipgrids, a social learning app that allows users showcase their knowledge, to address the week's content. Garcia could also send it to other students to complete.

Launch. Students may practice the Launch as they would in the face-

to-face school setting. Garcia could end Zoom Meetings, Flipgrids, and Google Classroom posts with, "I love you," and students either say or type, "And there's nothing we can do about it." Even if students are unable to participate or choose not to participate, they will be reminded they are loved and missed.

Bright Future

As a showcase school for *Capturing Kids' Hearts* (Flippen Group, 2020), the EXCEL model will continue to provide the framework Garcia and her students need to ensure the community of learners, which includes all stakeholders in education, stay connected. Although the variables are drastically modified for face-to-face or online delivery, maintaining the ideals of *Capturing Kids' Hearts* will remain the hallmark of Garcia's classroom.

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Supporting Authentic Engagement in a 4th Grade Classroom During Trying Times

Kali Saleh and Callie J. Price

Engaging students in a math and science classroom is challenging in a face-to-face classroom, and even more so in a virtual world. This paper highlights the extreme distance a 4th-grade math and science teacher went to engage the community to support authentic learning experiences during the move to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Home visits were made to 43 students to ensure needs were being met. From supporting family involvement to inviting the Dallas Stars' mascot to a class Zoom, no virus could stop this teacher from moving mountains to reach her students.

Introduction

Teachers are known for their flexibility to adapt to change. This was put to the test during 2020 in my [disrupted] 4th-grade math and science classroom. When teachers and students left for Spring Break at Acton Elementary in Granbury, Texas, no one knew we would not be returning or that our entire world would be shaken to its core due to the effects of COVID-19. As we quickly adjusted to virtual instruction, we learned how to overcome many obstacles along the way. I knew it was my duty to tackle these obstacles head-on in order to best serve the needs of my students.

Student Needs Come First

Noddings (1997) advises we should modify our assumptions using continuous consideration of student needs and the curriculum should be cooperatively built based on those needs. Before I could plan for content, I needed to make sure the students' socio-emotional needs were met to the best of my abilities.

As a passionate educator, I constantly strive to meet the emotional needs of my students first and foremost. It is my philosophy that building lasting, strong relationships is at the foundation of my profession. Ensuring every student

knows they have an encouraging and supportive person on their team forever is of the utmost importance. This proved to be the biggest challenge I confronted during this uncharted territory of virtual learning.

Worried about my students' well-being, I desperately wanted to see each one of them. From the beginning, it was my mission to find ways to check on students and ensure interaction. My partner teacher and I set up a Flipgrid where students had the ability to interact with their classmates and teachers. They were able to reply to one another with videos and talk about their new way of social-distancing life. Individual Facetime calls were set up with each student for the first week of our remote learning experience in-order-to see our sweet students and explain what would be happening in the weeks to come. Zoom breakout rooms were used so students could talk with one another in small group settings.

Virtual Guests

Virtual classroom engagement posed another challenge. Although students loved Zoom conferences so they could "see" their classmates and teachers, I quickly realized the new excitement began to wear off after the first few Zoom

sessions.

Engaging students had never been such a struggle in my face-to-face classroom. The games we would usually play, use of cooperative learning, interactive math stations, kinesthetic learning opportunities were just...gone. I wondered what I could do to enhance the Zoom experience. That is when the idea of guest speakers came to mind.

It started with an email to the Dallas Stars' mascot. He surprised my students with an impromptu dance party before our Monday Math Zoom. We also received surprise guest visits from scientists thanks to a program called "Skype a Scientist", as well as guest authors, and a visiting children's ventriloquist. These special guests, paired with prize incentives for completing weekly lessons, along with fun online quiz games brought back some normalcy into our virtual classroom world and created memorable experiences.

Authentic Engagement

As a teacher, I understood the importance of ensuring students were learning critical content. In math and science, our team of teachers intentionally planned for lessons that would incorporate real-world problem solving and authentic learning.

Social-constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978) states that learning is a social process. The learner constructs meaning through interactions with peers and others (Jaramillo, Social-constructivist 1996). We found through parental/guardian feedback, families enjoyed being involved with student projects. For example, when teaching financial literacy during this time, the assignment was to have students ask their parents/guardians about the fixed and variable household monthly expenses.

Rather than completing a worksheet or taking an online quiz, students practiced adding and subtracting decimals by creating online shopping lists with a budget using online local grocery store ads.

When learning about weather in science, students created a wind-sock with their families. These lessons had higher completion rates and more positive feedback from families rather than typical workbook assignments. This form of engagement is supported by educational researchers who say students bring with them “funds of knowledge” that can be capitalized on through engaging with their contextual worlds (Griffith, Silva, & Weinburgh, 2014).

Student Access

Although most students had access to the internet and were able to stay connected with their teachers and classmates, there were still some students who did not have online access or were struggling to turn in weekly assignments. I could not let these children fall through the cracks during these times due to a lack of access.

In efforts to connect these students, teachers transformed their lesson plans to include their workbook activities they each received during a workbook distribution or via hand delivery. Teachers were encouraged to adapt lessons each week that included activities to be completed using readily accessible items or materials found in their homes.

Many teachers in Granbury ISD volunteered in the community delivering lunches for students in need. Teachers at Acton Elementary partnered with Cresson Connections, Rancho Brazos, and Sandy Beach community centers serving and distributing lunches

daily. This was our way of not only giving back but making the connection with students we all longed for and missed dearly.

To connect with students, many teachers from our campus visited students at their homes. Together with my partner teacher, we made home visits to all of our 43 students spread across our community. During these home visits, we were unable to enter the homes, but managed to communicate through our students’ front doors using social distancing measures standing six feet apart. We would bring each student a treat, along with a note, to ensure our students felt loved and knew they were deeply missed.

Targeted home visits were also made for a few students whose parents reached out to me because their child was struggling emotionally. These particular students and I sat in lawn chairs in their driveways and simply chatted with each other. Sometimes these conversations would last for a few minutes, while other times lasted an hour or more.

Teachers and administrative volunteers also made individual home visits on a weekly basis for families when teachers were having difficulty contacting families. It was our goal to ensure students did not fall off our radar as we navigated through uncharted territories together.

Conclusion

Nothing came easy during these trying times. Ensuring students’ socio-emotional needs were met through virtual and home visits was a critical step before learning could take place during this pandemic. Authentic learning was supported through the invitation of virtual guests and by providing relevant lessons that promoted

family-student engagement.

Pierson (2013) made the powerful statement that *every child deserves a champion*. Watching educators come together and do whatever it took to champion for students during the pandemic was quite incredible. This was all new and unknown. In a matter of weeks, teachers around the world came together, adapted, collaborated, went the extra mile, and remained advocates for children. It took a village. Educators are better together, now, more than ever as we try our best to provide authentic learning experiences for our students. I am incredibly proud to be in this profession.

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Mother and Teacher: Intermingled Perspectives All Interrupted

Crystal Dail Rose and Ginger Jones

This brief article is part of a larger study where a mother, Dr. Crystal Rose, and her daughter's teacher, Mrs. Jones, utilize autoethnography to examine their experiences surviving and eventually thriving as this fourth-grade classroom was uniquely interrupted. Data included emails to parents and teachers from the school superintendent, Dr. Matt Underwood; weekly stories and journal reflections around what they did as a mother and teacher during the hurried process of moving all curriculum and instruction online; questions they asked themselves; and, finally, triumphs they celebrated as all classrooms were "interrupted" during the four weeks following school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic in a rural Texas town.

Teachers are known for innovation to facilitate student success on a daily basis. Ensuring success during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, however, called for a different level of creativity from teachers as they worked with families to transition effective face to face instruction to online platforms. The experiences and interactions between the Rose family and Mrs. Jones, their daughter's fourth grade teacher, communicate how classrooms were uniquely interrupted during this time. This sketch details our experiences surviving and thriving as Dr. Matt Underwood, Superintendent, communicates our destiny and how our classrooms were uniquely interrupted.

Although reflecting on one's own teaching has been shown to be highly effective for improving teaching practices for decades (Kohlberg, 1968; Piaget, 1970) and helpful for coping with teacher stress (Taylor et al., 2016), few consider taking the time to reflect during stressful times, such as moving all face to face instruction to an online format. De Leon (2019) posits, "While technology trains the brain to process new ideas quickly, become open to new ideas, and communicate freely and

frequently, people experience information overload and have no time for reflection or problem-solving" (p. 48). Technology served a much-needed role during the Spring 2020 school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic; however, reflection was not at the top of everyone's mind. Because of this, Dr. Rose reached out to her daughter's fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Jones, and asked if she would consider penning a weekly reflection on her experiences navigating this stressful time. As part of a larger study utilizing autoethnography, the Rose family and Mrs. Jones examined their experiences as their classroom was interrupted. Data for the study included emails to parents and teachers from the school superintendent, Dr. Matt Underwood; weekly stories and journal reflections around what they did as a mother and teacher during the hurried process of moving all curriculum and instruction online; questions they asked themselves; and, finally, triumphs they celebrated.

Moving To Online Teaching and Learning During Week One
Monday, March 16, 2020: Email Correspondence from Superinten-

dent: "Out of an abundance of caution, students are being asked to remain at home for two weeks... Teachers and administrators are already hard at work preparing for the delivery of online instruction" (M. Underwood, personal communication, March 16, 2020).

Mrs. Jones (fourth grade teacher): After meeting with administrators, my math team and I stood at the bottom of a mountain called "Distance Learning." We had one week to plan and implement online learning to engage our students. We sprang into action and determined a plan of attack including a daily spiral review and paper packets using iPad activities as support.

Dr. Rose (mom of fourth grader): Teachers did an amazing job quickly putting together lessons in Google Classroom, but there were difficulties. In order to submit the worksheet, my daughter created a text box, typed in the box, saved the screenshot and loaded it into the submission site on Google Classroom. There was communication coming at us from SeeSaw, Google Classroom, and Remind about homework assignments, "extra" activities, and Zoom sessions. Messages between students, teachers, and parents were dispersed throughout all of these platforms, apps, and inboxes. It was an academic form of *Where's Waldo*, and we all had to play, and it was not fun.

Mrs. Jones: With the perfect plan in place, we released school supplies, paper packets and 500 iPads in about three days using a drive-through system. We felt accomplished! At first, I was giddy when the first assignment was photographed and sent through Seesaw. I could give immediate feedback electronically. I love technology! However, my outlook

changed. I did not realize I would have to deliver directions repeatedly and fish through 180 assignments to find my students' math work. My workload was heavy and so were my thoughts. Parent feedback revealed overwhelming confusion with assignments and concern about their health and job security.

Looking Toward Week Two

Thursday, March 19, 2020: Email Correspondence from Superintendent: "I want to thank you for your continued patience regarding the communication of information pertaining to the Coronavirus Pan-

demic. In response to Governor Abbott's press conference today, students are being asked to remain at home through April 3rd" (M. Underwood, personal communication, March 19, 2020).

Dr. Rose: Communication from the school district revealed we would endure more online instruction. This week, my daughter and I air-dropped all of the math and writing worksheets from the school issued iPad to our home computer and printed the papers. She did the work on paper then submitted photos (see Figure 1). This process was smoother.

Starting to Thrive in Week Three

Dr. Rose: Although we hoped for a back to school face to face announcement, week three did not bring any new communication from the superintendent's office. This was disappointing, but we received a beautiful plan from our teachers for the week! At this point we moved from the difficulty of mining SeeSaw, Google Classroom, and Remind for much needed instruction and assignments to a simple list and plan (see figure 2). This was a game-changer! Now, there were clear expectations of what we were

Figure 1: Math Submission

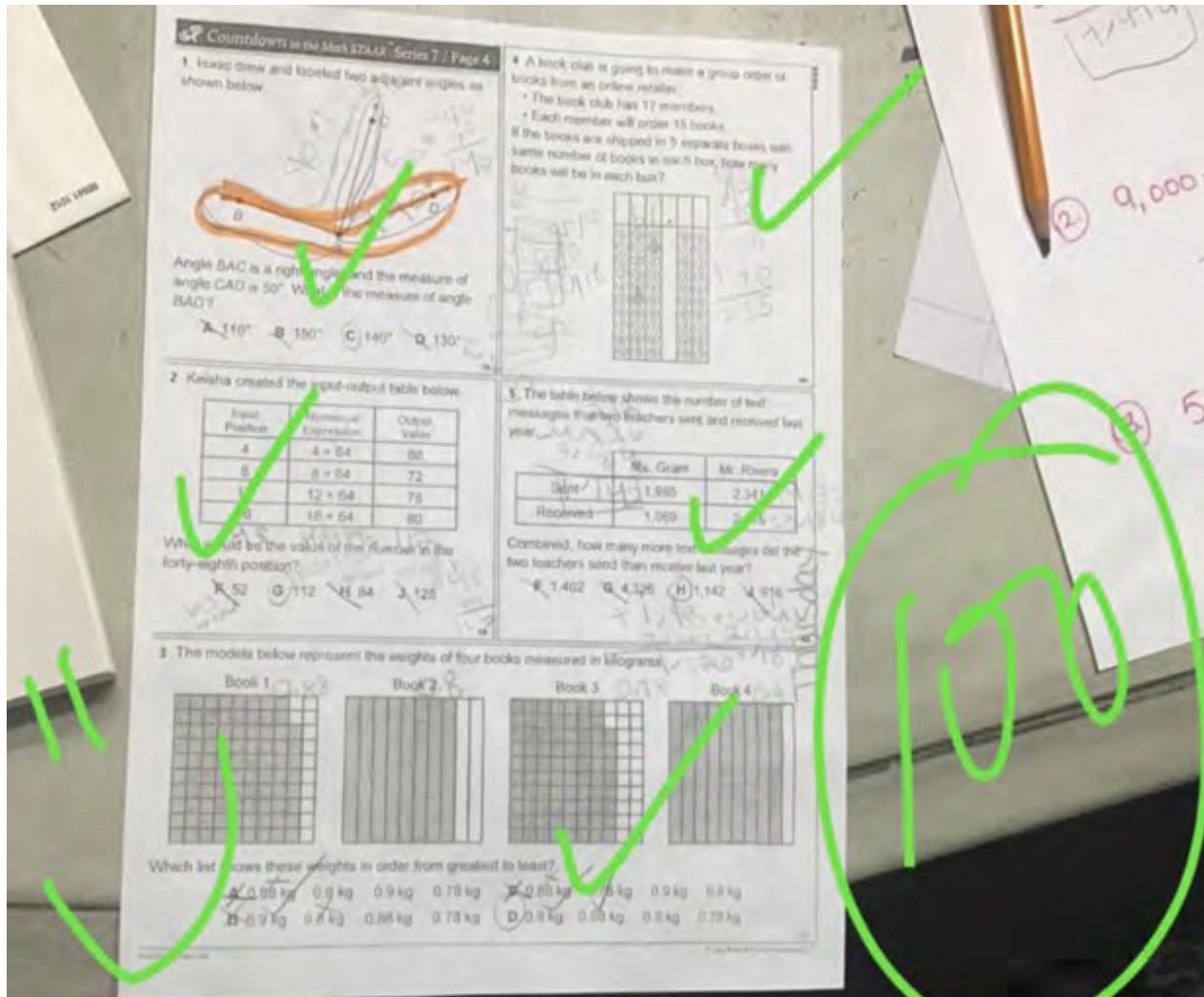



Figure 2: Week Three Plan

| | | MARCH 23-27 | | | | | 4th Grade |  |
|------|--|---|--|--|---|---|--|---|
| | | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | | |
| Math | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a 100's Chart on graph paper Using Division Practice - remember to check Unit Review STEM Day 1 (Math) Science located by track page Q1 Review: decimal to fraction - find name, tenths and hundredths | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use your 100's chart to answer... 2 digit multiplication practice Unit Review Q1 Review: using word problems using multiplication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use your 100's chart to answer... Adding and Subtracting decimals Unit Review STEM Day 2 (Math/Science) located on track page Q1 Review: multiplication Write your own word problem | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use your 100's chart to answer... Subtracting with borrowing Unit Review Q1 Review: word problems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use your 100's chart to answer... Unit Review STEM Day 3 (Math/Science) Q1 Review: word problems Write your own word problem | | | |
| | Reading | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read 20 minutes Take a.r. test if needed Go to google classroom to watch video and get info for your assignment Complete Daily Reading Ready - Monday, Take a picture of completed work - post to Seesaw if possible Q1 Review: using word problems Extra practice - IXL or Exact Path (edmentum) for 15 or more minutes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read 20 minutes Take a.r. test if needed Complete Daily Reading Ready - Tuesday, Take a picture of completed work - post to Seesaw if possible Q1 Review: using word problems Extra practice - IXL or Exact Path (edmentum) for 15 or more minutes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read 20 minutes Take a.r. test if needed Complete Daily Reading Ready - Wednesday, Take a picture of completed work - post to Seesaw if possible Q1 Review: using word problems Extra practice - IXL or Exact Path (edmentum) for 15 or more minutes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read 20 minutes Take a.r. test if needed Complete Daily Reading Ready - Thursday, Take a picture of completed work - post to Seesaw if possible Q1 Review: using word problems Extra practice - IXL or Exact Path (edmentum) for 15 or more minutes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read 20 minutes Take a.r. test if needed Complete Daily Reading Ready - TEST, Take a picture of completed work - post to Seesaw if possible Q1 Review: using word problems Extra practice - IXL or Exact Path (edmentum) for 15 or more minutes | | |
| | | Writing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spelling Choice Board Activity Spiral Review See ELA Menu for extra practice opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spiral Review Expository Comp-Transform See ELA Menu for extra practice opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Spelling Choice Board Activity Spiral Review See ELA Menu for extra practice opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Spelling Choice Board Activity Spiral Review Expository Comp-Plan & Intro See ELA Menu for extra practice opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spiral Review Quiz Spelling Test See ELA Menu for extra practice opportunities | |

supposed to submit and the actual date it was due. This greatly minimized our stress!

Week Four, School Closed Until May

Tuesday, March 31, 2020: Email Correspondence from Superintendent: "Governor Greg Abbott just announced that all schools in Texas will be closed until at least May the 4th. We will continue to follow our "wait and see" policy in regard to reopening our schools..... In Stephenville ISD, we are fully aware that this global pandemic has affected everyone in one way or another. Many of you are working full time from home, providing educational support for your school age students, caring for younger children and trying to tend

to all of the tasks of keeping your household running. Instead of having one or two full time jobs, you now have many... The stress of this situation is daunting" (M. Underwood, personal communication, March 31, 2020).

Mrs. Jones: I could feel the strain of the nation as I started preparing for the next week. It was time to change from distance learning to distance teaching. I gleaned a few tips from other teachers, and I set out to have my very first Zoom meeting. I had envisioned a perfect math lesson with student engagement and questioning. Wow, I was delusional! Students arrived eager to talk, barely awake, or completely distracted. The floodgates opened, and their concerns started

to pour out. "When will we return to school?" "I'm tired of being alone." "My uncle has the coronavirus." "I miss you!" My students needed to connect to me and each other. My objective shifted from a teaching lesson to a problem-solving session.

Week Five, School is Closed For the Rest of the Year

Friday, April 17, 2020: Email Correspondence from Superintendent: "Governor Greg Abbott just announced that all schools in Texas will be closed for the remainder of the school year. Please rest assured that while our buildings may be closed, our teachers, counselors, staff, and administrators are still here for you! We want to thank you for the support and strength

Figure 3: Mrs. Jones Trying to Remain Hopeful



you have shown during this unprecedented time” (M. Underwood, personal communication, April 17, 2020).

Mrs. Jones: Despite our overwhelming concerns and extreme exhaustion, my team considered options to create a learning community in one location instead of utilizing all of the tools we had at our disposal (SeeSaw, Google Classroom, Remind, and others). Parent communication revealed the difficulty of navigating all of these spaces, especially considering this would be how we would deliver instruction for the remainder of the school year. Finally, we settled on Seesaw Activity to deliver our instruction. Each teacher would create lessons, including help videos, songs, independent practice, and extension activities, for one day each week to balance the workload. These would all be saved in the Seesaw activities library. For the first time since the

quarantine started, I approached this “new normal” with an optimistic outlook.

Dr. Rose: Although the teachers were forced to design the plane while flying it, I think this new approach helped moved them closer to their goal. They designed the work a bit more like online daily modules (see Math Module

Figure 4: Math Module



Tuesday Math-April 7th

1. Watch Math Videos for Tuesday
2. Complete Countdown and Fact Practice
3. Go to IXL-B4 and complete and screen shot certificate.
3. Attach work to Seesaw Activity

Question #2 Video Help <https://live.myvrspot.com/iframe?v=fZTlJZ-TUxNmlyMTlyYTMzY2NmMmNmZjNlQWVmNDYyMzQ>

Question #5 Video Help <https://live.myvrspot.com/iframe?v=fZWY1ZmQxNTBjMTNjZGQ2Y2VjNTQ1MmQ5MTNlYWY2N2Y>

Question #6 BrainPop-Elapsed Time (User name:hook, Password: teacher)
<https://www.brainpop.com/math/dataanalysis/elapsed-time/>

in Figure 4 below). Although we all stayed apart, I truly feel it also brought our community and school closer as we endured this together.

Mrs. Jones: In the midst of uncertainty, I chose joy! I had the experience of seeing my first students in Stephenville ISD recognized as 2020 graduates. We both started at this district 13 years ago. One day, I will see this class of 2028 graduate and we will celebrate how they overcame and conquered this year of classroom quarantine.

Dr. Rose: I think we all will deeply appreciate “normal” when we get back to it. I don’t think we will ever forget this. Life was interrupted, but we survived and will thrive. Look out 5th grade, here we come.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced all teachers to make the unexpected, hurried shift from traditional, face-to-face instruction to online learning. Even for the most innovative teachers, this dramatic shift strained educators as they had to find ways to navigate multiple online platforms to share lessons, collect student work, collaborate with colleagues, and communicate with parents. The act of reflecting, important as it is under normal circumstances, is even more vital

during times of stress, such as this; however, with so many unexpected demands placed on educators during the pandemic, reflection is often not given priority. The experiences provided by Dr. Rose and Mrs. Jones were intentionally recorded for the purpose of collecting such reflections that might otherwise be lost. All classrooms were “interrupted” during the four weeks following school closures brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic; however, there were lessons learned, problems solved, and a relationship formed during this time. Ongoing research using this data will examine how these

reflections can inform future instruction.

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Figure 5: Dr. Rose’s Daughter and Mrs. Jones’s Student, Excited to Finish the Year



A Tale of Three Academicians and their Virtual Classroom

Terry L. Fox, Anna L. Fox, and Ryan L. Fox

“We are going fully online” were words that struck all educators with trepidation in March 2020. But by taking this situation and creating an environment in which teaching and learning could take place in a virtual classroom using a synchronous format allowed three academics in the same family to continue to serve their students. All teachers did what they do best and taught their students. We applaud the enduring spirit of them all.

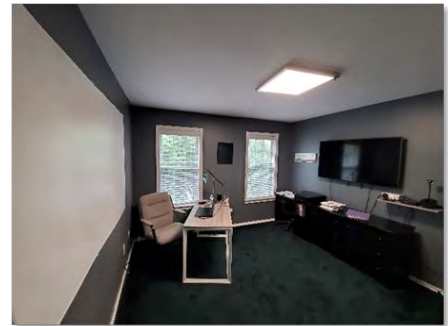
Spring Break, 2020. It began as a well-needed respite for a family of academics. Then the world turned upside down due to a fast-spreading virus named COVID-19. Suddenly, emails from university administrators were announcing an extension of spring break with the possibility of all classes going online for a short time. Then more emails arrived announcing that the remainder of the semester would be conducted online and instructions to faculty and students ranged from campus presence being strongly discouraged to no one allowed on campus. Questions were posed such as how?, when?, who?, and where? Faculty who had little if any experience teaching online were suddenly thrust into a strange new world and had no choice but “to boldly go where they had not ever gone before.”

The first two authors of this paper are on the faculty of the University of Mary-Hardin Baylor (Terry) and Tarleton State University (Anna). The third author (Ryan) was in his last semester of graduate school at the University of Maryland and was a teaching assistant. He will be joining the faculty of Rockford University this fall. With all classes going online and access to campus severely limited, Ryan made the decision to head home to Texas where he continued his coursework and teaching.

Somewhat fortunate for our family of academics, we had some experience with online courses, so we were not at a complete loss. However, given the situation and the uncertainty about what the future might still hold, we took the opportunity to “remodel” the online teaching experience. It began with a bedroom makeover.

We selected one of our bedrooms, which was no longer in use to be our new “virtual classroom”. Strongly desiring to maintain a synchronous learning environment, and not wanting to perpetuate the “talking head” associated with sitting at a laptop with your face inches away from the webcam, we designed what we felt was a much more conducive teaching and learning environment. It began by repainting the room. The color scheme, selected during our son’s junior high years, was a little too overpowering and distracting as a classroom. So, we repainted the walls in a medium gray, institutional tone. After pricing whiteboards (the least expensive beginning around \$350), and after researching alternatives, we decided to purchase a 4’x8’ sheet of matte white tile board at a local home improvement store for less than \$15. It was relatively simple to hang our “whiteboard” using mirror hangers, and we added PVC cap molding to finish off the edges. The unique requirement for

using this type of material is to wipe it with baby oil before using dry erase markers, and to subsequently clean it with a rag also moistened with baby oil. We also ordered a simple desk from Amazon. This completed the non-technical aspects of our virtual classroom.



To actually “connect” to our students, we also needed to spend some time researching technology options. We were very fortunate in that Terry was given permission early on in this situation to use some department funds to purchase equipment to help transition to this fully online environment. One of our primary desires was to not replicate the “talking head” experience, we decided to model our virtual classroom after virtual conference rooms found in many businesses. To accomplish this, we needed two pieces of equipment. The first was a video conference room webcam. The camera we selected was a Logitech ConferenceCam BCC950. It may have somewhat resembled a Star Wars droid, but it had very good reviews and was reasonably priced. We ended up purchasing it from NewEgg as Amazon was out of stock at the time, probably due to its popularity. We placed this camera on the opposite wall from the whiteboard and desk, which allowed the viewer to see a classroom very similar to what they would experience if they had continued to be physically present.

Over many years, various studies examined similar phenomenon, particularly the concept of social presence (or teacher immediacy behavior) within a technology-supported learning environment (Gunawardena, 1995; Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997; Hostetter & Busch, 2006; Kang et al., 2014; Picciano, 2002; Richardson et al., 2017; Shea et al., 2003). This particular camera has the ability to pan and zoom and comes with a remote to help move the camera as you move from the desk to the whiteboard, and back. Or you could simply keep the setting zoomed out and see the entire front of the classroom.



The second piece of equipment purchased was a 55" LED TV monitor. The reason for this was so we could actually see our students. In a Zoom session on a laptop, the video images are quite small. Again, since one of our primary objectives was to create a teaching and learning environment as close to face-to-face as possible, having a large monitor allowed us to see our students much better as we (almost) would in a physical classroom. We mounted the monitor next to and on the same wall as the conference webcam.

We already had a portable projector which could be used, for example while one is presenting at a conference, so we added this item to our virtual classroom in the event we wanted to display Power-

Point slides onto the whiteboard and still have the ability to move and interact.

Connecting the equipment was relatively simple. The conference webcam and the portable projector required USB connections, and the TV monitor required an HDMI connection. We purchased appropriate extension cables to run from the equipment, around the base of the walls, ending at the desk. This allowed whoever was teaching (we had to hang a dry erase calendar on the wall to keep track of teaching times) to bring in their laptop, plug the cables into the respective ports, and be ready to go.

The online aspect was accomplished using Zoom, which we (and many other people) have become proficient at using, and generally, all our classes were held in a synchronous format. Over the course of the final six to eight weeks of our respective semesters, we regularly met our classes using the virtual classroom, and used the classroom for the inevitable plethora of online meetings. We also made use of the room and the technology for online office hours and advising sessions. One of our universities held an informal "contest" as an encouragement to faculty to enhance their online environment, and our virtual classroom naturally won. Although we each had a few students who "checked out" post Spring Break, the vast majority of our students remained engaged. Since we taught a mix of courses from freshman through graduate, it was rewarding to know we were able to continue to connect with students at all levels in this format.

We actually experienced very few challenges with this environment. From a technology perspective, we had to make a few small adjustments such as where and how to

run the cables to be the least obtrusive but also accessible to whom ever was using the room. Our class schedules surprisingly meshed quite well – we had no overlap with class meetings, although there were days when as soon as one instructor left the classroom, another immediately walked in – very similar to what would happen in a face-to-face environment.

One advantage of using Zoom is the ability to record the classes and make them available for students to watch later. Although our classes continued to meet the same days and times as before Spring Break, a couple of our students had new scheduling conflicts (such as the need for additional hours at a job to support family) and this allowed them to stay connected, albeit asynchronously.

Once again, our primary objective was to mimic what the students would otherwise experience in a regular classroom as best we could under the circumstances. From the students' perspective, they could see us sitting at our desk and working on our computer to demonstrate a technique, and then see us stand up, walk to the whiteboard and make notes or draw a diagram, and continue with our lecture. The students saw us walk around the front of the classroom, prop ourselves on the corner of the desk, talk casually, and (almost) feel as if we were right in front of them.

From our perspective, the opportunity to move around, interact with the students, identify body language cues more easily, and have multiple techniques with which to teach made the transition during this difficult and challenging situation tolerable. Overall, feedback from our students and colleagues was very positive, and even in a time when everything changed suddenly, we were able to

continue what we most enjoy doing – teaching and relating to our students.

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Virtual Case Consultations: An Approach to Peer Instruction and Peer-Led Debriefing

Misty G. Smith

Although COVID-19 was an abrupt change to navigate as educators, it also served as a reminder that learning occurs beyond the traditional face-to-face classroom environment. Virtual case consultation committees were used as an innovative teaching strategy for social work students to simulate case staffing/debriefing of client assessments to gain field related experience. Students were able to apply the course concepts related to client assessment and realize the value of social support during a time of loss and change. Peer instruction and peer-led debriefing served as a useful pedagogical underpinning for this teaching strategy that could be applied to a variety of disciplines in secondary and post-secondary education settings.

The abrupt onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged us as educators to thoughtfully deliver curriculum using remote methods, while still ensuring students achieve student learning outcomes. Nationally, for many social work programs in higher education, this unexpected situation required that social work students be removed from face-to-face field practicum settings within community agencies. Field education serves as the signature pedagogy of social work education, the milieu for applying theory in practice (CSWE, 2015). At a time when our society and communities were facing unprecedented vulnerabilities, the very place where social work is essential, our students were unable to experience this unique learning opportunity firsthand. Thus, students experienced a loss, not having the chance to complete a practicum in the field setting, which most students cannot wait to experience.

Knowing that social work students would no longer be in a face-to-face field setting to apply the knowledge, skills, and values of the profession with clients, families, and communities, it became imperative to develop alternative ways that students could still learn from client situations in their sup-

porting social work courses. Case staffing/debriefing among professional colleagues is characteristic in social work practice. While this practice technique is typically modeled in a traditional face-to-face classroom discussion, an alternative simulation method had to be created. The instructor implemented committees, called virtual case consultations, as an innovative way to simulate a case staffing among colleagues in the course. Each week, students were presented with an extensive client scenario to apply their social work assessment skills. Students were organized into groups of three to four students with the group membership changing weekly. Instructions required students to identify a common time that the group members could meet virtually to debrief the client scenario and answer the related assessment questions. Group sessions were required to be recorded and the recording link be submitted for the instructor to share meaningful feedback. Through the case consultation committees, students were able to use peer learning as an active way to process, deconstruct, and apply critical thinking skills to come to a conclusion on the assessment of each case. In reviewing students' recordings, students raised difficult questions, considered alternatives

that were not previously considered, and used critical thinking to determine an outcome for each case. Employing the pedagogical method of peer instruction suggests that students gain not only in their knowledge but also in the retention of their knowledge at an increased level (Lambert, 2012). By becoming active in the learning process through sharing their perspectives to one another and having to vie for their point of view, it reinforces the new knowledge and requires students to apply it (Lambert, 2012).

An unexpected outcome of the case consultation teaching strategy also emerged. It was quickly observed that students provided one another consistency, stability, and a community of support through the weekly case debriefings. Students in the course were balancing the demands of being a parent home schooling their children, some had family members exposed to COVID-19, and others were experiencing reduced hours or loss of employment. The pandemic impacted everyone's daily life with vast change and numerous losses. Losing traditional education delivery models, jobs, future plans, routines, and physical connection occurred as a result of the pandemic. All of these losses can cause grief (Breen, 2020). Breen (2020) notes that "social support is one of the strongest determinants of positive outcomes after bereavement" (p. 1). Therefore, students provided one another a natural social support system to navigate the uncertainties presented during these challenging times to successfully continue their educational goals albeit virtually.

Outcomes of using the case consultation committees resulted in positive learning results for the students. Both outcomes mirrored important learning concepts for

social work students (case debriefings with colleagues and the value of social support for individuals encountering loss). Both learning areas will be vital to their future professional practice in applying assessment skills when working with clients. As noted by Ha (2020), the use of peer-led debriefing strategies can be equal or superior to instructor-led debriefing in cultivating student learning outcomes such as clinical performance competencies. In addition, case-based learning promotes self-evaluation and critical reflection in an effort to help students integrate the content knowledge with their use of skills (Ha, 2020). This approach of peer-led debriefing and peer instruction can be used in a variety of disciplines within secondary and post-secondary education to achieve learning outcomes in a remote environment. For example, together, engineering students can develop design plans for water delivery, education students can create grade appropriate lesson plans, and political science students can discuss debate strategies for policy reform.

Although the unprecedented situation of COVID-19 required an abrupt shift in our traditional strategies for teaching, it also provided educators with an opportunity to identify solutions and new strategies to employ and stow in our toolbox to ensure our students were prepared moving forward on their educational path. This challenge served as a reminder that the educational environment does not only consist of what transpires inside a classroom. As educators, we must recognize that our students are also individuals who are personally dealing with competing demands and stress in order to finish their education. This experience provided educators a prime opportunity to model support, flexibility, adaptability, and innovation to our students, as change is inevi-

table in any future field, and we cannot become complacent with the education of our students.

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Zooming into the Hearts of Children: A First-Year Teacher's Hard Lessons and Silver Linings

Shelby Staudenmaier and Erin Pearce

As an undergraduate student, Shelby Staudenmaier approached challenges with perseverance and positivity. Luckily, her asset-minded disposition followed her into the classroom for a challenging first year of teaching. This article will highlight the silver linings associated with virtual instruction, life-changing lessons learned, and how one novice teacher used the skills she acquired in her education preparation program to touch lives in her virtual classroom.

The first year of teaching is typically the most difficult for the majority of educators (Fry & Anderson, 2011). Researchers have found that beginning teachers' decisions to not return to the classroom is primarily due to frustration caused by factors such as poor classroom management, inadequate guidance and support, poor relationships with colleagues and parents, intense accountability, and a sense of being overwhelmed (Hung & Smith, 2012; McCarra, 2003). Therefore, adding a pandemic and subsequent change in pedagogy overnight without virtual instruction training to an already challenging year is not for the faint of heart. Although disease outbreaks and shifts in teaching have occurred in many Asian countries in the last decade (Lim et al., 2009), the educational system in the United States of America was not prepared. However, since educators are trained to be flexible and adapt to any situation, they adjusted overnight to address this shift, continuing to change student lives in a virtual world.

Life Before COVID-19

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Shelby Staudenmaier worked diligently to create strong connections with her students, to whom she referred to as "my kids." Although they would often struggle to meet

Ms. Staudenmaier's high expectations, these 'go-getters' worked very hard to accomplish their goals and never gave up. Although Shelby would teach the subjects of mathematics, phonics, reading, science, and social studies every day, she truly focused on other skills the students needed to learn, such as team building, respect, integrity, and collaboration. Ms. Staudenmaier was able to do this because of the safe, structured, positive learning environment she created in her classroom, which allowed students to flourish even under difficult circumstances. For example, one of her students, Isabella, came to first grade with trauma and performed below Kindergarten grade level. Ms. Staudenmaier and Isabella worked persistently on her reading, mathematics, and self-confidence. Because of the teacher-student bond and their perseverance, Isabella soon blossomed into a bubbly, confident student who was reading above the first-grade level. Unfortunately, for many students like Isabella, the context changed suddenly overnight.

Teaching in a Virtual World

In March 2020, the United States swiftly changed as the country braced for an invisible foe. Spring break was extended as teachers prepared to move learning online

for safety purposes. Students either returned to a virtual world with their teacher or with their parents through activities provided in learning packets.

Teaching during the pandemic was challenging primarily due to the change of setting from a classroom to video conferencing (Zoom). Synchronous classes using Zoom were the only way Ms. Staudenmaier felt remotely close to her students compared to being in her actual classroom. Even with the abrupt change and new learning environment, she was still challenged with preparing students to learn and refocusing students to stay on task. However, there were new and unexpected disruptions in this new virtual setting. Pet lizards often made appearances in class, and Ms. Staudenmaier had to incorporate rules to prevent students from playing with the different Zoom features (unmuting, etc.).

To keep students engaged in a technological Zoom classroom, Ms. Staudenmaier had students complete daily optional activities on Google classroom that followed the TEKS guidelines and the lesson plan format, which were set-up by the day of the week. For instance, one activity included learning about time by matching analog clocks to digital clocks. Students also journeyed with her on virtual field trips, and afterward, she created a student discussion board based on knowledge gained from the field trip. She made platforms where students could remain in contact with each other by crafting discussions, which were similar to class discussion boards she used during her education preparation program. Shelby mentioned that the online, interactive components of her undergraduate teaching courses helped her the most during this time because she was able to model the actions and activities

created by her professors and mentors. The students and teacher missed the physical classroom, but Ms. Staudenmaier found these students to be more engaged than ever thanks to the variety of online activities she provided.

Challenges

One of the most challenging aspects of Zoom classes was scheduling; she had to meet the needs of her students based on the parents' daily schedules. A few parents were unable to have their children attend the Zoom classes due to scheduling conflicts. Ms. Staudenmaier understood parental responsibilities to take care of their families; therefore, she willingly gave up her entire day to have one-on-one meetings with students who missed the Zoom class.

Secondly, many of her students were unable to attend Zoom class meetings due to a lack of Internet or technological devices in the household. Luckily, the administrative team at Lamar Elementary School approached this issue with understanding and compassion and were prepared for all possible scenarios for home-based learning. The faculty and administrators of the elementary school strategically thought about how to engage students based on technology availabilities. To accommodate students who did not have technology at home, Shelby's team provided interactive activities and lesson plans that could be completed without the use of technology. To show evidence of activity completion, the parents sent pictures through Class Dojo. Examples of the activities listed on the lesson plan included manipulating a clock with the minute and hour hand, creating picture graphs, writing prompts about a story the student read from their textbook, and other activities from their specialized teachers. The goal of crafting hands-on

learning lesson plans during this pandemic was to make this situation feel as supportive as possible for the students and parents.

Although the students were able to learn virtually or with provided interactive lessons on paper, the lack of a collaborative, positive learning atmosphere for all is what saddened Ms. Staudenmaier the most when the pandemic hit the United States. Because of the relationships she had built with her students and their families, she knew that many of her students, including Isabella, would no longer be in a nurturing environment. Although she tried contacting Isabella's parents multiple times by leaving messages on their cell phones, she never received a call back. Shelby stated, "One of the most heartbreaking aspects of teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic was losing touch with the students. It was incredibly hard to no longer see the beauty of teaching, such as witnessing all of your students grow" (S. Staudenmaier, personal communication, May 31, 2020). Ms. Staudenmaier reported that many teachers shared the experience of losing contact with students that were making extreme progress in the physical classroom. After the school closed the doors, the teachers at the school constantly prayed for the safety and love for the students that they no longer interacted with physically or virtually.

Silver Linings and Hard Lessons

Shelby Staudenmaier never expected to be teaching from home or seeing her students in a classroom setting. She did not like the new teaching situation; she found it difficult to create boundaries from her professional and personal life, especially since she was meeting with students one-on-one throughout the evening. As a teacher, she was determined to

make the online setting feel like a face-to-face classroom by talking to the students, instructing students on Zoom, or guiding them through the Google Classroom, giving students feedback when submitting their work, and still keeping traditions such as "Fun Friday."

A valuable lesson Shelby Staudenmaier learned was the importance of utilizing technology in her classroom. Shelby mentioned that this situation forced teachers resistant to incorporating technology to utilize electronic sources in many unfamiliar ways. The added activities using technology caused students with electronic resources to grow independently by following directions and completing assignments on their own. Her first-grade students were more motivated to learn on their own because of the technological component. Shelby Staudenmaier was prepared for this phenomenon due to what she learned about Generation Z in her education preparation program. She stated, "This may sound weird, but the students who had access to technology grew more because of the added technology versus the face to face classroom" (S. Staudenmaier, personal communication, May 31, 2020). As mentioned earlier, her experiences in her undergraduate courses provided her with the conclusion that this generation was much more motivated to learn when utilizing electronic devices. The students turned in more assignments and would often want to discuss the assignments. They also commented often that the assignments were fun.

Even though she went above and beyond to make this situation feel normal for those without technology or Internet access, it still was not ideal, and some students were robbed of finishing their year with triumph. The students with tech-

nology grew academically, but the students without technology did not demonstrate growth. This disparity between socioeconomic classes alarmed Ms. Staudenmaier. Without the connection to technology or the teacher, these students did not demonstrate their learning and understanding. Moving forward, Ms. Staudenmaier is determined that no matter a child's socioeconomic status, she will research strategies, plan for all situations, and provide quality education to all.

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Alleviating Pandemic Panic: A University Professor Responds to the Crisis by Increasing Communication and Engagement

Amber Lynn Diaz

Student engagement is of utmost importance to K-12 and higher education educators because of the correlation with knowledge retention and student satisfaction. However, with the quick, recent shift in pedagogy in response to the global pandemic, educators struggled to ensure students were engaged with their learning. This article describes how one professor continued to engage and build her relationships with her students despite the pandemic.

Regardless of educational setting, designing instruction that ensures high levels of engagement is arduous. In response to the effects of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, educators in K-12 and higher education had to redesign their instruction overnight. One of the most challenging tasks for me was ensuring engagement as my undergraduate face-to-face lessons shifted to online instruction. This was not a challenge I faced alone but one every educator faced and a major concern for K-12 schools and universities. According to a survey of university presidents, 81% listed engagement as their biggest concern during the quick shift to online instruction (Lederman, 2020) because engagement not only maximizes student learning and recall of new information, it also strongly correlates with student retention in higher education. The more actively engaged students are with each other and with the subject matter, the more likely they are to persist in their studies and achieve at higher levels (Hwangji Lu, 2020). Therefore, despite COVID-19, I was determined to ensure that engagement continued to be a critical component of my course.

The concept of engagement is not grounded in a single action but rather multiple actions that continually change. Because every student is unique, the factors that contribute

to meet their interests and levels of engagement are unknown. Educators have little control over many of these factors; however, research has shown that they can influence student motivation, that certain practices increase time spent on task, and that various methods exist to make assigned work more effective for students at all levels (Anderman & Midgley, 1998). This is not a novel concept; many educators know that the more students are involved with their own learning, the higher quality of knowledge they will retain, which should lead educators to ask, “What makes a student engaged in their learning?” To answer this question, it is imperative to first understand the meaning of engagement. This is difficult because the term *engagement* is broad, and there are varying definitions dependent on individual interpretation; for example, what is engaging to one educator may not be engaging to the next.

Schlechty’s (2002) work on engagement has greatly impacted my beliefs and instruction regarding engagement. He contended,

“Engagement is active. It requires the students to be attentive as well as in attendance; it requires the student to be committed to the task and find some inherent value in what he or she is being asked to do. The en-

gaged student not only does the task assigned but also does the task with enthusiasm and diligence. Moreover, the student performs the task because he or she perceives the task to be associated with a *near-term* end that he or she values” (p. 37).

This description negates the idea held by some institutions and professors that rate levels of student engagement by assignment submissions and discussion board participation. This alone does not demonstrate that our students are truly engaged in learning.

Furthermore, engagement is any modality of learning where students will be captured in interest, drawing their attention to content, and captivating and enriching their curious minds. Schlechty (2002) stated, “If students become engaged in the “right” stuff, they are likely to learn what we want them to learn” (p. 1). Aligned with these findings, my courses and specific instructional lessons have been designed to meet students’ needs and interests to maximize engagement. I created a learner profile assignment that is utilized to gain knowledge about each one of my students (see Figure 1). This one assignment completed by the students provides in-depth information needed to ensure my instruction will meet their learning needs and interests through engaging instruction. However, while this activity alone allows me to prepare for effective instruction, it does not assess engagement in real time.

Understanding the importance of active student engagement and the impact on both student persistence and achievement requires educators to ask the question: “How does one determine what percentage of their students are engaged, and why are they engaged?” Many educators can respond to this question

with generalized answers but nothing concrete and specific. The most experienced teachers will share that measuring engagement is a difficult task (Rich, 2018), and it is challenging to understand how it is actually achieved. Additionally, if an educator is unaware of the need to assess students' levels of engagement, it is almost impossible to know if his or her perception of student engagement is actually true.

A fundamental concept in *Working on the Work* (Schlechty, 2002), 'levels of engagement' is a tool consistently used in my courses to model and assess the instructional design of each face-to-face and online lesson (see Figure 2). Students rate a particular activity us-

ing post-it notes filled out with their genuine, anonymous feedback. This provides immediate feedback regarding which activities work best for their learning, thus allowing adjustments to be made for future lessons.

During a typical semester, the learner profiles and levels of engagement ensure that students' needs are met for both learning and engagement. However, the sudden changes that occurred in response to the spread of COVID-19 presented unforeseen barriers in actively engaging students in familiar ways. First and foremost, the effects of the pandemic changed students' circumstances by requiring schools to move all instruction online and non-essential businesses

to close doors. Many students lost their jobs or were required to stay home from work, creating serious financial burdens. Through a survey conducted with my students, I found that COVID-19 presented increased needs ranging from lack of technology access, financial burdens, shifts in family dynamics, and a rise in medical concerns and conditions.

Transitioning courses into an online format overnight was challenging for educators and students. Based on my previous experience with online learning, I was aware that students typically perceive a lack of social presence and interactions in online courses (Bowers & Kumar, 2015). That's without a pandemic! My students were already strug-

Figure 1: Learner Profile. This figure illustrates an example of a student Learner Profile.

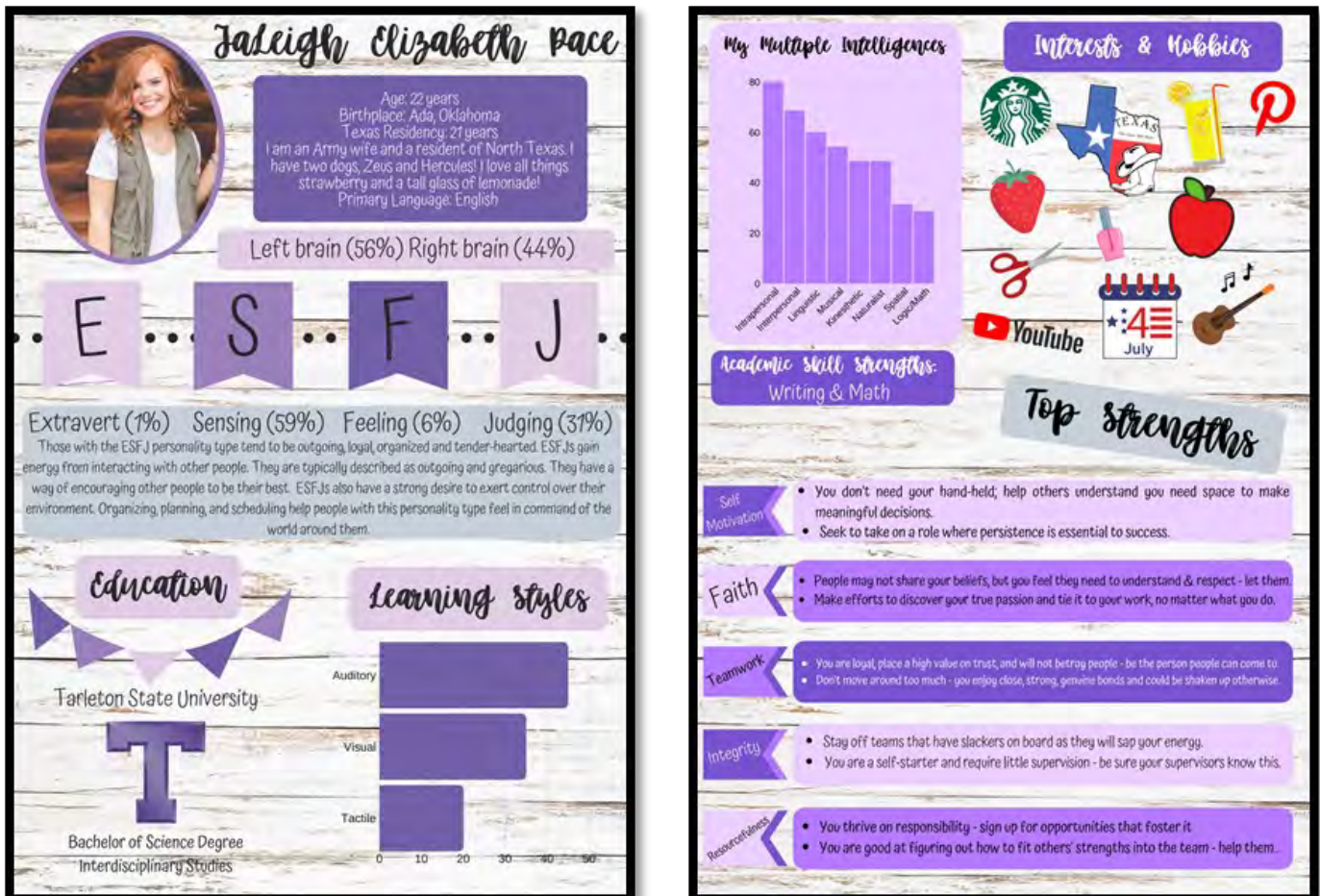


Figure 2: Levels of Engagement Student Rating. This figure illustrates the students' rating for their level of engagement during a face-to-face class lesson.



gling with isolation and the idea of social distancing; ‘teacher presence’ was crucial during this time. My learner profiles became even more valuable because they provided unique ways to create connections with my students.

Similar to other educators, I found myself in a problematic situation. Many of the assignments and assessments that were designed for engagement in the classroom had to be redesigned for an online format. The following actions helped me refine my instruction to ensure engagement and student success:

- Utilized information from the

learner profile in redesigning instruction.

- Communicated on a personal level with my students, including recording voice memos providing feedback on assignments using “Media Comment” in Canvas.
- Continued to rate the levels of engagement on every assignment and conducted self-reflections that provided specific thoughts and personal engagement levels.
- Utilized a variety of technology applications to promote and strengthen collaboration such as online debates, conducting problem of practice protocols

via Google Forms, and participating in unique discussion boards.

- Ensured teacher presence by being available to students during weekly Zoom conferences, one-on-one Zoom meetings, and phone calls.
- Significantly increased student feedback, which afforded opportunities for teaching and re-teaching by providing specific comments to my students.

With a consistently wavering environment, student engagement and the subsequent assessment of that engagement is now more important than ever before. Although my students successfully finished the Spring and Summer 2020 semesters, it was not an easy task for anyone. However, it did highlight the significance of engaging instruction. H. Perkins, a Tarleton Curriculum and Instruction graduate student, validates the importance of engagement stating, “Thank you so much for the feedback not only on this paper but all of my assignments. I have put a lot of myself into this course, so your encouragement, insightful questions, and affirmation have been very meaningful. One particular assignment, I cried afterward because I had spent so much time researching and writing. So, thank you for all the time you worked to provide genuine responses. I will endeavor to do the same for my students if we are teaching online this year...because it does mean so very much!” (personal communication, July 1, 2020). As demonstrated above, it is imperative for educators to model best practices no matter the obstacles, for our impact creates a ripple effect into the public schools that transform lives.

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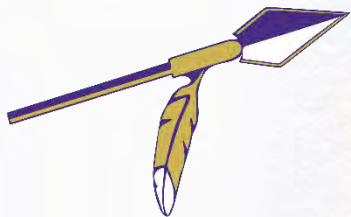
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ESP Bookshelf: Classroom Interrupted

Dr. Rebecca Miller-Levy

The end of the 2019-2020 school year was challenging to say the least. It looks like the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year might be just as challenging. With the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement, students, parents, and teachers are facing a variety of circumstances that requires difficult discussions about health and human rights. This *ESP Bookshelf: Class Interrupted* will provide resources to help facilitate these types of discussions. These are just a few examples of resources.

Dealing with COVID-19, Anxiety, and Stress

Angle, D. (2020). *Be a coronavirus fighter!* SP. ASIN: B08B68VMDB (Primary). Simple answers to complex questions about the coronavirus.

Black, H. (2020). *Why did the whole world stop?" Talking with kids about COVID-19.* Indy Pub. ISBN: 978-1087879024 (Ages 5 – 10). A tool to answer questions and start conversations about COVID-19 and other issues pertaining to disease and pandemics. Accurate information in a child friendly format. Includes a historical look, major vocabulary, and offers suggestions for ways to stay productive, active, and keeping a positive attitude during quarantine and sheltering in place.

Black, L. (2020). *Kelly stays home: The Science of coronavirus.* Blockstar Publishing. ISBN: 978-1734949315 (Ages 6 – 12). Simple, yet entertaining, explanations of the science behind COVID-19. Includes basic information on viral transmission, epidemiology, and social distancing.

Jenner, E. Wilson, K., & Roberts, N. (2020). *Coronavirus: A book for children.* Nosy Crow. ASIN: B08743V4SF (Elementary). *Coronavirus* looks at the science side of the virus with simple to understand explanations and then address the emotional difficulties that accompany a pandemic. The book includes resources for supporting mental health during a crisis.

Luckey, L. C. (2020). *What is social distancing?: A children's guide and activity book.* LCL. ISBN: 979-8632659147 (Elementary). This is a child-friendly look at viruses and germs in general. Includes a guide to social distancing, hand washing, and other tips for containing germs. Activates in the back.

Malley, H. (2020). *Not forever but for now: A story for children about feelings during the pandemic.* Stuart Tarty Press. ISBN: 978-1733740234 (Early Childhood). Will it every end? A simple resource about the pandemic and all the feelings that accompany it.

Nhin, M. (2020). *Masked ninja: A Children's book about kindness and preventing the spread of racism and viruses.* Grow Grit Press. ISBN: 978-1951056568 (Primary). *Masked Ninja* helps the young reader understand the chaotic events in the world and shows them actionable steps they can take to take control of their lives and prevent the spread of racism and viruses. This is an ebook that is available on the IASC website.

Understanding Race, Anti-Racism and Activism

Fiction

Colbert, B. (2020). *The only black girls in town.* Little, Brown. ISBN: 9780316456388 (Ages 8 – 12). This middle grade book tells the story of two young girls who find each other at a time when both need a friend. Alberta is losing her best friend to the popular girl who has always bullied her with racial taunts just as Edie moves across the street. Thrown together in part because they are the only two black girls in town, they find common ground and build a friendship based on mutual respect rather than their skin color.

Craft, J. (2019). *New kid.* HarperCollins/Quill Tree. ISBN: 97800062691200 (Ages 8 – 12). It is always hard to be the new kid at school, but even harder when you do not look like all the other kids. Craft uses a graphic

novel format to tell a story of what feels like being a person of color in a white space.

Draper, S. (2018). *Blended*. Atheneum. ISBN: 978144295005 (Ages 8 – 12). Divorce is hard for any child; however, Isabella is finding it especially difficult as she tries to negotiate two different households. Isabella's mother is white and struggling to get by financially while her father is a wealthy Black professional. Isabella finds rules are different and conversations are tricky as she tries to blend with her father's new family.

Miller, S. (2018). *Don't touch my hair*. Little, Brown. ISBN: 9780316562584 (Ages 4 – 8). *Don't Touch My Hair* is the story of a young girl who, while proud of her natural hair, is uncomfortable with people's desire to touch it, often without asking permission first. As Aria learns to set boundaries around her hair, she begins to develop confidence about who she is and who she wants to be.

Rhodes, J. P. (2020). *Black brother, black brother*. Little, Brown. ISBN: 9780316493802 (Ages 8 -12). *Black Brother, Black Brother* is the story of two biracial brothers trying to navigate a world in which they really do not fit any of the expected norms.

Nonfiction

Jewell, T. (2020). *This book is anti-racist: 20 lessons on how to wake up, take action, and do the work*. Frances Lincoln Children's Books. ISBN: 9780711245211. (Ages 11 – 15). Jewell provides background information and explanations to help young people develop an understanding of identity, history, action, and solidarity to use for anti-racist reflection and a jumping-off point for activism to change.

Johnson, G. M. (2020). *All boys aren't blue: A memoir-manifesto*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. ISBN: 9780374312718, (Ages 14 and up). Johnson shares his personal experiences growing up a black member of the LGBTQ+ community in New Jersey and Virginia. He emphasizes the importance of community to support one's ability to define oneself outside the norms of dominant mainstream society.

Kendi, I. X. (2020) *Antiracist baby*. Kokila. ISBN: 9780593110416 (Early Childhood). Written for toddlers, Kendi uses a board book format to share nine steps for raising awareness of racial inequalities and facilitate discussion about race.

Nagara, I. (2015). *Counting on community*. Triangle Square. ISBN: 9781609806323 (Ages 3 – 7). *Counting on Community* is a traditional counting book that features examples that encourage children to value their community and the environment and ways they can make change.

Nagara, I. (2012). *A is for activist*. Triangle Square. ISBN: 9784609805395 (Ages 3 – 7). This alphabet board book includes activism, environmental justice, civil rights, LGBTQ+ rights, and other issues of social justice in a manner appropriate for young children learning about community, equity, and justice.

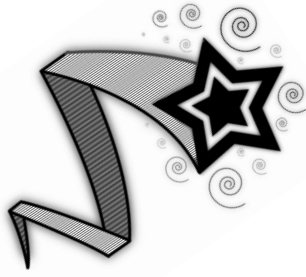
Reynolds, J., & Kendi, I. X. (2017). *Stamped: Racism, anti-racism, and me*. Little, Brown. ISBN: 9780316453691 (Ages 12 and up). A reworking of Kendi's *Stamped from the Beginning*, Reynolds chronicles the history of race relations beginning in 1415 with the first documents justifying the enslavement of Africans up to the Black Lives Matter movement of today. The book includes influential documents, figures, movements, and events over the course of time.

Rose, T. (2019). *M is for melanin: A celebration of the black child*. Little Bee Books. ISBN: 9781499809169. (Primary). This alphabet book presents each letter to inspire confidence and pride. Rose includes in references to black leaders, activists, and scientists along with affirmations that help young black children define themselves.

Woodson, J. (2014). *Brown girl dreaming*. Penguin/Paulsen. ISBN: 9780399252528 (Ages 10 and up). Woodson's memories of growing up black in a white world are presented as a novel in verse.

Teacher Resources

- Barkley, E. (2016).** *Learning assessment techniques: A handbook for college faculty.* John Wiley & Sons. ISBN: 978-1119050896. Although the subtitle says college faculty, the information in this book is easily transferable to any grade level. It includes 50 techniques for engaging students and assessing learning.
- Barkley, E. (2020).** *Student engagement techniques: A handbook for college faculty.* Jossey-Bass. ISBN: 978-1119686774. Although the subtitle says college faculty, the information in this book is easily transferable to any grade level. It includes tips, strategies, and techniques for all content areas to help teachers motivate and connect to students.
- Boettcher, J. B., & Conrad, R. (2016).** *The online teaching survival guide.* Jossey-Bass. ISBN: 978-1119147688. Includes a simple framework for creating and implementing online instruction.
- Borsheim-Black, C., & Sarigianides, S. T. (2019).** *Letting go of literary whiteness: Antiracist literature instruction for White students.* ISBN: 978-0807763056. This little book has a powerful message that goes far beyond the intended audience of English teachers. Although it is designed to help English teachers design or modify curriculum to help students unpack issues of race in literature, the information is easily transferred to any content area, and more importantly, any marginalized or minoritized group. This book is a game changer.
- Christopher, D. (2014).** *The successful virtual classroom: How to design and facilitate interactive and engaging live online learning.* AMACOM. ISBN: 978-0814434284. Part informational text, part workbook. Includes tools, checklists, and worksheets to help you prepare to hit the ground running in the online environment.
- Costa, K. (2020).** *99 tips for creating simple and sustainable educational videos: A guide for online teachers and flipped classes.* Stylus Publishing. ISBN: 978-1642670851. Forget all the expensive green screen technology you have heard about. This book is for the teacher who needs to create videos with what is in the classroom (or now, around the house). Includes instructional practices for creating video and helpful hints and tips to do so quickly and inexpensively.
- Darby, F. (2019).** *Small teaching online.* Jossey-Bass. ISBN: 978-1119619093. This is a companion piece to *Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning* that provides practical strategies for maximizing student success. *Small Teaching Online* helps the reader adapt the strategies to online instruction. It includes not only tips for success but also tips on how to take disasters and turn them into successes.
- Haseltine, W. A. (2020).** *A family guide to Covid: Questions & answers for parents, grandparents, and children.* ACCESS Health International. ISBN: 978-0578720821 (Elementary). Part one answers questions young children have asked Dr. Haseltine about COVID-19. Part two deals with questions people over 18 have asked. Each question is answered with clarity and compassion. Purchase of book includes a password to his website where future editions will be available for free download.
- Huggett, C. (2017).** *Virtual training tools and templates: An action guide to live online learning.* Association for Talent Development. ISBN: 978-1562865757. This guide has everything you need to design and deliver online.
- Patuck, H. (2020).** *My hero is you: How kids can fight COVID-19.* IASC. This is an ebook designed to be read with an adult or more knowledgeable peer. *My hero is you* looks at global ways of fighting the virus. Included are the stories of children from Egypt, Europe, Tibet, and a refugee camp. Patuck did extensive research with psychologists, which included a global survey of parents, caregivers, and educators. Ebook can be accessed from: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2020-04/My%20Hero%20is%20You%2C%20Storybook%20for%20Children%20on%20COVID-19.pdf>



Tarleton Stars



Tarleton Stars is an award given to current and past Tarleton students based on recognition for outstanding contributions in the classroom. Administrators, faculty members and ESP members are all eligible to nominate candidates for this award. Nominations for 2021 must be submitted to Julie Howell, JESP Editor and received by January 15, 2021.

2020 Tarleton Stars Recipients



Dr. Melissa Bryan is proud to be a native of Fort Worth and a product of the Fort Worth ISD. She holds a bachelor's degree in early childhood education from Auburn University. She continued her studies in educational administration at the University of Texas at Arlington and graduated with her master's in educational administration. In 2016, she completed a doctorate of education in educational leadership and policy studies at Tarleton State University. Dr. Bryan has been a featured speaker at the district and state level. She also participated in the Urban Schools Leadership Institute at Harvard University.

Dr. Bryan is in her 25th year of service for the Fort Worth ISD. She has served as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal at the elementary and secondary levels. She is currently the principal of South Hi Mount Elementary, her alma mater! It is a dream come true to serve at the place that inspired her to embark on the journey of being an educator.



Clarissa Jackson is currently a resident of Granbury, Texas where she graduated high school in 2014. Two years later, Clarissa began attending Tarleton State University and soon realized her deeper passion for education. Clarissa's journey through college would not have been possible without her support system which includes her boyfriend, family, and the dedicated professors at Tarleton. Clarissa is currently working diligently to serve the community she grew up in as a first-grade teacher at Emma Roberson Early Learning Academy in Granbury ISD. She is taking time to consider which graduate programs she would like to pursue in the future and training for a half Ironman. She is incredibly thankful for all who helped her pursue her dream of being an educator and for those who inspire her to become an amazing teacher.



Lucerito "Luz" Ramirez began her love for teaching and learning at a very young age. She started her journey towards becoming a teacher through her involvement in tutoring, afterschool programs, and assisting teachers. Luz currently works as a teacher assistant serving pre-kindergarten students at Mary Harris Elementary School in Crowley ISD where she has been for the past three years. She is proudly representing her family as a first-generation college student at Tarleton State University where she is working diligently to receive her bachelor's degree and certification in elementary education and ESL by December 2021. Her future plans include molding young minds while instilling a love for diversity and acceptance of different cultures. She is excited about the journey towards becoming an educator and can't wait to see what the near future holds.



On-Line Nomination Form

Describe in narrative, the significant accomplishments of the nominee and why you believe they should be recognized as a Tarleton Star in the 2021 edition of *The Journal of the Effective Schools Project (JESP)*.

Submit nominations on-line to

<http://bit.ly/tarletonstar>

Please send a digital photo to Dr. Julie Howell (jhowell@tarleton.edu) no later than January 15th, 2021.

Remember, nominees must be either a current student or graduate of Tarleton State University.

Preferably, the digital photo of your nominee should be an action in teaching or other working situation.

Call for Papers

The Effective Schools Project (ESP) at Tarleton State University is dedicated to the goals of improving school effectiveness, raising the achievement level of public school students, and improving the professional development of pre-service and in-service educators. Established in 1988, *ESP* seeks to unite the efforts of public school educators and university faculty in striving for continuous improvement.

The official publication of ESP is *The Journal of the Effective School Project* (JESP). The journal is dedicated to the dissemination of information, ideas, and research among the participants in ESP, as well as other interested educators. Published annually, each issue of the journal focuses on a particular theme, but consideration is given to non-thematic articles.

The theme for the 2019 edition will focus on the power and importance relationships. We are excited to celebrate 30 years of partnerships with surrounding school districts. Action research regarding engagement with the community and students in the classroom are welcome. Therefore, engagement practices considering all students' (PK-12) diverse learning and social needs will allow readers to reflect and consider engagement practices at their respective schools and communities.

Specifically, discourse regarding school choice and the offerings of public schools, making them the best choice for students in K-12 education. We hope to be able to offer practical solutions educators are willing to implement in the K-12 setting.

Volume XXVIII 2021

“It Takes a Village... to go Virtual”

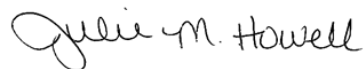
Submission Deadline: **January 15, 2021**

THE JESP SUBMISSION PROCESS...

JESP has moved all submissions and reviewing to an online system to better meet the needs of the ESP schools and authors who share their work with us. To submit a manuscript for review with *JESP*, please go to <http://www.thejesp.org> and click on For Authors.

Follow all instructions for registering with us and upload your manuscript. You will hear from us soon.

Sincerely,



Julie M. Howell, Ed.D., Editor

Manuscript Submissions

The Journal of the Effective School Project solicits articles dealing with field-based, or action research; descriptions of successful programs or practices designed to promote school improvement or increase student achievement; the application of effective schools research to the design and delivery of educational programs; descriptions of classroom practices or instructional strategies; position papers; reviews of literature; or historical perspectives. Generally, articles selected are those written in an informal, practical, and readable format.

The Journal of the Effective School Project editorial committee will evaluate articles submitted for publication consideration. Manuscripts must adhere to the following guidelines to be considered:

1. **Length:** The manuscript, including references, charts and tables generally should not exceed ten typewritten pages.
2. **Style:** Manuscripts must conform to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2009, 6th ed.).
3. **Cover Letter:** Submit a cover letter explaining the relationship of the article to the theme of the journal. Indicate that the article represents original material and is not currently under consideration by any other publication.
4. **Cover Page:** Include the following information on a separate sheet: title of the manuscript; author's name, complete mailing address, business and home phone numbers, institutional affiliation and address; biographical information about each author (not to exceed 50 words per author).
5. **Abstract:** Following the cover page, submit an abstract of 100 to 150 words and short biography of the contributing authors.
6. **Photographs:** All photos embedded in the manuscript must have participants' permission to be included in the manuscript for possible publication. Students who are younger than 18 years old must have guardian consent for their photographs to be displayed in the manuscript for possible publication. Space is limited. Please submit only 1 or at most 2 photos if your manuscript requires photos.
7. **Figures/Tables/Charts:** Again, due to limited space, **a maximum of one (1)** figure, table, or chart no larger than a standard published page will be allowed.

SEE EXAMPLES OF PAST MANUSCRIPTS:

JESP: <http://www.tarleton.edu/ESP/Journal/index.html>

Authors Register and Submit manuscripts at <http://www.thejesp.org>

After initial review by the editor, articles that meet editorial specifications will be sent to the Editorial Committee. The journal editor reserves the right to make editorial changes, but any proposed changes will be discussed with the primary author prior to publication.

The Jim Boyd Effective Schools Project

Tarleton State University's Effective Schools Project (ESP) has evolved into one of the nation's largest and longest running school improvement ventures. With the Effective Schools research as its foundation, ESP is a school improvement network linking the Tarleton faculty and campus leadership teams from over seventy Texas schools in an ongoing study and dialogue designed to enhance school effectiveness.

Effective Schools Conferences Effective Schools Conferences are at the heart of ESP. This annual series of conferences and seminars provides members with current research and theories, as well as practical methods and strategies from the nation's most prominent educators and reformists. The conference series is organized around a school improvement theme broadly associated with one or more of the correlates of Effective Schools.

Campus Planning Retreat In March, ESP leadership teams are invited to attend a planning retreat. During the retreat, school leadership teams are able to evaluate their school year to date, to reflect on the research and other information received at ESP conferences, to refine their campus improvement plan, and to exchange ideas, goals, and triumphs with other campus teams.

The ESP Journal *The Journal of the Effective Schools Project* is the official publication of ESP. The journal is dedicated to the dissemination of information, ideas, and research among the participants in ESP, as well as other interested educators. Published annually, each issue of the journal focuses on a particular theme, but consideration is given to non-thematic articles.

thejesp.org

www.tarleton.edu/esp/Journal/index.html

For more information about The Jim Boyd Effective Schools Project, please contact:

Dr. Julie Howell, ESP Director
Tarleton State University
254-968-9817
jhowell@tarleton.edu