TENNESSEE EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP A Peer-Reviewed Journal of the TASCD

Tennessee Educational Leadership (TEL) is a peer-reviewed journal intended to communicate information, ideas, theoretical formulations, and research findings related to leadership, supervision, curriculum, and instruction. Starting with **Volume 43**, the **TEL** will appear in an online format with national open availability. Distribution will include Tennessee Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (TASCD) members and others with an interest in supervision/leadership, curriculum development, and instruction at both the university and schoolbased levels. The journal is nonthematic and aims to promote discussion of a broad range of concepts, theories, issues, and dissemination of the knowledge base for professionals in education.

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Message from TASCD Executive Director Renee Meeks

Greetings,

I am both honored and excited to begin this journey as the new Executive Director of the Tennessee Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (TASCD). I have served TASCD as a member of the Board of Directors and Past President. I am thrilled to be moving forward with TASCD in this capacity. I come to this role with 25 years of experience in education and leadership. Throughout my career, I have had the privilege of working as a teacher at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, an assistant principal and the elementary and middle school levels, and a nonprofit leader before becoming an elementary principal.

We are making changes within our organization to ensure we hold true to our mission to support educators across the state of Tennessee. We will be intentional about providing an open forum for the analysis of educational issues, collectively influencing policy, and serving as a catalyst for change. We will also focus on being champions for diversity, expanding membership, and providing meaningful networking opportunities.

I believe that everyone needs a champion and that the path to true education lies in collaboration. Together, we will propel our organization to being a beacon of excellence and innovation in our field. I firmly believe that the true strength of any organization lies in its community. I am eager to collaborate with educators across the state to move us forward. I look forward to learning from your experiences, insights, and perspectives to collectively drive TASCD toward even greater success. Please reach out to me to share your thoughts, ideas, and aspirations for our organization.

As educators, we always find ourselves standing at the threshold of fresh opportunities, unexplored territories, as well as personal and professional growth. As we eagerly embrace the challenges and triumphs that lie ahead, let us reflect on the significance of this new chapter and the impact it can have on both ourselves and the school communities where we serve.

As we stand on the brink of a new chapter, let us embrace the journey with open hearts and eager minds. May this academic year be marked by collaboration, inspiration, and a collective commitment to the transformative power of education. Together, as educators, we have the privilege and responsibility to shape the future – one lesson, one student, and one academic year at a time.

Serving with Gratefulness,

Dr. Renee C. Meeks TASCD Executive Director tennascd@gmail.com

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Table of Contents

Co-teaching in an Education Preparation Program: Students and Faculty Learn the Benefits of Communication, Interaction, and Collaboration <i>Donna Short, Allison Oliver</i>	Page 5
New-to-the-School Teachers' Responses to Evaluation Policy Amanda Frasier	Page 12
Screening and Progress Monitoring Students at Risk of Dyslexia in Elementary School: A Primer for Tennessee Administrators Zachary Barnes	Page 21
The Internet of Page Ethnigity and School Palenging: Insights for an Inclusive	Daga 21

The Interplay of Race, Ethnicity, and School Belonging: Insights for an Inclusive Page 31 Educational Future *Lanise Stevenson*

The *TEL* Journal is a peer-reviewed Tennessee Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development publication. The TEL Journal's mission is to communicate information, ideas, theoretical formulations, and research findings related to leadership, supervision, curriculum, and instruction. The authors' viewpoints do not necessarily reflect the association or journal editors. Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information and legal use of all materials within their manuscripts.

Co-teaching in an Educational Preparation Program: Students and Faculty Learn the Benefits of Communication, Interaction, and Collaboration

Donna Short Austin Peay State University **Allison Oliver** Austin Peay State University

The primary focus of this article is to explain how co-teaching in a college education preparation course benefits students' communication, interaction, and collaboration skills. Two faculty professors collaborated to determine the best approach for modeling co-teaching college students educational concepts such as scaffolding, accommodations, modifications, and differentiating instruction throughout the education course. A student survey about co-teaching practices gave us insight into the benefits for our students. Three interlocking themes emerged, with instructors demonstrating (1) communication, (2) interaction, and (3) collaboration to model the benefits of co-teaching to meet the needs of diverse student populations. An assumption often inferred is that the post-pandemic students' social media and virtual experiences are sufficient for them to have one-on-one professional conversations. This case study demonstrates how students have the potential to gain insight through experiencing co-teaching in person between two well-equipped educators.

Keywords: co-teaching, collaboration

The college hallways have been quieter since une punct. What few students are present quieter since the pandemic. sit quietly in isolation with complete focus on their iPhones. The hidden earbuds protect them from interacting with a passerby who smiles and says hello. Students sit and wait in solitude, hoping class starts and ends soon. The limited interactions in the hallways and classrooms make the college experience feel cold and sterile. It will take most of the semester for students to feel secure enough to not hide behind their electronics and participate in their real-time learning. Unsurprisingly, since the pandemic, less interaction between instructors and learners has formed (Saxena et al., 2021). Research efforts to improve various learning situations between instructors and students are vital to inclusion and equal conversations in higher education learning (Zhang et al., 2004). Creative measures such as co-teaching between special and general education professors may be the opportune time to model the advantages of dialogue while increasing а collaborative support

community of learners. Education preparation programs (EPPs) can influence quality student learning to be more than a limited course of online facts. The instructor's ability to interact with the student is the heart of the learning process, development of knowledge, and empowerment of learning (Azmat et al., 2022). The co-teaching objective is to value professional face-to-face communications as necessary for interactive learning skills that are missing in an online format.

Online learning: A misconception of interaction and communication

D'Agostino (2022) shares that in recent research, "... before the pandemic, 0.28 percent of high school respondents said they planned to attend college fully online. In 2022, that figure more than doubled to 0.72%" (D'Agostino, 2022, p. 3). Students are receptive to the idea of remote learning because the benefits of less commuting and more productive time are advantageous to their schedules (Fajri et al., 2021). Even though evidence indicates the benefits of convenience for college students to take online courses, the drawbacks may have more impact on student success. Students in online courses have lower rates of course completion and final grades, lower rates of persistence, and increased course repetition (Alpert et al., 2016; Bettinger et al., 2017; Figlio et al., 2013; Hart et al., 2016; Jaggars & Xu, 2016; Xu & Xu, 2019). Furthermore, the research reflected in this specific case study is the fact that students struggle to stay connected in online courses (Kofoed et al., 2021), raising the concern that coursework generally yields worse student performance (Cellini, 2021). The question we seek to explore further is the impact co-teaching has on interactions, such as communication skills among future educators. As far back as 1998, researchers Thomson, Straubhaar, and Boyd shared concerns that online learning is more likely to create social isolation than association (Lynch, 1999). In a more recent study, Basar et al. (2021) stated that their case study of 99 students indicated that a student's motivation to learn online was at a low of 41%, and to work in a group was at 66.7%. The most striking statistic is that 98% of the students agreed that conventional face-toface teaching was most important to their learning (Basar et al., 2021, p. 119). With clear evidence of some of the disadvantages of academic and social online learning, universities continue down a path of "allowing mass access to education" (Morris et al., 2020, p. 2) as a less interactive online learning experience.

Co-teaching: Communication, Interaction, and collaboration

The entire concept of co-teaching is the ability to address the diverse learning needs of larger-sized classes that involve the inclusion of special education students. These interactions between teacher-teacher and teacher-students are not skills gained solely in textbook reading. It takes time to practice these face-to-face professional interactions, and what better place to learn this skill than in the college course? According to Ali (2020),"Physical curriculum instruction techniques are more efficient and student-engaging compared to online teaching" (2). The need for students to learn the skill of collaboration involves interactive discourse that seems less likely to occur in some isolated online learning. Educational preparation programs (EPPs) can model creative strategies that support their students to be interactive learners, resulting in empowered educators. Based on York-Barr, Bacharach, Salk, Frank, & Beniek (2004), and Wenzlaff, Berak, Wieseman, Monroe-Bailaregeon, Bacharach, & Bradfield-Krieder (2002) study, "University courses is one way to effectively model and develop collaborative skills of teacher candidates" (p. 19). With a better understanding that "remote learning reduces the interaction between students and lecturers" (Ali, 2020, p. 1475), the coteaching experience is more valuable to the student's learning as future educators.

Co-teaching: The Classroom Experience

During the spring 2023 semester, ten students enrolled in an instructional strategies course met three times a week face-to-face. The two faculty members modeled coteaching twice throughout the semester. Being that one faculty member specializes in special education; the other faculty member specializes in curriculum and instruction, the topics addressed offered students a myriad of instructional concepts to absorb. The issues addressed were scaffolding, accommodations, modifications, and differentiating instruction in a K-5 classroom with the inclusion of special education students. The first class started with an explanation of how scaffolding instruction is important when differentiating instruction for the diverse learning needs of their students. Both faculty members modeled how to conduct a dialogue

on the important topic of scaffolding. The goal of both faculty members was to encourage the class to realize the importance of relying on colleagues for professional insight and support. During the second class, faculty members addressed how the general education teacher needs to understand that special education students are general education students first. and the responsibility of providing accommodations and modifications of instruction is intended to be shared among teachers. The faculty member versed in special education mostly led this topic since this was her area of expertise, with the faculty member versed in general education adding various examples of how the general educator implements those accommodations and modifications. During both class times, students were engaged in the discussion and participated by asking insightful questions that would benefit their instruction as a teacher. At the end of the spring semester, students enrolled in the instructional strategies course were asked to complete a survey of questions using the Likert scale and open-ended questions. For this specific article, the focus is on two specific surveys that provide us with important student feedback that has the potential to inform practices in not only educator preparation programs but also K -12 settings. Students completed the survey under the direction of an outside faculty member so that both faculty members would not influence the students' responses. Additionally. all students responded anonymously to all questions. If no one wanted to participate in the survey, the individual could leave the class.

Findings

In Figure 1, the question asks students to rate their understanding of the importance of professional conversations that best help students' learning. Students could select on a Likert scale whether they strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, or strongly agree. Out of the ten responses, one out of the 10 or 10% strongly disagreed. Three out of the 10, or 30%, agreed with the statement. Finally, six out of the 10, or 60%, strongly agreed that co-teaching provided insight into conducting professional conversations. The possible explanation for the 10% strongly disagreeing with the statement is that the student made an error and could not go back to correct that error. In Figure 2, the selected question is an open-ended prompt that requires the students to provide a brief response on the positives of having two instructors. Coding of keywords such as communicate, interact, expertise, and types of interactions were identified as the key takeaway students gained during the co-teaching classes. Even though the ten students enrolled in the course are considered a small population, 100% of those ten students completed the survey. Based on the data results in Figure 1, 60% of the ten students enrolled in the instructional strategies course strongly agreed that a co-taught class provided insight into how professional conversations are conducted. Then, 30% of the ten students agreed with the survey question, and finally, 10% of the ten students strongly disagreed. The possible explanation for the 1% is that the student did not read the survey correctly or did not have a good experience during the two co-taught sessions. In Figure 2, the open-ended questions provided a little more insight into what the ten students felt was a positive takeaway from the co-taught sessions. The one concern, however, is that the open-ended question might be considered leading since the word "positive" is part of the question. For future surveys, the faculty members will need to review their word choices here so that it does not affect the students who participate. The keywords that were coded in the students' responses include different perspectives, action, understand, help, feedback, expertise, interact, differentiate, communicate, and modeling. These terms helped the faculty members understand that the impact was more than the modeling of co-teaching, and our expectations of what good practices were also

impactful. Out of the ten students who participated in the survey, only one stated they would not want to co-teach in their classroom. Ninety percent said they saw the advantages for their students to experience a co-taught class.

Figure 1

Question: A co-taught education course provides me insight on how to have professional conversations with my colleagues about education strategies that best help students learning



Figure 2

Open-ended question: What do you think is positive about having two teachers in one class?

Student Responses	Coding Key Words
We get two different perspectives	• Different perspectives
I like how there is a perspective from both teachers. You can see both teachers are learning from each other throughout the lesson while teaching us.	 Perspectives from both teachers learning
You get to see this work in action and fully be able to understand.	Actionunderstand
They both offer a different perspective	• Different perspectives
You can hear both teachers' perspectives and can have more help from both teachers	Both teachers perspectivehelp

When a student asks questions, both teachers can aid in giving thorough feedback.

You can have two different perspectives for both a general and Sped teacher. Furthermore, you can rely on one another's expertise to help all students and learn to interact better with other teachers.

The Positive side to having two teachers in one classroom is the differentiated insight and experience that both teachers bring to the room.

Having two teachers in the classroom is beneficial, especially for college education classrooms. I say this because students are being shown what it is like to communicate professionally and work with colleagues in a classroom environment. This is a great representation of modeling, which is one of the most important concepts we learn in education.

It is good to have two teachers in one classroom because students can ask both teachers questions, and the students can gain different perspectives from both teachers. If one teacher is more skilled in a subject than the other one, it will help to get that instruction from that specific teacher. Differentiated

feedback

Expertise

interact

•

- experience
- Communicate
- modeling

 Students gain perspectives

Discussion

The advantage of working with another colleague to teach a course is that it is an encouraging experience as professionals and for students to witness. Both faculty members not only addressed scaffolding instructional strategies, but because of their differing races, they could individually connect and identify with the diversity of the student population. Even though teacher diversity was not a component of the Godrey and Grayman research, they emphasized teachers that from diverse backgrounds facilitating a classroom dialogue would benefit students to hear varying perspectives (2014). The faculty members' ability to take turns to communicate with the students and each other comfortably spoke volumes to their students. This ability to communicate in a relationship professional guided an interdependence between groups and positive attitudes toward diversity (Paluck, 2006; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). The expertise that was offered to our students emphasized the importance of collaboration, cooperation, and communication. Hattie (2003) confirms that the result of collaborative communities will advance teacher effectiveness and expertise. This experience of collaboration validated the importance of supporting, respecting, and sharing can build stronger learning communities for students desiring to be educators.

Co-teaching: The Benefits for All Involved

Modeling co-teaching with students in educator preparation programs offers numerous benefits for demonstrating effective communication, interaction, and collaboration to meet the needs of diverse students in K-12 settings. By witnessing co-teaching in action, students gained practical and realistic learning experiences. They observed how teachers effectively communicate and interact with each other to address the diverse needs of students. Through this firsthand experience, students developed a deeper understanding of the complexities and practicalities of co-teaching, bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Additionally, modeling co-teaching provides students with invaluable role models and mentors who exemplify effective communication, interaction, and collaboration skills. These role models inspire and guide students as they develop their abilities to work collaboratively with diverse students and fellow educators. By observing co-teachers in action, students can witness the individualized support provided to diverse students. including differentiated instruction. adaptations. and targeted interventions. This exposure helps enhance their planning students and implementation skills to create inclusive learning environments that meet the unique needs of all students. Furthermore, modeling co-teaching fosters the development of teamwork and collaboration skills among students as they observe the power of effective communication, trust-building, and problem-solving within coteaching partnerships. These experiences enhance their professional growth and prepare them to work effectively and collaboratively with other educators in their future teaching careers.

This collaboration allowed for identifying appropriate teaching strategies, materials, and accommodations that could optimize students' learning experiences. Additionally, based on the feedback received and student engagement, the collaboration promoted the exchange of ideas, expertise, and resources, which, in turn, fostered a collective effort towards providing the best possible education for all learners. The time and effort put into co-teaching were at first focused on modeling for professional education majors the professional benefits. After only two classroom sessions, there were observably more advantages to consider. A stronger community was created among students by first being a community as faculty. The environment was comfortable in the classroom, but that eventually permeated into the hallways. Students interacted more with each other and the faculty. A simple hello was no longer awkward or met with silence. The key to student's success was the specific sequence for practicing communication skills that would lead meaningful interaction and to enriched collaborations. Furthermore, it was also beneficial to the faculty to collaborate on coteaching. Buckingham, Lopez-Hernandez, and Strotman (2021) indicate that "implementing coteaching strategies in higher education courses

can serve to create a fruitful space for faculty professional development, mainly by enabling learning processes that will help professors develop their teaching and reflective competencies" (p. 2).

The impact of the pandemic isolation on students and faculty continues to influence our efforts in EPPs. Determination to continue convenient online courses no matter the cost of learning is the unfortunate path for most colleges and universities. EPPs need to assess what we lost during the isolation- purposeful and meaningful communication and collaboration. As Robert John Meehan stated, "The most valuable resource all teachers have is each other. Without collaboration, our growth is limited to our perspectives" (2011). Teaching cannot be in isolation; therefore, neither can learning.

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Dr. Donna Short is an Assitant Professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning at Austin Peay State University. Research interests include curriculum, instructional strategies, science education, and assessment.

Dr. Allison Oliver is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning at Austin Peay State University. Research interests include special education, behavior interventions, instructional practices, behavior disorders, and minority populations.

New-to-the-School Teachers' Responses to Evaluation Policy

Amanda Frasier East Tennessee State University

When teachers are new to a school, they must make sense of policies within a new context. In this horizontal comparative case study, I analyze interview data from three teachers in North Carolina taken at two points in a school year to explore how new teachers make sense of and respond to teacher evaluation policy. Study participants framed the evaluation problem around the extent to which school-level enactment focused on assessment. Teachers demonstrated the following reform typologies in response to their sensemaking around evaluation policy: Assimilation, Adaptation, and Avoidance. When new to a school, teachers are expected to follow the same policies and processes as teachers who have long operated in that school's policy context. So, new-to-the-school teachers must reconcile new-to-them policies with their personal preconceptions of practice in an entirely new context. Teacher evaluation polices outline what is valued in teaching by delineating and measuring those values. So, it is worth considering how teacher perceptions of evaluation may influence their practice and career choices, particularly teachers trying to balance such valuation with their daily work in an unfamiliar context. This case study of three teachers in North Carolina utilizes sensemaking theory and problem framing to explore the question, how do teachers who are new to a school make sense of and respond to teacher evaluation policy?

Then a person is exposed to something new, they must rely on their previous experiences, beliefs, and values to make sense of it. Moreover, an individual's sensemaking is also influenced by the collective sensemaking of those around them. Weick explains, "Sensemaking is never solitary because what a person does internally is contingent on others" (1995, p. 40). Not only is sensemaking a collective process, but it is also deeply situated in a group's context (Coburn, 2001). Teachers who are new to a school are individuals entering a space with established group conventions and traditions (Weick, 1995). So, the sensemaking of a new teacher will be influenced by how established faculty make sense of a phenomenon, which manifests in how the policy is enacted at the school level. Individuals and groups both engage in sensemaking when they experience dramatic change, termed shocks. Weick explains that shocks are sometimes singular and large events but, more likely, a series of smaller changes interrupting an ongoing flow (1995). The interviews took place after a shock because study participants were working in

new schools, and thus, their entire context had changed. Moreover, while all had been evaluated, two teachers had relocated from other states with slightly different policies. At the time of this study, a six-standard evaluation rubric was utilized to assess teachers in North Carolina. The sixth standard included a student growth measure calculated by student test score performance. So, student test performance was closely linked to an individual teacher's evaluation.

Part of sensemaking is problem setting or problem framing. Weick (1995) explains that what he terms as problem setting is necessary for problem-solving, and he contends that in setting a problem:

> We select what we will treat as the 'things' of the situation, we set boundaries of our attention to it, and we impose upon it a coherence that allows us to say what is wrong and in what directions the situation needs to be changed. (p. 10)

Similarly, Coburn contends that "How a policy problem is framed is important because it assigns responsibility and creates rationales that authorize some policy solutions and not others" (2006, p. 343). As

teachers make sense of policy shocks, they develop a framework for understanding the perceived problems with the policy. This framework limits the options a teacher considers as they develop their response. So, how a teacher framed evaluation policy would limit their possible policy responses. Importantly, new teachers are significantly more likely to perceive evaluation impacting their practice when compared with veteran peers (Frasier, 2023).

Others have used various categories of reform typologies to categorize teacher responses to policies (see Yurkofsky, 2022, for a recent example). A foundational study utilizing typologies categorized strategic responses to classroom policy as acquiescence, compromise, avoidance. defiance, or manipulation (Oliver, 1991). Later, Coburn (2004) argues in her study of reading policy implementation that "[T]he relationship between institutional pressures and classrooms was much more interactive and nonlinear than that portrayed by Oliver" (p. 223). As such, Coburn offered five typologies: alternative rejection. decoupling/symbolic response. parallel structures, assimilation, and accommodation (2004). The answers in this study align with Oliver's (1991) avoidance and Coburn's (2004) assimilation and accommodation.

Methods

This is a horizontal comparative case study of three high school English teachers from two schools in one district in western North Carolina. Comparative case studies have long been recognized as an important tool for analyzing the intersection of educational policy and practice, and horizontal studies are useful for examining how the same policy unfolds in multiple contexts (Bartlett & Vavrus. 2016). Participants were interviewed twice during the 2016-2017 school year (October and March) as part of a more extensive study on teacher perceptions of the relationship between evaluation policy and teaching practice. All three participants were new to their school, and two teachers were new to the state.

Interviews of the participants were transcribed and uploaded in NVIVO for analysis. Interviews were coded for examples of sensemaking components: collective process, shocks, and problem framing. These codes were selected due to the literature that had been reviewed on sensemaking, and thus, deductive coding was employed. While completing this deductive coding scheme, memos were created to allow for the creation of summaries of each teacher's interviews and to record merging themes to track teacher reform typologies. The following typologies were iteratively identified by considering those espoused by Oliver (1991) and Coburn (2004) and were coded: assimilation, adaptation, and avoidance (Table 1). Codes were not mutually exclusive, and multiple codes could occur simultaneously. To ensure the reliability of my coding, I recoded each transcript three months after the initial coding and then compared both instances of coding. No discrepancies were identified in my application of the codes. A follow-up contact was made with each participant five years later, in October 2022.

Table 1

Reform Typologies

Typology	Definition	Action
Assimilation	Agreement with peers and policy: Teacher enacts policy in the same manner as interpreted by the collective and in the way it is implemented.	Policy is enacted similarly across contexts of the school in line with policy intentions.
Adaptation	Agreement with peers but not policy: Teacher	Policy is enacted similarly

	enacts policy in the same manner as the collective but not in the way it is implemented.	across contexts of the school but, to some extent, deviates from policy intentions.
Avoidance	Rejection of policy: Teacher rejects the policy entirely by not adhering to the requirements or exiting the system.	Individual does not enact the policy or removes themselves from the system.

Results The Case of Mr. Brown

Mr. Brown taught for one year in Tennessee at a very large high school of 2400 students before moving to his current location at a small, county-wide alternative school for students who were not succeeding in their home high schools. The previous vear, he had four formal observations conducted by his administrator. He said his administrator told him, "I'm going to evaluate you tough... you might be kind of low and stuff, but I want to show growth." He still got a "heads up" before evaluations, even those that were supposed to be unannounced, and knowing they were coming increased his anxiety around the visit because he felt there was no way he could do well.

At his previous school, Mr. Brown's post-conference would focus on one strength and one area of improvement as there were "too many other things on the rubric to talk about," so he felt like he "just accepted the scores given and moved on." During the first interview, he was about to be evaluated by his new administrator at the alternative school. He said he wanted to focus on what had been highlighted at the new teacher training he recently had attended rather than what had been emphasized during his previous experiences in Tennessee.

Mr. Brown stated that his previous school was very "test score driven." He taught tested courses and had many afterschool data meetings/charts. Students were scheduled for classes based on test scores, so each course was structured around trying to grow kids on a test. In contrast, Mr. Brown felt he could adapt more at his new school. Mr. Brown explained, "I am kind of looking more at how they are in a class, like are they actually engaging in the material?" He gave an example of how he had a student who could barely write, so he had the student submit work verbally. Another example he gave was of a student who did not want to look at a sonnet, so Mr. Brown asked about his favorite music and pulled up song lyrics. "We have that adaptability [at this school]." When asked what motivates him, Mr. Brown said, "I guess what motivates me is I don't want to fail the kids. In my previous school, I was worried about if the kids would fail [the test]."

In the second interview, Mr. Brown said he had been nervous during his first observation at the alternative school and compared it to when you write your first paper and college and "don't know how [the professor] is going to grade." Now that he had experienced evaluation at the school, he said he felt there were different expectations due to the context of an alternative school and felt like feedback was very encouraging. He also said that the county curriculum coach had observed him, which was "nerve-wracking," but the observer had participated in a lesson on *Romeo and Juliet*. Mr. Brown said the experience had felt validating.

He explained the "last school I was at was super hard... It seemed like the primary focus was all about getting those [test scores]. So, your whole lesson and everything almost had to be designed with that in mind, especially as you get closer to testing." He described how his last school really wanted students to practice taking tests and opined, "It's miserable for the kids, and it's miserable for the teacher." At his current school, Mr. Brown said of testing, "It's such a low priority from what's actually happening. Some of these kids are between homes and stuff... That's just really far down the ladder of where we operate day-to-day." He stated he had many students with low reading abilities who struggled to read the four-hour-long standardized test and that he had started training for a program in Foundational Reading to help his current students gain literacy skills. In a follow-up five years after data collection, Mr. Brown was still working at the same school.

The Case of Ms. Ranier

Ms. Ranier was in her 22nd year and transferred to her current school from the alternative position Mr. Brown now occupies. Ms. Ranier felt a bit out of her "element" as she was now teaching Honors classes for the first time in six years. She said she had been happy at the alternative school but had left the position in hopes of having a better work-life balance because she had recently adopted a child. Ms. Ranier described herself as a "child of poverty" and a first-generation college student. She described her motivation as:

My students. My client. I love them and want them to do well, and I'm someone whose education transformed my life. I would still be living on a farm, picking green beans, canning them, asking my grandmother if she thought what I was gonna make for lunch was an appropriate choice, and I wouldn't be doing my own thinking.

One thing Ms. Ranier appreciated at her new school was that the A.P. and Honors courses were open enrollment because she believed "students like her" could benefit from those courses.

Early in her career, Ms. Ranier was at a school where the principal did lots of dropins, and she had a shared planning period with English teachers. In that context, she felt that her administration knew what was happening in classes. At the alternative school, she described the same conditions as Mr. Brown, with frequent, supportive interaction with the administration and the district coach. However, she had not seen much of the administrator at her current school and said she "did not know them." The principal had not been in her classroom until her first observation, which occurred immediately before our first interview. Ms. Ranier described how she was confident that she would not see her administrator in her classroom again until an observation next semester. Unlike the alternative school, she saw administration and curriculum coaches constantly in the hallway and classes.

For her observation, Ms. Ranier taught a lesson designed by another teacher because "being the new person on the team, I want to make sure I'm not the easy teacher. I wanted to make sure I'm a team player." She stated that she was following the "lead teacher" on what to use for tests and that writing was assessed using common rubrics across the department. She was upset because she described how she had two kids who were being very "disrespectful" during her observation. She described the anticipation for this evaluation as "very nerve-wracking, and it's made me anxious, and I didn't sleep." She said that she felt "so demoralized" that day by her observation and joked about needing to drink after work.

We spoke for some time about state testing and how those scores played into evaluation ratings. In North Carolina, teacher effectiveness ratings were recorded online at the state level. Ms. Ranier stated that she knew her composite score online was "red" because of her record at the alternative school where students traditionally had very low test scores. She said the big difference at this school versus her old one was that it was predictable what students had been taught, "If teachers are on the same page, you know where to pick up with students."

Ms. Ranier spoke often of her child throughout both interviews. She stated that she was only going to have one child, as she had "two miscarriages and he's adopted... I want to spend time with that child. I don't want to go to professional meetings, I don't want to lead a committee, I don't want to do any of that." She said she usually works 50-60 hours a week. "I am [evaluated on] things that I do not feel are the reasons I became a teacher and do not reflect my performance and abilities as a teacher." She adds, "I think they're trying to force me to change school culture, to use my expertise and experience to mold new teachers to be like me. But I don't think that's okay. They should give me that choice." She said this year, she had been given an accordion file folder to document her effectiveness. Ms. Ranier said evaluations are much more than what can be seen in the classroom. She lists, "Do you help hire new teachers? Are you part of a professional organization?" and stated that she did not personally have the time or money to do these things. Of her 22 years in education and teacher evaluation, she said, "If I am not really darn good at this, someone should have told me before now to get a new career path."

Ms. Ranier reflected more on her new school context in her second interview. She said her post-conference for her first observation was a relief, but her principal had not been in her classroom since. She described feeling slightly more "claustrophobic and stifled" about what she needs to teach instead of the alternative school. Again, she focused on the time constraints of the job, saying she had worked five extra hours grading the previous night and had gone someplace with other teachers to do it, highlighting that working five hours "after work" was an acceptable practice at her current school. She said her son was sick, and a sub had not picked up the job, so other teachers had to lose their planning to cover her. She had come in during planning to be verbally reprimanded about putting in for a sub late. She said she has had to take days off to grade and felt like there were so many meetings. She had a parent conference every day last week after school.

I asked her why she had so many meetings, and she described it as "CYA," a commonly used acronym meant to emphasize that she was responsible for documenting to protect herself and the school from criticism, punishment, or even legal action. She said. "They want me to do CYA and prove that I've done my job in a number of ways. Can't I just have one high-stakes evaluation... I think there is a conspiracy to exhaust us." She also talked of the importance of having an administration like her as a teacher, "My job is so big I could still not do enough of it to get fired... tenure isn't going to save you if your administrator hates you." She ended by describing how she wondered if the DMV was hiring last week and how much of a pay cut it would be, adding, "I don't hate my job. I just wish it weren't so complex." Ms. Ranier expressed frustration that she had "been doing this too long to give up" but felt that evaluation policy, in particular, had impacted her family life negatively to the point that she may "have to do something drastic." Despite continuing to struggle with work-life balance, at a five-year follow-up, Ms. Ranier was still teaching at the same school and is retiring after the current year.

The Case of Mr. Eagle

Mr. Eagle was in his fourth year of teaching. He had taught three years at the same high school from which he had graduated in Mississippi and was now at the same school where Ms. Ranier was teaching. He said he had a different observing administrator every year he taught. He said his first administrator was "the best" as she wrote paragraphs of feedback. He described that her critiques were actually in the form of questions like, "What would have happened if you had done X instead of y?" and so this pushed him to be more reflective. For the next two years, he described being observed by people outside his content area who appreciated his classroom control and rapport with students but could not comment on his teaching. Despite varying utility, he said he had been "unbothered" by the way evaluation had been conducted in his previous school.

Like Mr. Brown, Mr. Eagle was switching from a larger school to a smaller one, so he was surprised that his new administrator stayed to observe his class for an entire 90-minute period. However, his new administrator was also impressed with his classroom management ability and rapport-building. Mr. Eagle stated he received very high marks on his evaluation and said that felt good, "but I don't feel like I'm getting anything out of it... I'm wanting growth-enabling conversations because I want to grow as a professional." Mr. Eagle had not had the opportunity to work with a curriculum coach at his previous school because those were only allotted to teachers with lower evaluation scores. As a high scorer, that resource was denied to him. At his new school, a coach had met with Mr. Eagle several times, and he had been encouraged to conduct peer walks in other teacher's classrooms.

The first time Mr. Eagle's principal came to observe, she happened to show up on a day when he did a Socratic Seminar on Black Lives Matter. Mr. Eagle described how that was lucky, as another day might have been devoted to something less impactful, like facilitating students using the computer lab. "It's gonna leave me with a good first impression," he stated, "the image that [my administrator] has of me in her head will be of that Socratic, where she said she left with chills because of the conversation the students had. I can't buy that kind of impression again." He summed, "That doesn't even seem equitable in some way."

Mr. Eagle was teaching an elective course and two courses of senior English. So, his experience with testing was different than Ms. Ranier's. Mr. Eagle could rely more on formative assessments that he made and administered because his courses were not subjected to state End-of-course exams but a district-mandated senior project and a research paper. Mr. Eagle said he felt the senior project was a more authentic assessment than the standardized test that was the end objective in other English courses. Mr. Eagle spoke of the role in tradition for the graduation project, which required a research paper, mentored volunteer experience, and a presentation to community members. He said he would ask about changing parts of how the project went or the procedures in which he was expected to follow and was told everything was "a county decision." So, he felt bound by county restrictions and the expectations of the curriculum coach. He stated that the experience was demoralizing to the point where he began to look up other jobs, "And I love teaching. I've never felt that way before this."

In our second interview, Mr. Eagle described his second observation, which occurred on the first day of his Journalism class, where he reviewed the syllabus and groundwork for the class. He said his third observation was when he facilitated his computer lab class. He said that her impressions from the first observation and the Socratic Seminar influenced subsequent evaluations, "I haven't received any critical feedback... I have heard that she's given critical feedback to other new teachers, so I'm thankful that she's enjoyed my class periods." However, he said that his administrator had approached him about becoming a permanent teacher in the course that was tested for the EOCs due to his high evaluation scores. This was a prospect that worried Mr. Eagle.

Mr. Eagle said he often heard from more veteran teachers at the school that they

were unhappy with how it was run since the current administrator started four years prior. "There's a very large contingent that still exists from the old days... there's a general feeling that people are being watched in [meetings] and during class periods." He described the presence of an "invisible list" that he was omitted because the administrator had the impression that he was a good teacher. Overall, Mr. Eagle's description of the school policy context matched his colleague Ms. Ranier's description of "CYA." At a five-year follow-up, Mr. Eagle said he had left teaching at the end of the study year.

Discussion

Despite having different backgrounds and experiences, the participants responded similarly when their sensemaking process resulted in similar problem frames (Table 2).

Table 2

Teacher I	Response		
Teacher	Context	Problem Framed	Response
Mr. Brown	School 1	Teaching centered on high-stakes evaluation.	Avoidance
	School 2	Value of assessment replaced with other values.	Adaptation
Mr. Eagle	School 1	Value of assessment replaced with other values.	Adaptation
	School 2	Teaching centered on high-stakes evaluation.	Avoidance

Ms. Rainer	School 1	Value of assessment replaced with other values.	Adaptation
	School 2	Teaching centered on high-stakes evaluation.	Assimilation

In the case of Mr. Brown, his first year of teaching in Tennessee was at a very assessment-driven school. This resulted in avoidance, and he left the school to take a job in North Carolina. Notably, Tennessee's evaluation model at the time was similar to North Carolina's, as both required a student growth measure (NCTQ, 2015). However, the alternative school where Mr. Brown spent his second year prioritized other values (such as those presented at the new teacher training) due to the school's unique context. As such, Mr. Brown was able to adapt his practice where he met the requirements of the evaluation policy, but it did not substantially impact his practice or career choices.

Ms. Ranier had left the position occupied by Mr. Brown, and she described a similar adaptation response to evaluation policy when she taught at the alternative school. Ms. Ranier ultimately left the school for reasons unrelated to evaluation and found that her new school was very assessmentdriven. Ms. Ranier assimilated into the school culture. She taught lessons and used assessments designed by other teachers. Ms. Ranier's assimilation response may be related to her unique circumstances. Unlike Mr. Brown and Mr. Eagle, Ms. Ranier had over 20 years of classroom experience and was the only study participant with a child. Ms. Ranier did not seem happy with her teaching situation. particularly concerning the evaluation. She talked about exiting the

system but ultimately reminded herself she was "five years from retirement." As such, Ms. Ranier chose to assimilate and stayed until retirement.

When Mr. Eagle was a teacher in Mississippi, there was no student growth component to teacher evaluation, and he could easily adapt practices at his school (NCTQ, 2015). However, for personal reasons, he transferred to the same school as Ms. Ranier, which was very assessmentdriven. Additionally, unlike Mississippi, North Carolina had a growth component in the evaluation rubric (NCTQ, 2015). Mr. Eagle's dissatisfaction with the evaluation contributed to his decision to leave the profession altogether (avoidance).

Overall, when evaluation was framed as a problem, and teaching was centered on high-stakes evaluation, Mr. Brown and Mr. Eagle responded with avoidance. Ms. Rainier considered avoidance but stated that she would remain teaching in that context due to her proximity to retirement. So, Ms. Ranier responded to the problem by assimilation. In contrast, when the context allowed teachers to focus on other values rather than assessment, all three teachers responded by adaptation.

Conclusion

All three teachers acknowledged how evaluation policy impacted decisions around classroom practice, but the policy can also impact a teacher's career decisions. When teachers have negative experiences with evaluation policy or feel it cannot be reconciled with their personal expectations for practice, they may try to exit a system (avoidance). The sample is limited by the parameters of a single district context and is too small to draw far-reaching conclusions on teacher retention. However, all three participants at least considered avoidance by exit when faced with contexts where teaching focused on high-stakes testing. Finally, both newer teachers left schools due to how the evaluation policy was implemented. Therefore, it is worth trying to understand the processes behind how individuals come to make sense of policies, particularly for new teachers.

So, teacher sensemaking of evaluation and how they frame the potential problems within can influence not just the choices they make in the classroom but may also impact whether or not they stay to teach at all. Future work on how evaluation policy impacts teacher practice and career decisions should be conducted, particularly since the inclusion of student growth has been in place in many states for several years. Studies conducted with a larger sample and in different contexts could yield more generalizable results.

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Amanda Slaten Frasier is an Assistant Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at East Tennessee State University. Her research interests are teacher policy and practice, policy analysis, evaluation/ assessment, and teacher education/ development.

Screening and Progress Monitoring Students at Risk of Dyslexia in Elementary School: A Primer for Tennessee Administrators

Zachary Barnes Austin Peay State University

Like many other states, Tennessee requires schools to screen and identify students who show characteristics of dyslexia. Because of this requirement, administrators play an active role in making sure their school meets the needs of the "Say Dyslexia" law. The purpose of this article is to provide Tennessee administrators with knowledge of dyslexia and how to effectively implement screening and progress monitoring of students who are at risk of dyslexia.

wave of dyslexia legislation has made its way through the country, with at least 43 states having some type of dyslexia-specific legislation, including Tennessee (NCIL, 2019). These laws were created to identify more students with dyslexia by improving the screening methods (NCIL, 2019; Petscher et al., 2019; Youman & Mather, 2018). However, there has been a lack of translational work to help close the researchto-practice gap between scientists and schools on the ground (Petscher et al., 2020; Seidenberg et al., 2020). This can lead to teachers being confused when approached by administrators, central office staffers, or parents using different terms from each other. Parents are also concerned about dyslexia. Over the past few years, there have been various popular press articles about dyslexia. These articles pushed parents to ensure schools had appropriate practices in place to identify students with dyslexia (Hanford, 2017). One way this is done is through Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS, previously known Response as to Intervention in Tennessee).

MTSS is a method of identifying students at risk of disabilities (academic or behavioral) and providing intensive academic intervention. This is done by screening all students on specific skills (i.e., universal screening), placing students into instructional groups based on the screening data, and then continuing to measure how well the student is doing in that intervention (i.e., progress monitoring). Those determined at-risk on a specific skill, as determined by the universal screener, are placed in Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention, with Tier 3 being the most intensive intervention. About 10-15% of students will be placed in Tier 2 interventions while between 3-5% will placed in Tier 3. The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) reports that those in Tier 3 are significantly below grade level.

School leadership plays a role in this process. The MTSS manual by the TDOE states that "the role of the school-based team is to organize and analyze implementation efforts for the MTSS to ensure that all students master the skills and knowledge necessary for postsecondary success (TDOE, 2018)." School administrators can use their role to promote these processes and to ensure school-wide fidelity (Eagle et al., 2015). Because of this role, this paper aims to provide Tennessee administrators with vital information on how best to screen for dyslexia within an MTSS framework.

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability in basic reading skills and reading fluency, which means those with dyslexia have difficulties with word reading, reading fluency, and spelling. This matches up with the disability category of specific learning disability (SLD) in basic reading skills and/or reading fluency. That's because dyslexia and SLD in basic reading skills and/or reading fluency are the same. This can sometimes lead to confusion among schools and parents about how to label a student. The International Dyslexia Association defines dyslexia as "a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. Difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and spelling and decoding abilities poor characterize it. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language (Lyon et al., 2003)". Structural differences exist in the brain between those with and without dyslexia (Kearns et al., 2019; Richlan, 2012). The phonological processing difficulties snowball into decoding, fluency, and comprehension deficits. There are also environmental, genetic, and neurological factors at play. Dyslexia is heritable, and early literacy home environment and instruction play a role in the development of dyslexia (Peterson & Pennington, 2015; Powers et al., 2016).

A key component of those with dyslexia is that a student has an unexpected reading deficit. It is surprising because the student has had a variety of chances through high-quality instruction and intervention to learn specific reading skills. When students are given high-quality intervention but fail to respond to that intervention, that is a key sign that a student may be a risk factor for dyslexia (Miciak & Fletcher, 2020). Dyslexia is more than just a student struggling to read. It is also a public health concern. G. Reid Lyon, the former director of the Human Learning and Behavior Branch of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), once wrote, "The psychological, social, and economic consequences of reading failure are legion (Lyon, 1997)." Mugnaini & colleagues (2009) found that those with dyslexia suffer from both academic and mental health concerns. Because of the consequences of dyslexia,

NICHD funded research sites across the country to learn more about dyslexia because it was, and still is, a "significant health problem." These health problems include long-term emotional consequences that come with living with dyslexia (Livingston et al., 2018). This shows the importance of early work to screen, identify, and intervene with students with or at risk of dyslexia.

The Importance of Screening and MTSS

Access to intervention is critical for a student who is struggling to read. Before they can be identified and placed into an intervention group, teachers must appropriately screen students and make necessary placements into intervention groups. Screening and identification of a disability are two different concepts, with screening being the main focus of this piece. Screening is a general education tool that quickly determines which students may struggle with certain academic skills. Those found to be struggling may be placed in an intervention group. On the other hand, identification is more of a diagnosis of a learning disability. The screening data and other data from the intervention may be used to identify a student with a disability.

Educators should look towards the medical community to see how they screen for medical conditions (Farris et al., 2020; Petscher et al., 2019). Doctors screen for a variety of conditions during yearly visits. If something comes up in a screening, the doctor will request additional testing. Appropriate universal screening, which provides screening to every student in the school, is the first step to creating a plan to help children succeed (Farris et al., 2020). Finding any warning signs early on is imperative to give that child the most effective intervention. This is why it is important for general education teachers, education special teachers. school psychologists, and administrators to have a

strong collaborative relationship with each other to come up with the best screening procedure.

Tennessee's "Say Dyslexia" requires students are screened that all for characteristics of dyslexia. This can and should take place through the existing MTSS process. For early reading, this comprehensive framework is designed with a preventative approach. First, all students receive high-quality instruction in Tier 1, which takes place in the general education classroom. This is where general education teachers provide high-quality, evidencebased teaching to all students. The skills taught, especially for elementary students, include foundational skills such as phonics. Additionally, this is when general education teachers provide differentiated can intervention. When kindergarten teachers were given professional development to improve small group. differentiated instruction, the students in their classrooms improved their reading ability (Al Otaiba et al., 2012; Al Otaiba et al., 2016).

Some students will need access to more intensive intervention (i.e., Tier 2 or Tier 3) in addition to Tier 1 instruction. These students are identified through universal screening, which is discussed further in the next section. The students are placed in either Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention, where they will receive explicit and intensive intervention. General education teachers also provide intensive instruction in Tier 2 or 3 groups. Policies around placements often come from state policy (Berkeley et al., 2020). For example, Tennessee places students below the 25th percentile (in the measured reading skill) in a Tier 2 intervention. In contrast, students below the 10th percentile are placed in the Tier 3 group (TDOE, n.d). Tennessee considers students in Tier 2 to be labeled atrisk, while those in Tier 3 are below grade level. By providing high-quality intervention, this framework allows students to respond to intervention before exploring special education eligibility.

Those who do not respond to intervention may move into a more intensive intervention (from Tier 2 to Tier 3) or may be referred for a special education evaluation to determine if the student meets the requirements of an educational disability. The MTSS process is a collaborative process involving general education. special education. administrators. and school psychologists. School psychologists have a meaningful and broad role within the MTSS process. They support data-based decisionmaking during data team meetings, consult evidence-based interventions, and on implement fidelity within the MTSS process (Eagle et al., 2015). The MTSS framework includes a lot of data to review, and schools should utilize a school-wide data collection system that will record, track, and monitor all data from Tier 1 to Tier 3.

Tennessee requires the school data team to meet every 4.5 weeks to review students' progress monitoring data. However, to move a student out of a specific intervention tier, Tennessee requires a minimum of 8-10 data points of progress monitoring every other week. This means that students need to spend significant time in an intervention group before being moved. By being a part of the MTSS process, school psychologists can easily monitor the data collection process to ensure high-quality data for the evaluation and eligibility process. They also have specific training in data-based decision-making that teachers may not have. When examining teacher knowledge about MTSS, teachers reported they knew less about data-based decision-making than they did about Tier 1 implementation or schoolwide MTSS procedures and requirements (Al Otaiba et al., 2019). A key part of the MTSS process is universally screening all students and making decisions based on the available data. With a lack of training in this area,

effectively screening and identifying students with dyslexia has been challenging (Catts & Petscher, 2018). With the rise of dyslexiaspecific legislation and research in this area, there has been a rapid increase in understanding the best practices to identify students risk of reading at а disability/dyslexia. Many states have adopted dyslexia laws that require explicit universal screening for dyslexia (NCIL, 2018). These dyslexia-specific laws often require that the state use an MTSS framework when identifying students with dyslexia (Gearin et al., 2020). However, these new dyslexia laws have not increased the number of students who have been identified as having dyslexia (Phillips & Odegard, 2017). This could be because of ineffective screening practices at the school level. The rest of this article will explain the effective universal screening and progress monitoring.

Universal Screening

Schools should have a systematic way to universally screen all of their students multiple times a year in basic reading skills. School leaders should be trained in screening and know how to create a school-wide screening plan before the start of the school vear (Barnes & Peltier, 2022). With input from teachers and other staff (e.g., school psychologist, speech pathologist, school counselor), the plan should be communicated with all school personnel. Finally, ongoing training in data-based decision-making should be happening every year. While teachers report confidence in their ability to make data-based decisions, they struggle when presented with actual data-based tasks (Oslund et al., 2021).

In most cases, universal screening will take place through curriculum-based measures (CBMs). CBMs are measures designed to be used repeatedly to measure progress towards a goal. They have been created to be quick checks, like taking a temperature, to alert the school if specific students need intervention. These screeners are not to determine if a student has a disability but to determine if a student is at risk of a disability. The skills that are screened for will vary based on age.

Table 1.

List of specific reading skills and their definitions.

Specific Reading skills	Specific Skill
Phonemic Segmentation	The ability to break down spoken words into individual sounds. This is often assessed by giving the student a word, presented orally, and asking them to segment the word into individual phonemes.
Letter Name Fluency	The ability to identify letters fluently. This is often measured by how quickly a student can name letters presented to them in one minute.
Letter Sound Fluency	The ability to identify the sounds of the letter fluently. This is often measured by how quickly a student can produce the sound of the presented letters in one minute.
Work Identification/ Word Reading Fluency	The ability to identify individual words fluently. This is often measured by how quickly a student can read a list of individual words in a minute.
Nonsense Word Fluency	This is the ability to sound out made-up words fluently. This is often measured by how quickly a student can

	read a list of made-up words in a minute.		giving a student a reading passage with a
Reading Fluency	This is the ability to read accurately and with prosody fluently. This is often measured by how quickly a student can read a passage accurately in one minute.		systematically. Students are asked to pick the correct word that makes sense in the sentence. This can be administered to a group.
Spelling	This is the ability to correctly spell words. This is often measured by a teacher reading out a list of words at a specific pace while the class writes the word out on paper.	The readir follow a developr itself. Good read foundational skill and comprehension 2005). Earlier foundational skills	ng skills listed in Table 1 mental trend that builds on ders have the necessary ls paired with vocabulary on skills (Perfetti et al., grades will screen for s like phonemic awareness
Vocabulary	Students are asked to match a vocabulary word to a definition. The CBM also provides distractor definitions. It can also be provided in a multiple-choice assessment.	and letter sounds schooling should foundational skills 2019). Table 2 sh what to screen in screen and ident dyslexia or other o	s. The first few years of focus on screening basic s of reading (Petscher et al., nows some suggestions for n K-2, an integral time to tify students at risk for difficulties.
Listening Comprehension	This is the ability to comprehend a story that is presented orally. This is usually measured by a teacher reading a	Table 2.Possibleskillselementary grades	to screen for in early s
	story and the student	Grade Level	Necessary Assessments
	answering comprehension questions afterward.	Kindergarten	Phonological awareness (phoneme segmentation, blending,
Reading Comprehension	This is the ability to understand what the passage says. This is		naming, letter sound, vocabulary
	having a student read a passage. Then, students are asked to complete a multiple-choice assessment on literal	First grade	Phoneme awareness (segmentation, manipulation), oral vocabulary, word recognition
	and inferential understanding.	Second grade	Word identification, nonsense word
Reading MAZE	This is the ability to understand what the passage says. This is often measured by		identification, oral reading, reading comprehension

Multiple commercial programs can be used to screen students. Many districts will have already purchased a program for teachers to screen and progress universally monitor their students. If not, there are resources available to you. EasyCBM has a free version for teachers to use and also allows teachers to pay a fee for a more advanced product. After you universally screen, data teams should review the predetermined cut-off points for inclusion in an intervention group. As previously mentioned, Tennessee has suggested that anyone below the 25th percentile on a screener should be placed into tiered intervention (Tennessee Department of Education, 2015). Students who are flagged for intervention should also be given additional measures to pinpoint the specific skills deficits. This is especially important for the upper elementary grades and beyond, who are given just reading fluency measures as a universal screener. Below is a universal screener checklist

Checklist for universal screeners:

- 1. Find the universal screener that your district uses and obtain specific training from your district or school.
- Work with the school's assessment team to create a school-wide plan to screen all students systematically. This includes identifying the cut-off scores used to place students into Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions (school, district, or national norms).
- 3. Provide school-wide professional development on how to screen students effectively universally. This should take place yearly for all staff. Screening takes a lot of time, and all staff should participate.
- 4. Before screening begins, schedule a data team meeting to review screening data and make intervention placements. Schedule the rest of the

data team meetings for the whole year.

- 5. Students should be universally screened on their grade level.
- 6. Students in an intervention group should be given a diagnostic assessment to determine specific skill deficits.
- 7. Create a goal, begin evidence-based intervention, and begin to progress monitor.

Progress Monitoring

To determine if the intervention is working correctly, students must be progress monitored to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. The data collected here will be used to make future decisions about a student's progress in MTSS. Teachers should pay close attention to how quickly students improve, make sure they give enough time within an intervention for the student to improve, and collect enough high-quality data to make decisions (Nelson et al., 2018; Van Norman & Christ, 2016)-a word of caution for those students in Tier 2 that move back to core Tier 1 instruction. After examining almost 7,000 elementary students, Nelson and colleagues (2018) found that many students who left Tier 2 struggled and fell off grade level once they stopped receiving that additional support. This means that schools may want to frequently monitor students who have exited intervention to catch those who have regressed in their skills.

should be Students progressed monitored frequently and on their instructional level (Lemons et al., 2014). There are a few different ways to determine the instructional level for a student. You want the student to correctly read 90-95% of the words at the appropriate grade level (Honig et al., 2018). You should drop down a grade level if they are not at that level. Another common method is to drop to a lower grade level probe if a student is reading below the

10th percentile. Always start with their grade level and continue to drop down until you reach their instructional level (either reading above the 10th percentile or reading with 90-95% accuracy). Within a MTSS framework, giving the student time to respond to the intensive intervention is essential. It is possible that students could have some gaps in their skills that an intervention could quickly close.

Another core part of progress monitoring is creating a goal for the student to reach. Setting a goal is a critical part of the MTSS process, as the goal will heavily influence whether a student is moved to a different tier or is eventually referred for special education eligibility (Clemens et al., 2018). You can set a specific weekly growth (e.g., 1-2 words read correctly per minute) or an upcoming benchmark score. Many of the commercial assessment programs will assist in setting goals. It is crucial to frequently progress monitor students who are receiving intervention because the school psychologists will use the data to help determine eligibility if the student is eventually referred for evaluation. You should be consistently plotting the progress monitoring data on the graph.

The latest research in the identification of those with dyslexia shows that we should not just look at one piece of data but multiple data points. By looking at different types of data (e.g., low reading inadequate achievement. response to intervention), this hybrid identification process fits perfectly within an MTSS system that many states have already implemented (Miciak & Fletcher, 2020). This model works best when schools have strong MTSS programs. The screening and progress monitoring data becomes critically important in determining if a student is at risk for dyslexia. The universal screener data will show if a student has low reading achievement compared to peers. That should not be the only factor in determining if a student has dyslexia. Students must be given a chance to have access to high-quality intervention. It is very possible that effective instruction can close some of the gaps. Another key component of dyslexia is a student's inadequate response to intervention. This is where tracking progress compared to the goal is key. It is important to have a strong, research-based intervention to give the students a chance to grow and meet their goals (See IES practice guide for an overview of strong foundational skills instruction, Foorman et al., 2016). According to Miciak and Fletcher (2020, p. 350), "achievement and instructional data generated within MTSS is dynamic, treatment-oriented. preventive, and less likely to result in diagnostic problems because of its recursive and sequential nature." Progress monitoring takes time, and quick decisions should not be made.

Summary

Screening and progress monitoring of students at risk for dyslexia can fit perfectly into an MTSS framework that Tennessee has already adopted. Screening for dyslexia is a complex task, but having an effective schoolwide universal screening and progress monitoring plan will help identify students who are showing characteristics of dyslexia. It's critically important school administrators develop a plan for school-wide screening, communicate that plan to all stakeholders, and provide yearly training to teachers on dyslexia screening and the MTSS process (Barnes & Peliter, 2022). This will assist in a more efficient screening process each year.

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Zachary Barnes is an Assistant Professor of Special Education at Austin Peay State University. Areas of research interest include reading development, executive function, and dyslexia policy.

The Interplay of Race, Ethnicity, and School Belonging: Insights for an Inclusive Educational Future

Lanise K. Stevenson Johns Hopkins University

This study used annual school climate survey data to examine factors related to middle and high school students' perceptions of school belonging. The data set included student perceptions of their sense of belonging before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, offering a valuable comparison. Results indicate significant variance in students' feelings of school belonging across racial/ethnic backgrounds and grade levels across different years. Of particular note, racially/ethnically marginalized students consistently reported a diminished sense of school belonging before and after the COVID-19 pandemic compared to their peers.

he well-established link between school belonging and students' academic success and well-being cannot be overstated (Allen & Kern, 2017; Benner et al., 2017), yet a gap in the literature persists regarding the role of racial/ethnic identity in shaping these perceptions (Allen & Kern, 2017). School belonging captures the extent to which students feel personally accepted and within their educational supported environment (Goodenow & Grady, 1993). While the late 1990s saw the emergence of topics in this area (García Coll et al., 1996), comprehensive exploration specifically targeting the influence of race/ethnicity on school belonging is an area of increased scholarly interest. This gap in the literature is particularly significant given the disparities in educational outcomes observed among traditionally marginalized students (McFarland et al., 2020) who identify as Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and American Indian (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954).

Regardless of their backgrounds, adolescents can flourish academically and emotionally within inclusive environments (Benner et al., 2017; Sari, 2012). However, internal, interpersonal, and institutional barriers may prevent racially/ethnically marginalized students from perceiving their educational settings as supportive (Mpofu et al., 2022; Walton & Brady, 2017). Factors such as stigmatization, stereotype threat, and academic fit significantly shape these perceptions (Walton & Brady, 2017). Addressing these disparities and enhancing the sense of belonging may contribute to academic success across all backgrounds (McFarland et al., 2019, 2020). Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and American Indian students are traditionally racially/ethnically marginalized (i.e., marginalized), and achievement their outcomes have consistently been poorer than those of Asian and White students. Academic success in a post-pandemic landscape requires an examination of myriad factors influencing students' sense of belonging. In particular, it is critical to investigate the influence of race and ethnicity on belonging experiences (Strompolis et al., 2019) as the opportunity gap has increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Margolius et al., 2020).

Literature Review

A strong sense of belonging during adolescence is vital for emotional and academic well-being, especially because adolescents often seek peer validation and acceptance (Allen et al., 2023). The influence of teaching practices, peer support, academic motivation, and grade level on school belonging is well documented in the scholarship (Allen et al., 2023; Byrd, 2016). However, little empirical research has examined the sense of belonging experienced by racially/ethnically marginalized students (Margolius et al., 2020; Walton & Brady, 2017).

The broader societal biases and within school discrimination mirrored further environments can alienate marginalized students (Howard, 2008). However, schools with visions and missions emphasizing equity and culturally responsive teaching practices can foster a more inclusive environment (Allen et al., 2023; Byrd, 2016). Decisions by the school board, the community's cultural and economic conditions, and partnerships with local businesses all influence students' sense of belonging (Furrer & Marchand, 2020). For example, inclusive extracurricular activities and professional development centered on cultural responsiveness can enhance student engagement and strengthen their connection with the school community (Berger, 2019). also play a role in shaping positive school experiences, particularly in supporting racially/ethnically marginalized students in developing a healthy racial identity, which is crucial for academic success and overall well-being. School culture can indirectly contribute to a sense of belonging by influencing students' academic motivation.

Although research on the relationship between academic motivation and school belonging varies in methodological approach, the results of these studies generally show a positive association (Benner et al., 2018). External factors, such as school culture and discriminatory policies, can lower academic motivation, affecting belonging perceptions (Dadvand & Cuervo, 2019; Gurrola et al., 2016; Yusuf et al., 2022). Additionally, studies on the influence of students' grade level on school belonging have yielded varied findings: some find no correlation between year level and school connection (Sari, 2012), while others suggest belonging perceptions may decline from primary to secondary school (Longaretti,

2020). Racial and ethnic identities can influence academic engagement and persistence (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005), highlighting the need to cultivate a sense of belonging in students, especially those from traditionally marginalized backgrounds. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and its subsequent shift to remote learning heightened concerns about students' sense of school belonging (Fisher et al., 2022; Margolius et al., 2020; Mpofu et al., 2022).

Context

The study was conducted in three secondary schools within a suburban district in the northeastern United States: Benjamin High School (BHS), Hudson Middle School (HMS), and Smith Middle School (SMS); all names are pseudonyms. Within this district, 44.5% of the residents identified as middleclass and White, yet the majority of students minorities identified racial and as economically disadvantaged. BHS served approximately 2,800 students, of which over 80% identified as racial minorities, with almost half being Black and one-quarter being Hispanic. Nearly 95% of the class of 2019 graduated within four years, and 63% of these students were pursuing postsecondary education. HMS served 695 students who were predominantly Black (36.8%) and Hispanic (46.1%), and half of the students were economically marginalizedapproximately one-fourth of the student body identified as disabled. SMS served 812 students, with 35.1% being Black, 31.5% being Hispanic, 44.5% of the students being economically marginalized, and 14.4% having disabilities.

Purpose

The study aimed to 1) understand how the issue of school belonging manifested in the context and 2) identify how race/ethnicity and grade level may have contributed to it. Understanding these relationships is crucial to creating and maintaining supportive educational environments. The research questions that guided this study were: "To what extent does student perception of belonging differ by school year, race/ethnicity, and grade level?" and "To what extent do perceptions of belonging differ between students who are considered traditionally marginalized racial/ethnic minority groups and their peers?"

Method

This study used annual school climate survey data to investigate associations among demographic factors and perceptions of school belonging within traditionally marginalized adolescents. The districtadministered survey assessed students' sense of school belonging using the 18-item Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) Scale (Goodenow, 1993). To determine if student belonging perceptions varied from before to after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the students rated their perceptions of school belonging during the current year. Next, students completed an adapted version of the PSSM Scale to reflect 'perceived belonging to a school in the previous year. All items began with one of the following sentence stems, "Last year..." or "In the past..." (e.g., "In the past, I felt like a real part of my school."). This validated tool $(\alpha = .77-.88)$, designed for middle and high school students, measures domains such as perceived inclusion using a 5-point Likert scale, where a higher score indicates a stronger sense of belonging.

Middle and high school advisory teachers received survey links for distribution from late November 2020 to January 2021. Given the hybrid learning program in place at the time of the survey, some students responded remotely while others responded during class. The de-identified data measured past and current year school belonging and were analyzed by school year, race/ethnicity, and grade using the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Descriptive analyses provided means and standard deviations, while inferential analyses, including one-way and three-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), explored significant mean differences.

Findings

Of the 929 respondents with completed surveys, 51.2% were female, and 46% were male, with the rest not disclosing their gender. Regarding racial/ethnic identity, 36.9% were Black or African American, 33.0% were Hispanic or Latino, 13.9% were Asian, 13.3% were White, and 2.9% were American Indian or Alaskan. Grade distribution was 15.2% in Grade 6, 11.1% in Grade 7, 24.3% in Grade 8, 12.9% in Grade 9, 14.8% in Grade 10, 14.7% in Grade 11, and 7.1% in Grade 12.

Analysis of the survey data indicated that students' perceptions of school belonging declined after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to a hybrid learning model (see Table 1). Before the pandemic, students felt an average sense of belonging of 3.50 (SD = .63), which decreased to 3.38 (SD = .63). This decrease was statistically significant (t(929) = 7.53, p = .00).

Table 1

		1101	lous	Cur	rent	
	n	М	SD	М	SD	р
Belonging	929	3.5	.63	3.4	.63	.00***

Descriptive and Inferential Statistics of Belonging by Year

Analysis of students' perceptions of school belonging highlighted notable differences by grade level. Descriptive statistics indicated that Grade 6 students consistently reported the highest levels of school belonging across both years (see Table 2). Their perceptions remained almost unchanged after the pandemic's onset. Conversely, Grade 11 students conveyed the lowest sense of belonging, with their perceptions decreasing after the pandemic's onset. Grades 9-11 students experienced the most pronounced declines in school belonging post-pandemic, whereas perceptions of those in Grades 6 and 7 largely remained static (see Figure 1). In summary, while Grades 6 and 7 students demonstrated relative resilience in their perceptions of belonging post-pandemic, Grades 9-11 students felt a heightened sense of alienation during this period.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Belonging by Grade	
Level	

Grade		Previous	Current	
	n	М	М	+/-
6	140	3.67	3.69	.02
7	102	3.44	3.44	.00
8	224	3.42	3.34	08
9	117	3.48	3.27	21
10	136	3.55	3.29	26
11	135	3.41	3.20	21
12	65	3.51	3.40	11

Note. The differences in means are shown as (+/-).

Figure 1

Changes in Belonging Perceptions by Grade Level as a Function of School Year



Table 3 provides descriptive statistics by race/ethnicity, and Figure 2 depicts the changes in mean belonging perceptions by race/ethnicity for the previous and current school year. Post-COVID-19, all student subgroups experienced a decline in belonging perceptions, with the most pronounced drops among White, Black/African American, and Asian students. Before the pandemic, Hispanic students reported the lowest school belonging perceptions (M = 3.42), but this shifted to Black/African American students post-pandemic (M = 3.32). However, Asian students consistently reported the highest school belonging perceptions both pre- and post-pandemic.

Table 3

Descriptive Statist	ics of Beiong	ging by
Race/Ethnicity		
Race/Ethnicity	Previous	Current

a.

Race/Ethnicity		Previous	Current		
	n	М	М	+/-	
American Indian or Alaskan	27	3.62	3.57	05	
Asian	128	3.71	3.59	12	

CD 1

Black or African- American	339	3.46	3.32	14
Hispanic or Latino	303	3.42	3.35	07
White	122	3.56	3.39	17

Note. The differences in means are shown as (+/-).

Figure 2

Belonging Perceptions by Race/Ethnicity as a Function of School Year



Since one of the primary aims of this study was to understand how race/ethnicity may have contributed to perceptions of school belonging among traditionally marginalized adolescents. the original racial/ethnic student subgroups were reorganized into two new groups for analysis, usually marginalized racial/ethnic and nonminoritized students. One-way ANOVA was performed to determine if there was a significant belonging difference in perceptions between traditionally marginalized racial/ethnic students and their peers (see Table 4). Results showed a statistically significant difference in perceived school belonging between the two subgroups (see Table 5).

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Belonging by Traditionally Marginalized Racial/Ethnic Group

Subgroup		Previous		Current		
	п	М	SD	М	SD	+/-
Marginalized	669	3.45	.62	3.3	.63	15
Non- marginalized	250	3.6	.60	3.5	.61	10

Note. The differences in means are shown as (+/-).

Table 5

One-Way ANOVA of Belonging by

		Sum Sq	df	Mean Sq	F	Pr(>F)
Previous year						
Between groups		8.84	4	2.21	5.83	.00
Within groups		346.50	914	.38		
	Total	355.34	918			
Current ye	ar					
Between groups		8.20	4	2.05	5.272	.00
Within groups		355.24	914	.39		
	Total	363.44	918			

Conclusions and Implications

This study presents evidence emphasizing the connections among school year, grade level, race/ethnicity, and students' perceptions of school belonging. The shift to a hybrid learning program, precipitated by the pandemic, led to a significant decline in belonging perceptions across all subgroups, which confirms the findings of Margolius et al. (2020). One possible explanation for the decline is that the shift from the traditional classroom setting to the hybrid program may limit students' opportunities to interact with their peers and teachers and receive support from them. As schools have resumed inperson learning, many educators and policymakers are focused on strategies to reengage and motivate students, especially those who have experienced gaps in their learning (Fisher et al., 2022).

Findings suggest distinct experiences based on grade level. While Grade 6 students largely maintained their perceptions postpandemic, Grades 9-11 students experienced substantial declines. The transitional phases from elementary to middle school and middle to high school present unique challenges likely compounded by the pandemic's disruptions (Neel & Fuligni, 2013; Tsegay et al., 2023). To address this, teachers can provide emotional support and promote peer interactions while schools embrace a culture respect. and of inclusion, diversity. implementing school-wide approaches to boost students' mental well-being (Allen & Kern. 2017: Allen et al., 2023).

The results indicated that racially/ethnically marginalized students reported a diminished sense of school belonging compared to their peers. Given that marginalized students face internal. interpersonal, and institutional barriers and heightened biases, their direct feedback is invaluable for shaping interventions and debunking misconceptions. Schools must address the systemic issues perpetuating a lower sense of belonging among racially/ethnically marginalized groups.

Findings indicated that traditionally marginalized groups generally perceived a lower sense of school belonging, and the pandemic may have exacerbated these

Considering the historical perceptions. context and past research, the distinction between marginalized and non-marginalized groups highlights a persistent discrepancy in school belonging perceptions. Furthermore, one-way ANOVA results confirmed these findings, showing a statistically significant difference in perceived school belonging race/ethnicity. Therefore, based on race/ethnicity is a determining factor in students' perceptions of belonging, with marginalized traditionally students consistently perceiving a lower sense of belonging before and during the pandemic.

The present study provides insights into the school belonging experiences of racially/ethnically marginalized students; however, a comprehensive examination of the phenomenon is still needed. First, future studies should ascertain why certain grade heightened levels experience effects. especially during a disruptive period. Secondly, qualitative examinations, such as interviews or focus groups, can offer a richer, in-depth understanding of students' feelings and experiences. Lastly, intervention research into the efficacy of specific interventions targeting school belonging perceptions, especially for racially/ethnically marginalized students, can contribute to the limited scholarship (Walton & Cohen, 2011).

summary. these findings In underscore the decline in school belonging perceptions, especially during the pandemic, with clear distinctions based on race/ethnicity and grade levels. Recognizing these disparities, there is a call to action for educators, policymakers, and researchers to address the underlying causes by employing research-informed strategies. This effort is pivotal to ensure that racially/ethnically marginalized students experience inclusive environments that foster their socioemotional well-being and academic success.

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Lanise Stevenson is an adjunct professor at Johns Hopkins University, specializing in Entrepreneurship in Education. She also works as an equity coach and researches students' belonging perceptions in secondary schools.