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

To Diversify the Principal Pipeline, Empower Those Within

Austin Peay State University
Austin Peay State University
Austin Peay State University
Austin Peay State University

School administrators are responsible for establishing the school mission and vision, ensuring school safety, collaborating with teachers and staff, and attaining optimal student achievement. As labor market data reveal high demand for school administrators, there continues to be a need for qualified school leaders from diverse backgrounds. This paper recommends several practices and policies to recruit and retain school administrators of color, including implementing assistant principal mentorship programs, grow your own leader initiatives, online K–12 educational leadership job-embedded programs, and taking an active, diverse teacher recruitment approach to diversify the pipeline.

t can be argued that effective school leadership is the most critical factor in the education of our children. Although school leaders are not involved in day-to-day teaching, they indirectly affect academic achievement students' bv facilitating instructional practices that will meet the needs of all students. In addition to supporting community and district goals, principals set the climate of their schools, influence teacher effectiveness and retention. ultimately drive overall student and development. High-performing school administrators recognize the qualities of effective classroom teachers. Through their tenure, they know how to train and retain the best teachers while dismissing ineffective ones (Branch et al., 2013).

School administrators are charged with the wide-ranging responsibilities of establishing the mission and vision of the school; ensuring school safety; engaging in continual and positive collaboration with fellow administrators, teachers, and staff; and, most importantly, attaining optimal student achievement. Branch et al. (2013) found that "effective principals raise the achievement of a typical student in their schools by between two and seven months of learning in a single school year; ineffective principals lower achievement by the same amount" (p. 63). Moreover, school leadership disruptions harm student achievement, especially for students of color or economically and socially marginalized students.

In order to sustain a healthy and diverse principal pipeline, it is important for each state to examine its strengths and weaknesses. A review of one state's trends in its labor market demand for school-based leaders reveals a stark need to empower new assistant principals, particularly those from historically underrepresented populations.

Labor Market Demand for Educational Leaders in the State of Tennessee

In Tennessee, educational administrative positions are projected to grow 6.3% between 2014 and 2024, with new and replacement positions leading to approximately 210 openings annually (see Table 1). This mirrors the national and regional demand for educational leaders. By volume, elementary and secondary school administrative positions represent the most significant annual job openings. Aggregating across all administrative settings, these occupations are forecast to employ almost 7,000 administrators in the state by 2024.

Table 1

Tennessee Estimations for Educational Administrative Positions in 2014 and 2024.

Occupation	2014 Estimation	2024 Estimation	Number Change	Percent Change	Average Annual Openings
Educational Administrators in Preschool/Childcare Centers	1,080	1,090	10	0.9%	30
Educational Administrators in Elementary/Secondary Schools	4,720	5,080	360	7.6%	160
Educational Administrators in Other Settings	740	780	40	5.4%	20
Subtotal in the Above Occupations	6,540	6,950	410	6.3%	210
Total in All Occupations	2,770,320	3,145,410	375,090	13.5%	102,070

Note. From "The state of educational leadership in the United States: Trends and implications for higher education and local school districts," by J. R. McConnell, 2020, *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 23(2), 1–10, p. 6 (https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2019.1708475).

Further examination of the labor market viability in educational leadership reveals that this growth in Tennessee is most greatly due to the demand for school assistant principals (see Table 2). The number of elementary and secondary classroom teachers in the state has shifted only slightly from 2014 to 2021. Although classroom teacher and school principal numbers have generally increased only incrementally during this timeframe, the number of assistant principals has increased most sharply.

Table 2

Tennessee Teacher and Administrator Compos	nd Annual Growth Rate (CAGR), 2014-2021.
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Occupation	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	CAGR
Elementary Classroom Teachers	45,223	45,030	45,567	45,609	39,302	39,252	39,563	42,082	-1.0%
Secondary Classroom Teachers	19,373	19,064	19,360	19,482	12,991	10,789	11,527	19,636	0.2%
Total Classroom Teachers	64,596	64,094	64,928	65,091	62,525	61,583	62,879	67,404	0.6%
Total School Principals	1,691	1,739	1,765	1,754	1,767	1,790	1,810	2,202	3.8%
Total School Assistant Principals	1,788	1,826	1,891	1,963	1,947	2,052	2,092	2,584	5.4%

Note. From the 2014–2021 "Annual Statistical Report," by Tennessee Department of Education, 2022, (https://www.tn.gov/education/data/department-reports.html).

By 2020, only 16% of Tennessee's teachers and 27% of administrators were educators of color (i.e., non-White), while 39% of their students were students of color, a disparity that reflects the national trend and one that has generally increased over time (see Table 3). For students of color, having educators who resemble them can alter their educational experience in terms of academic achievement. attendance. behavior, suspensions, persistence, and teachers' perceptions of them (Dee, 2004; Egalite & Kisida, 2018; Holt & Gershenson, 2017). Moreover, White students with more diverse educators seem to be better suited for life in a multicultural society (Bower-Phipps et al., 2013). White aspiring principals training in racially diverse cohorts felt better prepared to lead schools with diverse student populations (Rasmussen & Raskin, 2021).

Table 3

Racial/Ethnic Demographic	Position	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
American Indian or Alaska Native	Student	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5
	Teacher	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	NA
	Admin	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	NA
Asian	Student	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.6
	Teacher	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	NA
	Admin	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	NA
Black or African American	Student	24.1	24.0	24.0	23.9	24.3
	Teacher	11.0	11.3	12.0	11.5	NA
	Admin	17.9	19.4	20.1	20.5	NA
Hispanic or Latino	Student	9.7	10.4	10.9	11.8	12.3
-	Teacher	1.1	1.1	1.3	1.4	NA
	Admin	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.7	NA
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific	Student	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Islander	Teacher	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	NA
	Admin	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	NA
White	Student	63.4	62.7	62.1	61.2	60.1
	Teacher	83.1	82.0	82.5	83.9	NA
	Admin	75.7	74.0	75.1	72.9	NA

Tennessee Student, Teacher, and Administrator Racial and Ethnic Diversity, 2016-2021.

Note. From the 2016–2021 "Profile and Demographic Information" report and "Educator Race & Ethnicity Data," by Tennessee Department of Education, 2022, (https://www.tn.gov/education/data/data-downloads.html).

So, What Does This All Mean?

Maintaining consistent school leadership and recruiting and retaining school administrators of color are two aspects of the pipeline that can be strengthened to impact student achievement positively. We argue that, as labor market data reveal high demand for school administrators, there continues to be a need for qualified school leaders from diverse backgrounds. Policies and practices by state and local education agency leaders and principal preparation programs are needed to cultivate more diverse leaders for our schools.

Maintaining Consistent Leadership

Research studies highlight school leadership's critical role in overall school achievement. First-year principals comprise 40% of school leaders assigned to lead schools achieving at the lowest quartile (Branch et al., 2013). The lack of consistent and tenured school leadership hurts student achievement, with the "instability of leadership often cited as an impediment to improving high-poverty and low-performing schools" (Branch et al., 2013, p. 68). There several reasons why school are administrators vacate their posts, such as transitioning to another school, better opportunities at another school district, feeling hopeless about leading a high-poverty school or leaving a career in education for other options.

Babo and Postma (2017) conducted an analysis of students' English language arts and mathematics state-mandated scores on a representative random sampling of 172 out of approximately 700 elementary schools in New Jersey. The sample schools comprised low, middle, and high socioeconomic students. Findings suggested a significant association between principal years of service and overall student performance on state standardized tests (Babo & Postma, 2017; Branch et al., 2013). Research supports that experienced school leaders who remained at their post for at least six years positively impacted student achievement (Branch et al., 2013).

Recruiting and Retaining School Administrators of Color

Principals of color have an impact on overall school achievement and the hiring of teachers of color by five to seven percentage points (Bartanen & Grissom, 2019). A report on the Teacher and Administrator Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Tennessee (Tennessee Department of Education, 2018) affirms that, while 37% of students are students of color, only a meager 13% of Tennessee teachers are teachers of color. This trend is also reflected nationally, where students of color comprise 51% of the total student body compared to 18% of U.S. teachers being teachers of color.

In addition, principals of color tend to retain teachers of color and reduce the number of turnovers. Brezicha and Fuller (2019) found that "race matters in establishing trust between teachers and principals" (p. 25). Both school administrators and teachers of color are reported to have a positive influence on the academic achievement of students of color; there is "strong evidence that racial diversity in the principal's office matters for racial diversity of a school's teaching force" (Bartanen & Grissom, 2019, p. 41). On the other hand. White principals tend to hire fewer Black teachers in their tenure (Bartanen & Grissom, 2019), which is important because of the perceptions students of color have of teachers of color.

Students' Perceptions of Underrepresented Teachers

Cherng and Halpin (2016) addressed a gap in empirical research when they explored whether students' perceptions of teachers varied by the race/ethnicity of teachers. Based on an analysis of approximately 50,000 students and 1,680 teachers, they claimed that perceptions vary, and the preponderance of the evidence demonstrated that students had higher approval ratings of Latino and Black teachers compared to White teachers. The researchers demographic controlled for students' academic characteristics. teachers' characteristics, efficacy, and employment conditions. This finding corroborates Latino Black teachers' ability to build and relationships and relate to students of color. Furthermore, studies on teachers' expectancies have shown that underrepresented teachers tend to express more empathy and have more of a favorable perception of their students of color. Through effective and meaningful relationships teacher-student relationships, students of color can excel in a classroom environment

that is fair and equitable, where "exposure to a single Black teacher can reduce Black male students' high school dropout rates by a third" (Cherng & Halpin, 2016, p. 37).

Tenenbaum and Ruck (2007)conducted four quantitative meta-analyses on whether teachers' expectations, referrals, and positive and negative behaviors were similar between students of color and White students. According to their findings, they reported that three of the four meta-analyses demonstrated "small but significant effects suggesting that teachers held more positive expectations, made more positive referrals and fewer negative referrals, and provided more positive and neutral speech for European American children than for African American and Latino/a children" (p. 266). This discrepancy in how students of color are perceived and treated in the classroom may negatively affect whether or not they matriculate through high school completion. underrepresented Having school administrators and teachers can create positive experiences and benefits for students of color. Therefore, it will help to reduce the number of students of color being overidentified for special education and placed into alternative school settings (Tenenbaum & Ruck. 2007).

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Upon the review of current data and research, we propose policy and practice recommendations at both the secondary and secondary postsecondary levels. For education. we suggest creating or strengthening existing assistant principal mentorship programs, growing your own leaders, and targeting diverse teacher recruitment. We suggest an online K-12 educational leadership job-embedded program for postsecondary education. In addition, we believe it is critical to establish strong and continual partnerships between local educational agencies and higher education institutions with school leadership licensure programs.

Assistant Principal Mentorship Programs

existing assistant principal In mentorship programs, there should be an emphasis on providing assistant principals with relevant training and knowledge to perform their job functions to increase their retention rate. Due to the hectic schedule and demands of being an assistant principal and having several districts spanning a large geographical area, it is difficult to convene all assistant principals at a single location on any given day. Therefore, one option is to provide virtual leadership program in a synchronous, asynchronous, or hybrid format assistant principals give support, to professional development, and an opportunity to network with their peers.

Assistant principals can undergo ongoing professional development to refine existing cultural competency and acquire practical research-based strategies that are proven to transform schools to affect student achievement and equity positively. One tenet of the mentorship program is for assistant principals to focus more on becoming instructional leaders. Therefore, they can explore research-based strategies and have candid discussions with fellow aspiring assistant principals on how and what must be sought to improve student achievement for all students, specifically those student subgroups who historically underachieve.

Grow Your Own Leaders

School districts are in an ideal position to create a "grow your own" leaders program that targets potential teacher leaders who aspire to become future assistant principals. The program design should be structured to provide teacher leaders with the relevant job duties and responsibilities of a first-year assistant principal. There are several benefits to growing your own programs, such as the teacher leaders being already familiar with the culture of their school and district. Therefore, indoctrinating "outside" administrators into a brand new community, district, school, faculty, staff, and students can be overcome. Also, the familiarity of a teacher leader who is from the "inside" and is promoted to assistant principal can positively impact employee morale. A message resonates among the school district that teacher leaders are valued for their hard work and promoted eventually to administrative roles. Lastly, an advantage of implementing a grow your own leaders' program is the potential to reduce the cost of conducting external recruitment.

Active Diverse Teacher Recruitment

To increase the number of assistant principals of color, there should be a focus on recruiting actively teachers. diverse According to Lindsay et al. (2017), "it appears it's not as simple as people of color choosing not to become teachers" (para. 3). Although there is a disparity in the college enrollment of Hispanic and White students, graduation rates between the two are pretty comparable (Lindsay et al., 2017). To understand the dire need for diverse teacher recruitment is to realize that "in 2015, 4.4 percent of White adults were teachers, but only 1.8 percent of Black adults and 1.5 percent of Hispanic adults were in the profession" (Lindsay et al., 2017, para. 4). To overcome this obstacle, school districts in higher conjunction with education institutions could potentially develop "K-12 students becoming K-12 teachers" pipeline.

Online K–12 Educational Leadership Job-Embedded Program

In higher education, we suggest an online master's degree program that offers an asynchronous, job-embedded focus and multicultural courses. Thus preparing teacher

leaders to become effective assistant principals from their first day at their new post, principal preparation programs should be mindful of their course offerings. There should be some theories taught throughout each course, but teacher leaders should be able to find the connection between what they are required to learn in each course and how it will become relevant when they are promoted to administration. The courses should provide teacher leaders with jobembedded assignments pertinent to their current school setting. In addition, the courses should also focus on preparing teacher leaders to be equipped with the knowledge to lead schools in diverse communities with diverse students. Increasing number the of school administrators of color leading schools throughout the United States may be challenging. Therefore, principal preparation programs can provide students with courses dedicated to multicultural issues, implicit bias, and cultural competency (Castro et al., 2018).

Collaboration between Higher Education and Local Education Agencies

Professors of principal preparation provide professional programs can development to K-12 school leaders in identifying and recruiting teacher leaders, especially those of color, who can potentially become future administrators (Castro et al., 2018). School leaders can delegate leadership tasks and responsibilities to teacher leaders to gain insight into what it will take to become a school leader. For example, in the absence of an assistant principal, a teacher leader can assume the assistant principal's role for a day to learn the intricacies of school administration. Professors of principal preparation programs can facilitate an "open house" for teacher leaders aspiring to become assistant principals with opportunities to learn about the entrance requirements into a

school leadership program, what to expect, and meet the professors. It would be beneficial to establish positive rapport between universities and local school districts, which would, hopefully, result in teacher leaders taking the next step into a K– 12 educational administration licensure program.

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James M. Thompson I, Associate Dean and Assistant Professor, <u>thompsonjm@apsu.edu</u>, Department of Educational Specialties, Austin Peay State University. Areas of research interest include academic/discipline disparities, classroom management, culturally relevant pedagogy and cultural competence, and school and community.

Sherri K. Prosser, Assistant Professor and Doctoral Coordinator, prossers@apsu.edu, Department of Educational Specialties, Austin Peay State University. Areas of research interest include qualitative and mixed methods, online teaching and learning, leadership, and equity.

John R. McConnell III, Professor and Chair, <u>mcconnellj@apsu.edu</u>, Department of Educational Specialties, Austin Peay State University. Areas of research interest include quantitative methods, program evaluation and assessment, teacher effectiveness and retention, and STEM.

Hanrui He, Assistant Professor, <u>heh@apsu.edu</u>, Department of Educational Specialties, Austin Peay State University. Areas of research interest include student retention, educational technology, instructional strategies, diversity, and institutional or secondary data.

Social Studies Teacher Preparation Programs in Tennessee Public Universities

Jessica Rozell	Austin Peay State University
Zach Inman	Vanderbilt University
Elizabeth Harrison	Austin Peay State University
Andrea Lee	Austin Peay State University

This article examines social studies teacher preparation programs in Tennessee public universities. Background information on social studies teacher preparation programs is provided, followed by a discussion of social studies teacher preparation, preservice social studies teacher training, and social studies content classes. The article then addresses social studies content education in Tennessee public universities and explores differences in the preservice teacher preparation programs for social studies teachers. Connections to pertinent literature on social studies education are provided. Finally, practical and administrative implications are discussed.

Keywords: Preservice teachers, social studies teacher preparation programs, Tennessee universities, social studies content

graduation fter from university. many social studies teachers do not feel adequately prepared to teach social studies in the classroom (De Loreta et al., 2019). Fitchett et al. (2017) report that social studies preservice teacher training has become ineffective, and teachers are not fully prepared to teach social studies content in the classroom. Preservice teacher programs have prepared many teachers to teach in the classroom but not necessarily effectively teach content (Crowe et al., 2017). Some teacher preparation programs are better equipped to train social studies teachers than others, and some teachers are better prepared than others even within the same training programs (Vagi et al., 2019).

Preservice training impacts social studies teachers' instructional practices and strategies (Wiens et al., 2022). Current preservice teacher training is highly theoretical and lacks adequate preparation for social studies teachers in the classroom (Bittman et al., 2018). When teachers lack the knowledge and skills to teach social studies effectively, students may have difficulties grasping course content (Kilicoglu, 2021). In addition, teachers who lack adequate training may struggle to fully engage students in the classroom, which impacts students' academic development (Recepoğlu & İbret, 2021).

The field of social studies includes a wide arrav of subjects. such as "anthropology, communication sciences, economy, education, geography, history, linguistics, political sciences, psychology, sociology, and law" (Güleç, 2020, p. 48). These subjects expose students to issues impacting local communities, society, and the world. Teaching social studies content can be challenging and requires quality preparation (Nganga et al., 2019). Social studies classes are meant to foster problemsolving skills and democratic citizenship skills, which aim to prepare students for daily life (Güleç, 2020). Teachers need to be able to effectively teach these skills to students (Güleç, 2020) and engage students in the course content (Bittman et al., 2018). Preservice teacher preparation programs need to ensure that teachers receive quality training to be effective in the classroom and that they are receiving effective instruction on how to teach social studies content. This article examines preservice social studies education in Tennessee public universities in light of the literature highlighting the need for quality social studies content preparation in preservice teaching programs.

Literature Review

Preservice Training

Preservice teacher training can impact teachers' ability to teach students in the classroom in a positive way. De Loreto et al. (2019) researched social studies education because they aimed to understand the challenges and problems in their preparations, training, and coursework. They interviewed new social studies teachers to learn the challenges of being a new teacher. The five categories identified by De Loreto et al. (2019) include teachers' burden, lack of pedagogical content knowledge. shortchanged students. needs-strategiescompetencies alignment, and teachers as catalysts for change. De Loreto et al. state that social studies preservice training does not adequately prepare new teachers for instruction in the classroom. In addition, new social studies teachers need training, instructional materials, and support to prepare them for social studies teaching (De Loreto et al., 2019). In sum, new social studies teachers do not receive adequate training to prepare them for teaching content effectively in the classroom.

Wiens et al. (2022) examined social studies teachers' practices and preservice training through the Teacher and Learning Instruction Survey given to 240 secondary social studies teachers throughout the United States. The results indicated that teachers are adequately comfortable with content knowledge and pedagogy because preservice training includes cognitive instructional practices, but teachers feel less prepared to work with diverse learners of cultural and linguistic backgrounds and need more multicultural instructional training (Wiens et al., 2022). Consequently, the results concluded that teacher preparation programs shape social studies teachers' instruction practices well into their careers (Wiens et al., 2022). Thus, Wiens et al. reiterate that preservice training needs to better train social studies teachers for high-quality instruction.

Varying Training Programs

There are varying levels of training programs and support available in teacher preparation programs throughout the United States. Bittman et al. (2017) studied social studies teacher preparation programs across the country to address the concerns about the programs' quality. Bittman et al. (2017) explored the training provided related to content knowledge and pedagogical experiences by examining the catalog of coursework available. The findings show that training programs have a wide variety of requirements for social studies teacher preparation programs (Bittman et al., 2017). The study suggests that social studies education programs are not equitable and that different programs prepare social studies teachers differently (Bittman et al., 2017). Having some degree of cohesion in terms of course preparation and requirements could be beneficial (Bittman et al., 2017).

Vagi et al. (2019) studied the quality of preservice teacher training and its impact on teacher performance. They studied teaching quality during student residency, also known as student teaching. The participants completed two full semesters of student teaching for 1,283 preservice teachers from a variety of degree programs, with the majority of the teachers partnered with Title 1 schools. Results demonstrated that student teachers improve at significantly different rates, and these differences are related to their background characteristics, which include age, race, and college GPA. The first analysis suggests that preservice teachers with lower initial scores experience greater gains than those with higherperforming peers (Vagi et al., 2019). The second analysis grouped preservice teachers into two groups by college GPA and ethnic composition. Vagi et al.'s (2019) analysis suggests racially underrepresented teachers were less likely to improve than their white peers. This study indicates that social studies preservice training have better prepared some teachers than others for the classroom (Vagi et al., 2019). Therefore, social studies preservice programs need more consistency to train teachers more effectively.

Social Studies Content

Nganga et al. (2019) examined social studies teachers' preparedness to teach controversial issues. This study explored the perspectives of preservice social studies teachers and asked questions concerning the level of preparedness participants had. Nganga et al. found cultural diversity, immigration, and social justice as the topics participants deemed most significant. They also found that the participants were hesitant to teach these issues even though they believed educators were responsible for them. Nganga et al. concluded a few changes are needed in preservice teaching training to prepare them for teaching these challenging social studies topics. Engaging preservice teachers in discussions and debates is critical to foster diverse perspectives and encouraging curriculum and assignments that improve critical thinking skills and provide opportunities to reflect on issues in the classroom (Nganga et al., 2019). Preservice training for social studies teachers has not sufficiently prepared them for deep engagement with social studies content.

Research highlights the lack of effective social studies content integration in the classroom. Crowe et al. (2017) studied preservice social studies teachers' visions of themselves prior to student teaching and conducted a portfolio conference where students reflected on their learning during their courses and field placement. The portfolio conference focused on their development as effective social studies teachers (Crowe et al., 2017). Portfolios and conference transcripts were examined (Crowe et al., 2017). Teachers demonstrated examples of effective general teaching but lacked social studies content integration in the courses (Crowe et al., 2017). Additionally, there are concerns that social studies teachers are not creating classrooms focused on the common good, national and global societies, and deepening democracy (Crowe et al., 2017).

Social Studies Education Preparation in Tennessee Public Universities

To understand the social studies education programs, data was collected from public universities from across the state of Tennessee on undergraduate social studies/science education programs. Data from 10 schools were collected because they offer an undergraduate social studies education degree or minor. The following universities were used to collect data: the University Tennessee of Knoxville, Tennessee Tech University, the University of Memphis, Middle Tennessee State University, University of Tennessee Chattanooga, the University of Tennessee Martin, Austin Peay State University, East Tennessee State University, Tennessee State University, and the University of Tennessee Southern. The collected data focused on social studies-specific education courses, classes, and student-teaching requirements. Of these public colleges, all had a social studies education path, but not all provided social studies education courses to prepare social studies teachers specifically. Most social studies education programs included at least one course that was specific to teaching social studies content, but not all. Table 1 displays data about undergraduate social studies education programs at Tennessee public universities. It provides the number of social studies education courses, educationspecific courses, and student-teaching required courses. Depending on the university, they had middle school-specific social studies concentrations and secondary social studies concentrations.

Table 1

Undergraduate Social Studies Education Programs at Tennessee Public Universities

University	Social Studies Education Courses	Education-Specific Courses	Student Teaching Requirements	Total Courses
Austin Peay State University	3	30	10	43
East Tennessee State University	6	27	10	43
Middle Tennessee State University	3	31	12	36
Tennessee State University	3	12	18	33
Tennessee Technological University	3	15	15	33
University of Memphis	0	18	6	24
University of Tennessee – Chattanooga	3	21	12	36
University of Tennessee – Knoxville	3	19	3	25
University of Tennessee - Martin	0	27	9	36
University of Tennessee - Southern	0	25	11	36

All universities require teachers to take education-specific and history-content courses, but not all the necessary courses center explicitly on social studies education. The requirements varied between each university ranging from three to zero social studies education courses available. Table 2 provides the specific undergraduate social studies education courses taught at Tennessee public universities. Overall, the results of this survey demonstrate the differences between Tennessee public universities' ability to prepare preservice social studies educators to teach social studies in the classroom.

Table 2

Undergraduate Social Studies Education C	<i>Courses at Tennessee Public Universities</i>
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University	Social Studies Education Courses	Total Number of Courses
Austin Peay State University	EDUC 4041 Middle School Social Studies Methods HIST 4410 Teaching History in Middle School HIST 4950 Teaching Social Studies Secondary School	3
East Tennessee State University	HIST 4417 Residency I: Methods of Teaching History	1
Middle Tennessee State University	HIST 3011 Teaching Historical Thinking ELED 6530 Teaching Social Studies	2
Tennessee State University	HIST 3710 Teaching of History and	1
Tennessee Tech University	the Social Sciences SEED 4124 (5124) Materials and Methods of Teaching Social Studies	1
University of Memphis	N/A	0
University of Tennessee Chattanooga	EDUC 4520 Teaching Strategies and Materials in Secondary and Middle Grades Social Science	1
University of Tennessee Knoxville	SSCE 454 Teaching Strategies and Issues in Secondary Social Studies Education	1
University of Tennessee Martin	N/A	0
University of Tennessee- Southern	N/A	0

Undergraduate Social Studies Education Programs

This article examined the social studies course requirements for public universities in Tennessee. The number of required credit hours for social studiesspecific courses, education-related courses, and student-teaching requirements varies depending on the school. Of the 10 universities, two did not require a single social studies-specific course but merely social studies and education content classes. On average, universities require 2.4 credit hours of social studies content courses -6.95% of the total courses required (34.5 credit hours). To further understand the distribution of the social studies requirements, z-scores were calculated for the social studies course requirements for all universities. Outliers were identified as those at least 2 standard deviations from the mean social studies course requirement, $\mu = 2.4$ credit hours. σ 1.8 credit hours. One outlier was identified concerning social studies course requirements, East Tennessee State University, x = 6 credit hours, z = 2.00. All other universities were within two standard deviations of the mean social studies course requirements. These results suggest that the East Tennessee State University program requires more social studies courses than other Tennessee universities. Furthermore, an analysis of the proportion of social studies course requirements to total course requirements was conducted. All universities were within two standard deviations of the mean proportion, $\mu = 0.0678$, $\sigma = 0.0482$; however, it is important to note East Tennessee State University, z = 1.489, University of Memphis, z = -1.407, University of Tennessee Martin, z = -1.4067, and University of Tennessee Southern, z = -1.407, were furthest from the mean. Based on these results, East Tennessee State University provides somewhat more social studies courses, and the University of Memphis, the University of Tennessee Martin, and the University of Tennessee Southern require fewer social studies courses than average.

Conclusion

Social studies teachers must have content and pedagogy preparation to teach students effectively. article This variety the wide demonstrates of requirements for social studies education programs in the state of Tennessee. This article only examined courses in public universities in Tennessee. Further research should be conducted to see discrepancies between public universities as well as private institutions. In addition, it would be valuable to thoroughly examine the curriculum and course syllabi used in social studies content courses. Future research could also focus on the preservice social studies teacher preparation of preservice, novice, and veteran teachers. In addition, perception data can be collected to explore how preservice, novice and veteran teachers feel about social studies content education in teacher preparation programs by examining their own experiences or the curriculum and course syllabi of public universities in Tennessee.

It is critical that preservice teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively teach social studies content. Social studies is an important subject that helps prepare students to apply what they have learned as they become responsible citizens (Bayir, 2016; De Loreto et al., 2019). It also helps them to broaden their perspectives, learn about other cultures and the world around them, and become more informed on local, national, and international issues (Crisolo et al., 2017). History content and general pedagogical classes may not be sufficient to train preservice educators to incorporate the skills students need in social studies classes.

Finally, it may be beneficial for social studies teacher preparation programs at

public universities in Tennessee to examine social studies content courses at other universities in the United States to ensure that teachers are better prepared for the social studies classroom and provide courses rich in social studies pedagogy. In universities

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Crowe, A. R., Mooney, E., & Hawley, T. S. (2018). Preservice teachers' visions of themselves: Powerful teachers or powerful social studies teachers? *Social Studies Research and Practice*, *13*(1), 113–126. where content classes are lacking, instructors could consider implementing more assignments and activities that center on students' specific teaching subjects, which include social studies and other content subjects.

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Jessica Rozell is a doctoral student at Austin Peay State University and is a public school teacher in Tennessee. Her research interests include student disengagement, social studies curriculum, and project-based learning.

Zach Inman is an academic partnering consultant within the Office of Data and Strategic Analytics at Vanderbilt University. His research interests include higher education evaluation and assessment; applied multivariate analyses in the social, natural, and medical sciences; traumainformed research methodologies; and college student retention and persistence. **Elizabeth Harrison** is a doctoral student at Austin Peay State University and is employed as the international student services coordinator. Her research interests include TESOL program evaluation, immigrant students, and study abroad program evaluations.

Andrea Lee is an assistant professor of Educational Specialties at Austin Peay State University. Her research interests center on international and refugee education, educational leadership, and English language education.

The Integration of Social Studies and Science: The Use of Gardner's Multiple Intelligences to Differentiate Interdisciplinary Instruction

Donna Short Austin Peay State University

The purpose of this article is to encourage curriculum, instruction, and assessment (CIA) leaders to support their teachers' implementation of research-based approaches for integrating core subjects such as social studies and science in the classroom. Teachers can integrate curriculum in the classroom by including appropriate grade-level skills such as writing, reading, math, and technology and by using Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1993) to create a rich more indepth lesson. The idea behind integrating curriculum is to provide the real-world connections required by state standards to enrich a student's learning. Unfortunately, due to state education mandates, districts require academic leaders to have a rigid curriculum that creates time constraints for social studies and science instruction. In this article, integrated lesson examples help leaders better understand and embrace a constructivist approach to authentic, integrated instruction.

his article addresses the limited approach education integrating has taken to classroom instruction. A disconnect exists among core school subjects that overload students' ability to process so much information. States and school districts mandate an inflexible. teacher-centered curriculum to enhance short-term memory gains in anticipation of improved assessment results. We have limited our students' education to what psychologist Spearman (1904) suggested was only one intelligence measured by a single general factor responsible for achievement across all cognitive areas. The issue is that "51% to 75% of academic achievement cannot be accounted for by a g-factor alone" (Cherry, 2021, p. 3). With this stated, the narrowed approach of linguistics style classroom instruction. unfortunately, compartmentalizes students to one particular way of learning, with corresponding outcomes. The significance of integrating referencing multiple curriculum by intelligences provides students with various engaging, inquiry-based ways to learn.

Howard Gardner's (1983) intent for the book Frames of Mind: Theory of Multiple Intelligences was to identify individuals as having more than one *general* intelligence.

He did not promote the idea that individuals are limited to only one type of intelligence, as is sometimes purported. In fact, Gardner (1983) proposed, "A property of all human beings is that all of us possess these eight to nine intelligences" (p. xv). Gardner stated that the Theory of Multiple Intelligences was solely from the approach of a psychologist and not an educator (Gardner, 1983). To his surprise, schools began revising their curriculum based on multiple intelligences. The concern with schools employing Gardner's Multiple Intelligences in the classroom is that the intelligences equate to learning styles reducing the intelligences back to a single preferred intelligence like Spearman's general intelligence. The takeaway is that Gardner recommended that the multiple intelligence theory is beneficial for curriculum development, planning instruction, selection of course activities, and related assessment strategies, but he did not suggest labeling students as learning in one singular way.

The Neglected Subjects: Integrating Science and Social Studies

During the George W. Bush administration (2001-2009), every state was held accountable by national, standardized testing

for Grades 3–8 reading and math. The lack of attention science and social studies received under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2002 continues to influence pre-service teacher training courses and has a rippled impact on K–12 classroom instruction. The NCLB standardized testing continues to dictate how school districts dedicate less time and resources for these subjects starting as early as kindergarten (Figure 1). Because of NCLB, the traditional pattern of time allocation across subjects in elementary schools changed markedly. Researchers found that a substantial 47% increase in language arts and a 37% increase in math decreased the time allotted to other subjects, including science, social studies, art, music, physical education, and recess (McMurrer, 2007). A school district's efforts to focus on reading and math standardized testing has negatively destabilized teachers' autonomy to make curriculum and instruction decisions (Wills & Sandholtz, 2009). The consequence is the ongoing decline of science and social studies instruction in the classroom and a negative impact on reading comprehension and vocabulary results (Dougherty & Moore, 2019).

Figure 1

Average Hours per Week Teaching Science and Social Studies in K-3



The decreased time and resources allocated for science and social studies have resulted in necessary reforms such as Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies (NCSS) for gaining steps toward a well-rounded classroom curriculum. NGSS is three-dimensional framework of а performance expectations that focuses on disciplinary core ideas, crosscutting concepts, and science and engineering practices. Incorporating science, technology, engineering, and technology (STEM) in its fundamental practices, NGSS is a strongly interwoven approach that facilitates an inphenomenon-based learning depth. foundation for a science curriculum. The NCSS is a connecting framework of inquiry, ideas, and learners in an inquiry-based approach. Michael Yell, NCSS President (2008-2009), stated, "the narrowing [of the curriculum] will weigh heavily upon the students of today, as it has the effect of denying them a vital foundation in the social studies" (Yell, 2011, p. 128). The reality is that according to Au (2016), a qualitative meta-analysis; indicated more than 80 percent of studies in the review found changes in curriculum content and increases in teacher-centered instruction due to highstakes testing. Yell (2011) advocates that changes are necessary to broaden the school curriculum to include long-term multidisciplinary projects bridging content areas such as science and social studies. A benefit of interdisciplinary educational opportunities is the construction of a stronger learner-centered approach that emphasizes higher-order thinking, problemsolving, critical thinking, and collaboration skills.

An Integrated Lesson Using Gardner's Multiple Intelligences: A Rich History Supported by Science

Studies suggest that enriching literacy improve performances when activities measuring content knowledge and reading ability in the context of middle and high school social studies and science classes (Swanson et al., 2015; Vaughn et al., 2013; Wanzek et al., 2015). These studies emphasized text reading, connecting textbased learning to prior learning, and applying the knowledge gained from texts to problemsolving activities as beneficial to students' learning. Shanahan and Shanahan (2008) explain literacy progression as involving three different levels, basic, intermediate, and disciplinary literacy (Figure 2).

According to Shanahan and Shanahan (2008), basic literacy skills involve decoding and knowledge of high-frequency words, and intermediate literacy addresses comprehension strategies, common word meanings, and basic fluency. According to the literacy pyramid, disciplinary literacy focuses on skills specialized in history, mathematics, literature, or other subject matter (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). The disciplinary literacy level is a good starting point for CIA leaders to understand the benefits of integrating science and social studies curricula.

Figure 2

The Increasing Specialization of Literacy Development



(Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008)

In-service Teacher's Experience with Integrating Curriculum

This paper includes a personal reflection on nearly two decades of teaching integrated science and social studies in an 8th-grade middle school physical science course. I learned the specific standards my colleagues addressed consistently throughout their instruction in different subject areas during the school year. Through collective discourse, I discovered ways the physical science curriculum could support math, English language arts (ELA), reading, and social studies.

Although integrated lessons required a considerable time for preparation, once in place, the students could select various engaging activity options provided in an illustrated diagram on the dry-erase board. An example of a physical science lesson in which middle school students would participate was Bernoulli's Principle, the physics of flight. In a traditional classroom, students would learn the concepts and terms from a textbook with perhaps, one hands-on science activity. Fortunately, after reading a National Science Teaching Association (NSTA) article, "Escape from Colditz Castle" (Lancor & Lancor, 2017), about Nazi prisoners who secretly built a glider, my physical science lesson started to acquire a different meaning and purpose.

Based on the instruction in the ELA curriculum, I could incorporate what students were learning in a holocaust unit with my physical science lesson on Bernoulli's Principle. Instructing students about Bernoulli's Principle and the "Escape from Colditz Castle" would support not only students' learning in the ELA unit but could further include social studies and content literacy. Figure 3 uses the multiple intelligences, as well as Shanahan's disciplinary literacy, to explain a two-week integrated science, social studies, and disciplinary literacy unit centered on Bernoulli's Principle.

Figure 3

Bernoulli's Principle Interdisciplinary

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Station #1. (16 pts) Naturalist: (2-day, partner assignment) The Bernoulli Principle-How Birds Use Air Pressure to Fly article. 1. Read article 2. Complete hands-on activity 3. Respond to questions.	 Station #2. (16 pts.) Spatial: (1 day, individual assignment) Principles of Bird Flight Watch the video In science journal record observations of different birds' wings, beaks, body shapes, recognize flight patterns Explain Bernoulli's Principle by illustrating and labeling two birds' 	Station #3. (16 pts.) Linguistics: (1 day, individual assignment) Daniel Bernoulli's Biography article 1. Read article 2. Create a timeline of Bernoulli's life as a mathematician & scientist
*disciplinary literacy skills	 4. Compare & contrast the two birds' wings 	*disciplinary literacy skills
Station #4. (20 pts)	Station #5. (16 pts)	Station #6. (20 pts)
Logical/Mathematical: (2-day, partner	Linguistics/Interpersonal (1 day,	Logical/Mathematical &
assignment)	individual assignment)	Bodily/Kinesthetic (2-day, partner
Study the provided pictures of gliders to help you	Escape from Colditz Castle article	assignment)
design your own glider.	1. Read page 1 only	1. Assemble glider using provided
1. Create a blueprint of a glider-scale model.	2. Write a one-page story from the	materials.
2. Use metric measurement	perspective of a Nazi Prisoner (use scientific terms in your story)	2. Determine what data you will collect about your glider (distance traveled, weight of glider
	*disciplinary literacy skills	 Write a hypothesis, test, conclusion Collect and graph data.
Station #7. (16 pts)	Station #8. (16 pts.)	Station #9. (16 pts)
Spatial: (1 day, individual assignment)	Bodily/Kinesthetic (1 day, partner or	Complete Interactive Simulator on
1. Create a mini-poster about Bernoulli's	individual)	Bernoulli's Principle.
Principle and Flight	1. Conduct the hands-on science activity	1. Write two factual questions
2. Use checklist rubric	-A Change in the Winds-Bernoulli's Principle.	 Write two application questions Write two analysis questions

*Sources for specific activities in Appendix 1

Immersed in the multidisciplinary exploration, students experienced how core subjects interrelate. They also learned the skills for establishing short-term daily goals and time management to complete their choice of six out of nine stations during a 10day science unit. Additionally, the integrated unit supported standards that addressed historical timelines, science (physical, biology, and science process skills), literacy, writing, math (data collection, graphing, and metric measurement), and graphic arts. The impetus for connecting diverse topics to Bernoulli's Principle was not about checking off the maximum number of standards available in one unit. It was about the "ability for students to approach learning holistically, without the restrictions often imposed by subject boundaries" (Katz & Chard, 1989, p. 553).

Integrated Curriculum: Modeling Instruction Helps Understand Learning

After years of teaching experience, I observed the benefits of an integrated curriculum in the middle school classroom. It was a priority to incorporate the integrated curriculum strategy in a graduate-level course for pre-service teachers. Reluctantly, pre-service teachers were concerned about taking this approach due to administrators' requirements. The Jack Hunt STEM Center co-directors modeled for pre-service students an integrated lesson, Science and World War Involving Teacher I: Candidates in Integrated Learning (Short & Short, 2021).

We invited a local fifth-grade teacher and students to visit our center and participate in the science and WWI three-day integrated lesson to give our pre-service teachers a better understanding that "teachers who implement integrated curriculum provide students with real-world application of their education when they allow students to participate in meaningful learning experiences..." (Vanni, 2021, p. 5).

For school leaders, an important justification to consider in integrating science and social studies with other core subjects is that research suggests students can actually perform better on standardized tests and exams compared to their equals in an instructor-centered approach (Shriner et al., 2010; Campbell & Henning, 2010; Hinde, Osborn, & Dorn, 2007). In addition, integrated lessons can give students learning advantages traditional instructor-centered approaches do not provide. CIA leaders have an abundance of academic reasons to consider integrating course instruction, but one of the most notable reasons is to restore professional autonomy for teachers to make instructional decisions when integrating course instruction in the classroom. The opportunity for teachers to select informed instructional strategies that support an integrated curriculum can be instrumental in expanding their professional development (Barrett & Breyer, 2014).

A CIA leader can energize a positive learning environment that offers a less stressful, hurried pace of cramming shortterm retention of information that may encourage anxious, struggling students to gain confidence and become lifelong learners. Instead of limiting our students to only one way of learning and thinking, we need educational leaders who view instruction as a connection between all courses utilizing real-life skills. CIA leaders and teachers cannot continue down a path of "long-held beliefs and attitudes about

education, including traditional curricular design, economics, and standardized testing" as an excuse not to integrate curriculum (Mohr & Welker, 2017, p. 3).

Conclusion

The use of Gardner's Multiple Intelligences and Shanahan's literacy pyramid are useful tools that CIA leaders can model for teachers when integrating subjects like science and social studies into the curriculum. Effective strategies provide teachers with the skills to deliberate on correlations between science, social studies, and literacy. The resulting impact is that subjects such as math and reading can take on new meaning for students when supported by the subjects of science and social studies, and vice-versa. Students can make improved reallife applications of what they learn in these integrated subjects with their personal life experiences. The ability for students to make informed connection between an understanding complex issues (i.e., the math and science of a pandemic or discerning a social media posting affecting legal rights as a United States citizen) is adequate reason for consider integrating CIA leaders to rather perpetuating curriculum siloed, disordered subjects for our students.

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Appendix 1

Station 1: The Bernoulli Principle- How birds use air pressure to fly. https://www.moorheadschools.org/Documen ts/download/?ID=14755#:~:text=Bird%20w ings%20are%20specially%20designed,the% 20bird%20up%20into%20flight.

Station 2: Principles of bird flight video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUpe1 H--Pa0

Station 3: Daniel Bernoulli's biography article. https://mathshistory.standrews.ac.uk/Biographies/Bernoulli_Danie l/

Station 5: Escape from Colditz castle article: https://mathshistory.standrews.ac.uk/Biographies/Bernoulli_Danie l/

Station 8: A change in the winds-Bernoulli's Principle activity. https://mathshistory.standrews.ac.uk/Biographies/Bernoulli_Danie 1/

Donna Short is an assistant professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning at Austin Peay State University. Areas of research include middle school pedagogy, STEM education, and integrated curriculum.

Connecting, Correcting, Contributing: Supporting Special Education Teacher Candidates Through Field Placements and edTPA

Allison N. OliverAustin Peay State UniversityChristine D. LewisEast Tennessee State University

Special education teacher candidates' sense of preparedness is crucial to their overall success in completing their programs and effectiveness in entering the profession. Special education teacher shortages are consistently increasing in school systems across America. To attempt to close the teacher shortage gap and equip teacher candidates to confidently enter the profession, educator preparation programs must support teacher candidates beyond content knowledge and pedagogical practices. It is more crucial now than ever for teacher education programs to connect, correct, and contribute to teacher candidates through field placements and understanding the edTPA process.

S pecial education teacher candidates enrolled in educator preparation programs continue to decline, threatening the quality of education that students with disabilities receive. In the United States, 49 states report shortages of special educators (National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services, 2016), and as a result, schools across the nation are starved for teachers that are equipped to handle the diverse needs of students with disabilities. To gatekeep the profession, educator preparation programs must strive to support these teacher candidates and build their confidence in progressing through the program. Special education teacher candidates in educator preparation programs are challenged to employ evidence-based instructional and behavioral strategies throughout their field placements and ultimately through successfully passing of the edTPA (Cook et al., 2008; Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation [CAEP], 2015). Without continued reassurance from faculty and staff in the educator preparation programs, these teacher candidates often struggle to confidently meet program and certification expectations. Senior students enrolled in educator preparation programs are required to participate in two semesters of

field placements, and in 20 states, the submission of the edTPA for teacher licensure. Field placements are often divided into a semester of practicum (observations) and a semester of student teaching during the last year of coursework. During field placement. special education teacher candidates are provided an opportunity to learn about evidence-based practices in special education, gain first-hand experiences with students served under an Individualized Program (IEP), Education experience different types and levels of service delivery across the continuum, and reflect on how, when, and why specific evidence-based practices are implemented in public school settings. From those experiences, said teacher candidates are to take their experiences and knowledge and develop instructional content to submit as a part of the edTPA.

The edTPA is a performance-based assessment of teacher candidates created by the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity (SCALE) and nationally scored by Pearson Education. It is also promoted by the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Educators (AACTE) as a "standards-based assessment." Currently, the edTPA is used as a requirement for program accreditation or teacher candidate certification or program completion in 20 states. According to the most recent data, 74% of teacher candidates enrolled in traditional educator preparation programs pass the edTPA the first time. There is no specific data on the national success rate of special education teacher candidates enrolled in traditional educator preparation programs in passing the edTPA; yet special education teacher shortages are heightened across the nation and the number of students in public schools becoming eligible for special education services are rapidly increasing (Billinglsey & Bittini, 2019).

Teacher candidates' sense of preparedness is an essential concern for educator preparation programs. Sense of preparedness has been identified as one predictor for teacher success (Brown et al., 2019) and has been aligned to positive student outcomes (Giallo & Little, 2003). Educator preparation programs are not only positively correlated but play a vital role in teacher candidates' sense of preparedness (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Educator preparation programs must assume the role of providing special education teacher candidates with authentic feedback during field placements to adequately equip teacher candidates and reassure special education teacher candidates of their preparedness to successfully matriculate through the field placement process and edTPA. Educator preparation programs should assume a continuous tier approach of connecting, correcting, and contributing to the overall preparedness of special education teacher candidates to enter the profession confidently and successfully (Livers et al., 2021). Plausible solutions are summarized in this paper to address special education teacher candidates' lack of confidence in navigating field placements and edTPA.

Connecting

Upon entering the field, teachers in special education are expected to make

connections with all stakeholders and conduct themselves professionally in the face of adversity. As special education teacher candidates, they are expected to recognize characteristics of disabilities presented in identify targeted behaviors students. prescribe evidence-based observed, strategies to employ, all while maintaining confidentiality and following the laws mandated under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Additionally, special education teacher candidates represent a smaller population, in size in educator preparation programs than general education teacher candidates. Being within this smaller population can lead to a feeling of loneliness when navigating the unknown in field placements throughout the edTPA process. While all teacher candidates in educator preparation programs are required to employ theoretical and pedagogical practices through their instruction, special education teacher candidates are required to go a step further as they are required to do a surplus of tasks such as: manage student behaviors, implement evidence-based practices, train general education teachers and stakeholders on students' needs. facilitate meetings. safeguard legal documents, and track data of students with varving needs once entering the profession (Billinglsey et al., 2019; Maheady et al., 2013). To better serve these teacher candidates, educator preparation programs must make intentional connections with special education teacher candidates through real-world experiences and dialogue.

The primary role of the educator preparation program is to encourage teacher candidates to make the connection between research and practice across settings (Leko et al., 2015). Opportunities for student connections do not always come solely through a textbook instruction and should include experiences that involve relevant evidence-based practices that can be employed across disciplines among students with varying needs. One way to address the unnerving dispositions of special education teacher candidates completing the program ill-prepared is to facilitate panel discussions for teacher candidates with all stakeholders in the schools (Brown et al., 2015). Often, parents and students are not included in discussions surrounding best practices and teacher candidates need to hear from all stakeholders regarding their lived experiences in navigating parameters within special education. Inviting stakeholders to participate in a panel discussion within the classroom setting in the educator preparation programs allows teacher candidates to ask questions beyond the textbook and have a broader insight to the perceptions of each member involved in the process. Doing so, education connects special teacher candidates to their community needs and provides them with polyperspectivity. Naturally, the textbook and pedagogical instruction gives candidates teacher foundational and theoretical insight into special education but connecting special education teacher candidates to real issues and perceptions of stakeholders in the field, guarantees them a current depiction of trending needs in the schools. Ultimately, candidates form connections and are sensitized to the needs of the school and students in which they will serve. Additionally, conducting authentic panels within the educator preparation program validates instruction and places critical thinking on the teacher candidates as they have free-range to ask questions, voice fears, and access their learning and theory against reality. This method builds confidence and forms lasting partnerships among the educator preparation program, teacher candidates, and stakeholders at the local, regional, and potentially state level.

Connecting teacher candidates to trending needs and issues among stakeholders in the schools beyond the field experiences creates community, increases empathy, and builds confidence with a sense of urgency. The process supports teacher candidates in applying theoretical concepts and evidence-based practices coupled with special education law in their planning and preparation for the edTPA process. Overall, connecting research to practice with stakeholders in a collaborative approach is a win-win situation for educator preparation programs and teacher candidates alike while requiring no funding to execute and creating a pathway for sustainable mentorship.

Correcting

Measuring the outputs of educator preparation programs such as practice-based evaluations (e.g., edTPA) has increased the need for teacher educators to examine "best practice" for developing the skill-based competencies of teacher candidates (Sayeski et al., 2019). While the need for these candidates to effectively implement strategies is unvielding, many teacher candidates feel unequipped to do so independently and report more deliberate practice and feedback is warranted (Soslau et al., 2018). Educator preparation programs are mandated to focus on both content and application of knowledge of skills when developing coursework and field placement tasks. Upon the emergence of edTPA, educator preparation programs must now prepare teacher candidates to uphold learning standards through various modalities and be able to apply knowledge automatically. Research has proven that practice makes progress in teacher candidate's ability to confidently trust themselves in teaching and serving students. Deliberate feedback and correction can only be beneficial if teacher candidates are allowed ample opportunities for practice coupled with feedback and correction. The role of educator preparation programs to provide practice and feedback is critical to ensure special education teacher

candidates are developing in their craft and learning from their mistakes amidst integrating evidence-based strategies correctly. Teacher candidates need opportunities to receive specific, timely, and actionable feedback based on a shared vision of effective teaching across their experiences.

Corrective feedback, when warranted, should be a soft place for teacher candidates to land, not a punitive place of discomfort. Educator preparation programs must remember that a large part of teaching consists of modeling and molding minds to think critically, independently, and open to addressing whether or not the material being presented to teacher candidates warrants correction. It has been researched that some educator programs become out of touch with what teacher candidates need instructionally beyond the standardized content. One way educator preparation programs could increase positive experiences for special education teacher candidates is to provide them with mentors (Gehrke & McCoy, 2007). Again, through connections, correction isn't punitive, but becomes a softer place to land. Educator preparation programs could solicit participation of teachers with no more than five years of teaching experience to serve as mentors to provide insight to instructors in the program to better serve teacher candidates. Soliciting novice teachers as mentors ensures that both the teacher candidates' mindset is considered, and the pedagogical, real-world experience is reflected upon when providing corrective feedback. Again, the goal is for educator preparation programs and teacher candidates to be in alignment with giving and receiving correction as a shared experience. What better way to correct deficits as a whole than to address instructional content, delivery modalities, and the performance of teacher candidates through the lived experiences of practitioners in the field? Mentors could be provided access to sample field placement observations via video and provide feedback through a blind review process. Additionally, a corrective panel study could be devised from the mentors to partner with the instructors of the educator preparation program to determine a corrective plan of action that includes areas of concern to address through instruction.

This model of corrective feedback presents itself as a tier approach to addressing not only teacher candidate deficits but also the educator preparation programs' deficit areas. The goal is for the teacher candidates' to be comfortable with receiving corrective feedback and use the feedback as a tool for improvement versus creating an internal/external obstacle. Furthermore, this corrective approach informs the educator preparation program of strengths and weaknesses beyond licensure exams such as the Praxis and edTPA. To be well prepared, special education teacher candidates need to receive effective, corrective feedback on their practice, and educator preparation programs cannot rely on corrective feedback happening haphazardly. Programs must be intentional in providing opportunities and processes for it to happen. It is the duty of the program to show teacher candidates' how to employ evidence-based strategies and highleverage practices first, so they know it is possible. Correction done right breeds reflective practice.

Contributing

The culminating highlight for any teacher candidate is the completion of their degree from their respective programs and obtaining licensure to enter the field of teaching. Educator preparation programs must continue the student-program partnership and allow opportunities for newly licensed and recently graduated teachers to become contributors to the program. Not only does this method automatically add to the reflective practices of novice teachers; it inevitably provides the educator preparation program with authentic connections to facilitate a continuum of support to current teacher candidates and those seeking careers in teaching. With the emergence of nontraditional teacher licensure avenues across the nation, educator preparation programs need to make certain that individuals entering the field are aware of the expectations and demands required of teachers in today's classroom. Allowing novice teachers to contribute to the understanding and barriers presented in teaching to current teacher candidates creates а never-ending relationship between educator preparation student programs and past teacher candidates. Potentially, allowing varied levels of contribution encourages novice teachers to continue learning and aim to become highly qualified educators by continuing their education. Additionally, budding research can be realized as dialogue and trends emerge from authentic conversations and observations taking place among stakeholders.

Contributions from special education teacher candidates and novice teachers can take shape in varied modalities. As researchers in the field, educator preparation consider conducting programs should research that include novice teachers and special education teacher candidates regarding their lived experiences in matriculating through the program and life after licensure in the field. With the gap in research and literature regarding special education teacher candidates lived experiences in field experiences and edTPA, educator preparation programs should change the narrative and seek to close the gap. Doing so, will inform all stakeholders of themes to address to successfully develop highly qualified special education teachers and inform practices in educator preparation programs.

Conclusion

It is apparent that special education teachers are highly sought after, yet the question remains as to who is responsible for their proficiency in ensuring field placements, licensure processes, and practical implementation as professionals in the field. It has been well-researched that special education teachers have high turnover rates, and many leave the profession within the first five years of their teaching career. Educator preparation programs need to safeguard that they are preparing their special education teacher candidates to become active consumers of research and that they are producing confident teachers in the field. Educator preparation programs must ensure special their education that teacher candidates are aware of evidence-based interventions, know which ones to employ, and know how to access the effectiveness of the interventions they use with their students. Teacher candidates require multiple opportunities to take research into practice to gain confidence and automaticity of skills within the field. Within that practice, special need education teachers connections. correcting, and opportunities to contribute to the field to enter the field and remain in the field positively impacting outcomes for students with disabilities and their families.

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Allison N. Oliver, Assistant Professor, Austin Peay State University, olivera@apsu.edu. Areas of research: Special education, restorative practices, equitable education solutions. Christine D. Lewis, Assistant Professor, East Tennessee State University, lewispugh@etsu.edu. Areas of research: School counseling, traumainformed care, restorative practices, special education.

Pandemic Stories: A Narrative Study Sharing the Experiences of Practicing Teachers

Dorothy Valcarcel Craig Middle Tennessee State University

This study attempted to delve into the lived reality of teaching during a pandemic and to create meaning, share insights, and offer suggestions by expressing "pandemic stories." The study examined specific themes organized chronologically and progressed as the two-year research period progressed. Two graduate students were selected from a pool of those enrolled in licensure-based Master's classes to participate in the study, which adopted a qualitative framework and used the Narrative Research Approach. Multiple forms of data were collected, and themes were identified. Findings are presented from the perspectives of the participants.

he quote above was selected from a young adult literature book exploring the 1918 pandemic that ravaged the nation over 100 years ago. Appropriately stated-Marrin (2018) tells a precautionary tale that is relevant in today's times. It has been three years since the nation came under attack. The attack was one the United States hadn't seen since the 1900s. It was quick, devastating, and contained many unknown factors that affected all of us. I am speaking of the COVID-19 pandemic that emerged in March 2020. Families across the country were critically impacted by the death of loved ones; changes in the workplace causing many to switch to working from home; and the havoc wreaked on public schools that were unequipped, for the most part, to deal with the issues involved in closing schools and switching to alternative scheduling and remote instructional delivery. Now, three years later, we still see the influence of the pandemic regarding health issues, parent and teacher interactions, the rising number of teachers exiting the field, causing an alarming number of vacant positions, teaching and the general effectiveness of public schools in the United States. Are these problems and issues the reactionary result of measures, unpreparedness, lack of warnings, resistance to health-related policies, or – just a common

perception that we, as U.S. citizens, are "untouchable?"

This two-year study involved two graduate student participants enrolled in an Master's program. online The two participants were enrolled in classes while full-time teaching in public school classrooms during the onset of the COVID-19 crisis and throughout the following academic year. Adopting a qualitative framework-the Narrative study traveled the journey of the two participants as they navigated, adapted, and survived the public school classroom during the pandemic. Specifically, the study attempted to delve into the lived reality of teaching during a pandemic and to create meaning, share insights, and offer suggestions by expressing "pandemic stories." The study examined specific themes organized chronologically and progressed as the two-year research period progressed. The focused and storied themes included:

- Reactions: Initial Reaction to the Pandemic and Actions Taken,
- Perceptions: Personal Perceptions of Safety in the Classroom and Home,
- Transitions: Online Journeys and Alternative Scheduling,
- New Beginnings: Policies related to Masking, Distributing Information to Parents, and Transparency, and

• Lessons Learned: Personal Crisis, Health Stressors, Fears, and the Future of Education.

I invite you to take the journey with these professional educators that led to many unexpected decisions and conclusions regarding public school teaching, reactionary versus pro-actionary measures, and how they coped with tragedies, defeats, and triumphs.

The Onset of the Pandemic 2020

In March 2020, a tornado hit Nashville. Many schools in the metropolitan Nashville area were closed as recovery began and repairs were made. Approximately one week later, teachers were facing their own professional and personal crises as life, as known abruptly, came to a halt. The first cases of COVID-19 began appearing, and hospitals were quickly getting overloaded with patients. Schools and businesses immediately shut down due to the spread of COVID-19. Similar situations across the country were taking place, and teachers had to switch from traditional teaching in the face-to-face classroom to different modes of remote learning and instructional delivery.

As public schools across the country began to take action to meet the needs of students in terms of remote instruction—one cannot ignore the fact that many schools were already struggling in terms of funding, facilities, and a myriad of other issues surrounding the public education system. Garcia and Weiss (2020) posit that school closings, quarantines, and shutdowns were compounded by the national health crisis that the education system was unprepared for. There was a lack of structures, training, and resources in place to sustain the level of effective instruction that was usually taking place. There were many "unknowns," however, researchers were confident that-in general-student progress would slow and academic performance would deteriorate. In addition, previous pre-pandemic studies have

shown that for those students who were already disadvantaged due to socioeconomic inequalities, the gap in learning and achievement was sure to widen due to other factors such as lack of food services, safety, etc., and overall well-being. Added to these concerns, pre-pandemic research findingswhich at the time conducted were valuable but not relevant to most schools—were those that found key issues that influenced student success with different forms of technology and learning, such as inequality in terms of access, equipment, lack of dedicated space within the home, family structures, and time needed for effective online learning. This research became much more relevant once schools closed and transitioned to online learning (Rothstein, 2004; Reardon, 2011; Garcia & Weiss, 2017).

Eventually, schools closed for the remaining 2019-2020 academic year, leaving educators and administrators still puzzled about how to prepare for the 2020-2021 school year. As early as the summer of 2020, researchers published findings regarding remote learning issues and concerns. Open Assessment Technologies (Anderson, 2020) identified five key elements that impact successful remote learning. First, instruction should be personalized and must consider student needs. Second, accessibility must be ensured for all students. In many cases-this factor was interpreted as providing devices for students. However, even with a portable device, many students still did not have reliable connectivity or any internet provider. Third, schools must provide professional development to support teachers as well as equip them with readily available. appropriate resources. Fourth. student progress must be monitored through remote proctoring. Effective remote proctoring might involve added mobile and remote devices security features, tech support, and advanced monitoring features such as data analytic tools. Finally, the fifth element of effective remote instruction is ensuring that all tools and systems work seamlessly. With the exception of possibility—it is not within the realm of possibility for a classroom teacher to personally address any of the remaining elements as they reflect systemic structures and goals. In addition, at the time of the initial shutdown, most school systems did not have a remote learning management system where teachers could easily upload content, deliver instruction, and assess learners, leaving many relying on email and Zoom. Thus, it is no wonder that views of remote learning were not very optimistic.

On the other side of the fence, we heard from the "pro-remoters"-in studies conducted before the pandemic-who found many good things about the opportunities that remote learning and instructional delivery presented. For example, one study showed that students involved in remote learning performed slightly better than students participating in face-to-face instruction on exams. However, overall performance remained the same for both groups (Allen, Mabry, & Bourhis, 2004). A more recent study conducted at the beginning of the pandemic found that remote learning presented opportunities for teachers design creative instruction. to offer explanations supported by technology, and integrate appropriate gaming into lessons. Self-pacing was another added benefit, as opportunities for practice, enrichment, and follow-up lessons could be tailored to meet individual student needs and allow students to work independently on specific tasks (Victoria, 2020). In addition, Lewin et al. (2019) stress that remote learning using specific technology should consider the goal of overall improved learning to ensure effectiveness. The authors offer three recommendations that support remote learning. These include a) enhanced opportunities for modeling, b) enriched practice tasks, and c) varied opportunities for assessment and evaluation. Needless to say, there was much confusion, differing opinions, and challenges compounded by influences representing politics and political views when schools faced critical decisions regarding instruction.

However, what did educators actually think about remote learning and the abrupt switch from face-to-face instruction? Studies conducted almost immediately following the March 2020 shutdowns indicate that although intriguing—teachers reported being unprepared to switch to remote teaching. Critical challenges cited include a) lack of confidence and experience in converting face-to-face lessons to the online environment, b) lack of tools and resources, and c) lack of a secure learning management system reflective of a true online classroom. enough—elementary Interestingly grade teachers rated lack of library access and resources as the most critical challenge, while middle and high school teachers across content areas cited motivation and engagement of students as the main obstacle to effective remote learning (Anderson & Hira, 2020; Leech, Gullet, Cummings, & Haug, 2020).

Teaching in the Time of COVID Study

Two graduate students were selected from a pool of those enrolled in licensurebased Master's classes to participate in the study. The factors considered in the selection process were: a) enrollment in an online Masters class, b) in addition to being a graduate student—the selected participants also had to be practicing teachers, c) representation of two different school systems based on the location of suburban and urban settings, and d) willingness to share their stories. The two participants were assigned an alias (Anne and Ben) to ensure confidentiality and present the "pandemic stories."

The study adopted a qualitative framework and used the Narrative Research

Approach. The Narrative Approach may take several forms, utilize different analytic processes, and is grounded in different social disciplines. Clandinin and Connolly (2000) offer that as a framework for research, it may begin with experiences shared and live through participant stories of actual events or situations. As applied to this study-the personal and professional experiences shared by practicing teachers surviving the challenges of teaching and living through a pandemic were collected as biographies meaning that the researcher documented the stories through interviews, emails, openended surveys, and discussions (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2023). In addition, there is a need within a Narrative study to address the context in which the actual narrative is embedded, leading the study to explore the social, cultural, linguistic, and institutional narrative in which the participant experiences took place. The narrative, then, is recognized as the experiences of participants that are spoken or written accounts of a series of events or actions that took place in a chronologically connected manner. In order to create meaning and understand the experiences—the researcher must:

- 1. Focus on the experiences shared by a participant or set of participants,
- 2. Gather data through the collection of stories by way of multiple forms of data,
- 3. Conducting a thematic analysis of the stories,
- 4. Reporting experiences, and
- Chronologically ordering the meaning of the experiences into "life course stages" (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

The two participants represented varying teaching backgrounds, years of experience in the range of 1-5 years (Ben) and 10-15 years (Anne), and teaching assignment locations— one suburban (Anne) and one urban (Ben).

the Narrative Based on methodological approach, data sets included surveys, responses to open-ended discussion questions, forum posts, email interviews, and a final survey with an open-ended response. As a narrative researcher—the Pandemic Stories emerged due to the survey responses, discussions, email interviews, and forum In addition. informal email posts. conversations occurred when participants elected to share personal challenges such as family member illness, hospitalizations, relative deaths. and financial burdens Covid-related imposed by events. A professional participant-observer stance was maintained throughout the study, establishing the trust needed for each participant's Pandemic Story to be told in a human, honest manner. Last, each Pandemic Story was set in the context of teaching challenges, demands, professional both and personal and responsibilities.

Sharing The Pandemic Stories

Anne's Story: Progressing from Perceptions to Lessons Learned

Anne had the most teaching experience of the two participants, with 10-15 years all completed at the same high school. She was married and had two children enrolled in a neighboring elementary school. Anne was a high school English teacher employed by a suburban public school. Anne's school enrollment was diverse, with approximately 40% of the students identified as English learners whose first language was Spanish and who were considered "children of immigrants." The remaining student population was almost evenly divided between African American students and Caucasians, with a very low number of Asian students within the entire school. When COVID-19 prompted the school to close—Anne shared that her first reaction to the shutdown,

Anne: My initial reaction was that this was just something that would pass within the next few weeks. I enjoy the online experience of learning and interacting in my online graduate classes, and because I teach English, there are a lot of resources available in terms of print and digital material. Initial Survey, April 2020

In the discussion, Anne shared that her school system had a good many techrelated resources in place. There was no learning management system, but Anne had created an individual classroom website that supported her instruction. She also uses M.S. Teams to share information with parents and occasionally uses Google services with her students. In a follow-up discussion towards the end of May 2020, Anne shared that the shutdown was still in effect for the foreseeable future. Due to the school closures, the school system put together information regarding effective online instruction provided additional resources such as mobile devices for students who did not have the technology needed, conducted training workshops focusing on delivering instruction via Zoom, and offered tech support for teachers and students. Anne tracked her students' progress and found many had fallen below their pre-pandemic performance. To prepare for the new year, Anne assessed what was working and what was not. She found that students who were struggling before the shutdown fell to almost "non-performance" levels. Those who were what she termed "average and above" maintained their grades and ended the year as expected based on pre-pandemic performance. Anne noted areas of weakness and planned to integrate strategies to target these areas in the upcoming year. In addition, Anne also shared that she re-evaluated reading material making sure that 98% of the materials she would be using were available in digital formats.

With the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year—Anne's school adopted a hybrid schedule (online and face-to-face structure) and felt better equipped as she had attended virtual workshops for the good part of the which targeted summer. alternative schedules, hybrid learning, and a new learning management system that would be launched. Students were required to select face-to-face or online formats and were supposed to remain in those formats for the entire year. However, her personal fears surrounding the safety of herself, her students, and her own children and husband apprehension causing regarding were returning to school a few days a week, which was required. When asked to rank her levels of fear and apprehension on a scale of 1 / least worried to 10 / alarmed and fearful-she immediately said, "Ten!" In a personal follow-up email, Anne shared that her fear stemmed from both of her children's health conditions that made them vulnerable. Her daughter had asthma, and her son was diagnosed with Downs Syndrome. In addition, over the summer months prior to the 2020-2021 school year, Anne's aunt was hospitalized for COVID-19 and, once released, was still experiencing symptoms and after-effects of the virus weeks later.

Although Anne's school required face masks at the beginning of the 2020-2021 academic year—by January 2021, students were given a choice to attend face-to-face classes or classes online. Also, masks were "encouraged-not required."

Anne: In a high school setting, it's difficult to get students to wear masks. I keep a box of disposable masks at the door to encourage students to pick them up and put them on, but only about ¹/₄ of my students wear them. It's very frustrating and scary, given the nature of the interactions surrounding high schoolers. I feel as though my classroom is filled with germs. I am constantly wiping everything

down with Clorox wipes! I still am fully masked and eat quickly in my classroom, but not before I spray Lysol everywhere. To make matters even worse—my colleagues have started to make negative comments about my fears and mask-wearing. I feel very isolated and angry all the time. It is affecting my entire life, both at school and at home. If the school would mandate and not just "encourage" masks, I might feel a bit safe. April 2021.

In May 2021, Anne shared that her husband had contracted COVID-19. He had a mild case, but she still quarantined herself and her children. Anne's forum post follows:

Anne: Well, my fear has materialized...my husband has COVID and me, and the kids are quarantined for the next week or so. I honestly don't know how much more of this I can take. I am seriously considering leaving the field of teaching because I am so tired of COVID-related problems. I just can't concentrate with all of my focus on my family and health. Finally, my husband tested negative, and my mom called to tell me that my father was hospitalized. He was placed on a ventilator. Within one week, my father passed away. He was alone, and we couldn't go see him. This is the tragedy of COVID. My teaching has suffered from all of the illnesses In my own family. My mom is coming to live with us for a few weeks, so we'll see how that turns out. I am just glad that this school year is coming to an end. May 2021.

Eventually, the 2021-2022 academic year began. Policies at Anne's school changed. Although face-to-face instruction was encouraged—teachers still had to record their lessons and make them available in the event that a student tested positive. Masks were neither required for students, teachers, and other school personnel nor encouraged. The school was no longer required to inform teachers or caregivers if a student tested positive for COVID. The result:

Anne: Students come and go with sporadic attendance. It is hard for them to stay focused. The only thing they seem to like is Socratic Seminar, where they are able to read current event-related material and then talk about issues. We are supposed to make. But, all of our face-to-face instruction was available remotely. I feel like my entire life is on Camera. And when a student doesn't come to class, it could be COVID, or it could be that he or she just didn't want to get out of bed. We have become babysitters at the cost of our own safety. If you were a high school student, would you come to class if you knew you would not be penalized? I feel as though I am consumed by a lack of feeling safe health-wise. This has overtaken my focus on teaching. I constantly feel ineffective and distracted to this day.

Although I targeted the areas where students fell short during the shutdown most students' attendance was so sporadic that my strategies and additional materials didn't help to improve performance. Students remain disinterested and detached. It's almost like they are in some type of COVID coma! December 2021

During the fall (of 2021) Anne's daughter was diagnosed with COVID-19. Two days later, Anne tested positive. Anne's case was mild, but her daughter was hospitalized. Anne learned from a fellow parent that there were two other positive cases in her daughter's classroom. The school did not inform her and only found out by accident. Anne's daughter continues to experience symptoms but returned to school in January 2022.

Anne: My daughter's health is a priority to me. As a family, we experienced how the virus can affect younger children. As soon as we were able—we had our daughter and son vaccinated. But, there are still cases at school, and it has become an everyday occurrence. I guess the lessons I have learned are slanted because my family was affected by COVID maybe more than others.

I was never upset about the transition to online teaching because I do enjoy it. This could be in part because I teach English. I have to give myself a little credit because I was able to make use of the resources made available and structured mv online instruction like a Socratic Seminar. I think, for the most part, students enjoyed this (when they attended class). I am still concerned about home learning environments not being conducive to learning. Background noise, such as siblings, television, and loud music, is problematic. January 2022.

In general, Anne felt that online learning could be effective if students took the initiative because there were ample resources in her case. Considering all of her personal challenges, Anne shared that Asynchronous Distance Learning was probably the least effective because students don't interact with anyone.

Anne's suggestions in moving forward with regard to preparing for what might come next include considering a variety of platforms such as Clever, Kiddom, and M.S. Teams. Have several of these in place and also offer training for parents. Keep trying new formats, applications, and lesson designs. Find one that works for you and teach it to students as quickly as possible. Take advantage of training and workshops, and remember that good teaching is "good teaching." principles Apply the of effectiveness to the online classroom. Understand that you might not be able to give 100% due to family responsibilities, be kind to yourself, and take care of your mental health. Be an advocate for health-related issues because no one else will. Mask if you have to-even if ostracized by colleagues. Encourage new teachers and be realistic about your experiences. As of January 2022—Anne does not plan to leave the teaching profession.

Ben's Story: Progressing from Perceptions to Lessons Learned

Ben shared that he was in the first five years of his teaching experience when COVID-19 caused the school to shut down. At the time, he taught 8th-grade Social Studies—primarily U.S. History—at a large, urban middle school. Ben was also in the second semester of his Master's program when the study began. His initial reaction to the abrupt school closing and transition to remote learning was one of apprehension and panic.

Ben: When we received the notification that school was shutting down due to COVID, I started to panic. I feel like I am a realistic person and, in most cases, tend to go down a "worst-case scenario" path. I thought immediately that we would never be back in the classroom ... ever! My worst fears came true when we were called to a Zoom meeting to find out that we would have to move our teaching to remote learning. I had little experience with online learning. I had only completed two Master's classes. I liked the online format fine for me, but I just couldn't see my own teaching style converted to online delivery. I really never thought about actually catching COVID—I basically just went into high anxiety about teaching online.

Most of my students live in the projects (government subsidized housing), and for some—we don't know where they live day to day. They are on free lunch, and most go home and take care of younger brothers or sisters. I was concerned about keeping them on track. They struggle in class with the amount of reading required. I have to use a good amount of visuals that are hands-on as well as approach History as storytelling. I also use group projects to apply the historical information we cover. I didn't think this type of classroom instruction would transfer effectively. Initial Survey, April 2020.

In the discussion, Ben shared that his school system made many attempts to assist teachers with the transition, which eased his anxiety a bit. He attended an online workshop through a professional organization that presented steps in locating, integrating, and using primary source documents for online middle school Social Studies instruction. The school system also worked with Internet providers to allow families free access until the end of the school year. Having access along with devices provided by the school system helped students, but these were only temporary solutions. Ben slowly made his way through the remote learning process, and by the end of the 2020 school year, he was feeling a bit more confident with teaching online. With the start of the new academic vear-Ben's school adopted a hybrid model with groups of students attending face-toface classes on specific days and learning online on other days. The rationale was to establish "social distancing" in a school that was challenged in terms of space. However, he shared concerns that unfortunately began with the abrupt switch to remote learning in March 2020 and continued into the 2020-2021 academic year along with new challenges.

Ben: Some of my students are classified as so I worry Homeless. about what environment they are in and if they are being well cared for outside of learning. I also worry that most of my students are responsible not only for their assignments but also for their younger siblings, so they are missing out on what they should be learning. It is hard to watch a student who is supposed to be having a class caring for toddler siblings during the lesson. I can't imagine the student is learning anything in that environment. Most of my students fall into the average to below-average categories in terms of grades. I'm not sure how the remote stuff is going to affect them in terms of grades.

On top of these problems, we now have a hybrid model, which I am not too happy about. Just when I thought I had things under control in terms of online teachingnow we have students grouped into days on and days off. Here's how it works. We have two groups of students. The A Group attends face-to-face classes on Mondays and Tuesdays and then goes remote on Wednesdays and Thursdays. The B Group of students is remote on Mondays and Tuesdays and face-to-face on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Are you following this? On Fridays, teachers are available for all students if needed, but no one shows up for help. confused, parents Students are are complaining, and teachers are going crazy. This is 100% worse than the totally remote that we did before. October 2020.

Ben shared that by the end of December 2020—the school considered the challenges posed by the hybrid model and decided to go to only face-to-face instruction beginning in January (2021). With a mask policy strictly enforced-Ben returned to his brick-andmortar classroom. All teachers at his school were given cleaning supplies, disposable masks, and shields installed at the front of each classroom and between rows of desks. Student desks were moved apart as much as possible, and instruction proceeded. Ben shared that he felt safe because he "doublemasked" and gave incentives so that students would always wear masks. Ben personally did not have any students report that they had tested positive for COVID-19. Attendance remained as it was pre-COVID with the usual number of absences. This number did not increase.

Ben: My students actually seem happy to be back face-to-face. At least they don't have to

care for their brothers and sisters during class. They have "bought in." to maskwearing. Most of them come to school with their own masks and are equipped with their own Purel. I actually think they are "oversanitizing!" Two told me that if their moms got word that they took their masks off—they would be in big trouble. For the most part, I feel safe and feel that my instruction is back on track.

Of course, I have different students this year than my group last year. But, since most Students in the school are average to below— I will say that I haven't seen any changes In their grades. Students still do better with projects and group work than with the traditional tests.

At the beginning of the 2021-2022 academic year, the school still maintained a mask mandate policy for students and teachers. The school had also installed an elaborate electronic system that required temperature checks. To further ensure safety-Ben shared that his school still enforced a "no unnecessary visitor" policy. Last, parents were notified discretely when a student or teacher tested positive for COVID-19. Ben openly discussed policies and his perceptions of his safety and students and shared that he had no concerns. When asked if he had any thoughts about his future as a teacher and if he had any suggestions in moving forward towards "after pandemic" teaching, Ben replied:

Ben: I feel like I have lived through the worst of times, and I survived. I never had any thoughts of leaving education. I worked many years to get to this point and am not giving up on myself or my students.

We had a sudden switch to remote learning. Trying to crash course students in the expectations and applications proved difficult. If they have to—schools should go remote totally and don't bother with ineffective hybrid formats. I was consumed spending time finding which resources and technology worked best for me. My suggestion is to show students how to use the resources and technology so that they are prepared for the next time—and there will be a next time. I believe online teaching will become a more normal and utilized type of teaching in the future, so teachers should take this opportunity to develop ways to effectively deliver online instruction to better meet their students' needs. January 2022

Discussion

This examination provides a window into the experiences of two practicing teachers who—based on experiences, school location, policies, personal perceptions of online learning, and personal challengeslived through teaching during a pandemic. While Anne positively approached the transition to online learning, she became overwhelmed by health-related factors that consumed her daily life. This was partly due to personal illness but also partly to the policies adopted by her school and school system. Understandably, the personal illness with herself and her family members resulted in a focus on personal safety in the classroom. This focus was continually challenged by the policies or lack of policies adopted by her school, making Anne feel ineffective, unsafe, and distracted. Given the sporadic attendance due to the shutdown and remote options-Anne saw a dip in her students' performance. She attributed this more to a lack of consistent attendance than remote learning. At one point, Anne had thoughts about leaving the profession. However, she continued teaching, hoping for a more stable and healthy new academic year. Anne transitioned to remote learning and was confident in her teaching abilities. However, her confidence was overshadowed by her feelings of being unsafe at school and her experiences with COVID-19.

Ben, on the other hand, approached the transition to remote learning with anxiety and trepidation. He was concerned about his abilities to deliver effective instruction and his students' home responsibilities, which caused many to divide time between learning and caregiving. However, Ben did not have any concerns regarding his own safety or the safety of his students, as his school enforced many policies such as mandated masking, social distancing, visitor policies, and temperature checks. In addition, Ben's school continued to inform parents and teachers if students were exposed to another student or teacher who tested positive for COVID-19. This helped to support a health-safe environment further as quarantines were also enforced. At one point, Ben's school implemented an intricate hybrid system requiring students to learn remotely and faceto-face each week. He felt that the hybrid system was less effective than a strictly remote structure because the hybrid system employed was not favorable to parents, teachers, or students as it was confusing and disjointed. Ben did not see a difference in his students' performance in terms of grades but shared that they always do better with projects and tasks that are interactive rather than with traditional tests. Beginning with anxiety regarding remote learning-Ben ended positively and was able to offer viable suggestions to others who may be faced with an abrupt transition to remote instruction in the future. Ben shared that he was able to focus on instruction because he was not affected by COVID personally, in addition to the fact that his school took every precaution and enforced those precautions and policies to ensure safety.

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Dorothy Valcarcel Craig is a Professor of Education at Middle Tennessee State University where she also serves as director of the M.Ed. ESL and M.Ed. Digital Teaching & Learning.

The Role of Tutoring in Improving the Reading Skills of An Older Adult Learner

Blanche Jackson Glimps Tennessee State University (retired)

Aging is associated with a decline in activities requiring the use of cognitive skills. The increasing population growth and prevalence rates for adults over age 65 suggest a need to examine the literacy skills of older adults concerning their use of vocabulary and their comprehension of written texts. The purpose of this action research study was to examine whether tutoring prevented declines in reading comprehension and vocabulary skills of older adults. A mixed-method research design was used to include both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Test results indicated that small gains were made in comprehension and vocabulary skills.

Keywords: Older adults, tutoring, reading comprehension, vocabulary, literacy skills

he Census Bureau, as quoted by United Health Foundations (2021), indicate that more than 54 million adults ages 65 and older live in the United States (U.S.). By the year 2050, the number of older adults in the U.S. is projected to rise to "85.7 million or 20 percent of the overall population" (para. 2). The growth in the senior citizen population is not limited to the U.S. "All societies in the world are in the midst of this longevity revolution...in which the chance of surviving to age 65 rises from less than 50 percent to more than 90 percent at present in countries with the highest life expectancy" (United Nations, 2019, para. 2). Ortaliza, Ramirez, Satheeskuwar, and Amin (2021) assert that improvement in medical care, and increased access to healthcare, are the reasons life expectancy has generally increased.

With increased life expectancy, are older adults more at risk as readers? Aging is believed to be associated with a decline in most activities requiring the use of cognitive skills. The increasing population growth and prevalence rates for adults over age 65 suggest a need to examine the literacy skills of older adults concerning their use of vocabulary and their comprehension of written texts. With literacy, individuals can fully participate in their communities social and political life. Shanahan and Shanahan

(2008),referencing Carneale (1991),indicated that "the expansion of informationbased technology, the internationalization of labor markets, and the changing of workplace demands have increased the importance of literacy as an ingredient of economic and social participation" (p. 41). The purpose of this action research study is to examine whether tutoring prevents a decline in the reading comprehension and vocabulary skills of older adults. The researcher plans tutoring intervention for older adult learners and plans to evaluate the effectiveness to determine whether skill improvements occur.

Theoretical Lens

Constructivism is the theory that is the foundation of building reading comprehension and vocabulary skills. Jean Piaget and John Dewey developed theories of childhood development and learning that led to the evolution of constructivism. Piaget believed that humans learn through the construction of one logical structure after another. Dewey (1938) believed that learning should be based on real experiences. Arends (1998) states that constructivism considers the personal construction of meaning by the learner through experience as important, and the interaction of prior knowledge and new events influences that meaning. McLeod (2019)identifies а principle of

constructivism that he believes is central. That principle is a belief that learning is created rather than innate. Accordingly, new learning is based on the foundation of previous learning. Wang (2014) says this principle is associated with the concept of assimilation. Assimilating causes an individual to incorporate new experiences into old experiences. The second concept identified by Wang is accommodation which consists of reframing the word and new experiences into the mental capacity already present.

Vygotsky is another theorist that influences constructivism. As reported by McLeod (2018), Vygotsky says cognitive development stems from social interactions from guided learning within the zone of proximal development as children coconstruct knowledge with their partners. Wang (2014) says that since the learner is the main body of learning, the emphasis of teaching should shift to the learner. The teacher becomes a mediator or facilitator of learning rather than the vehicle through which learning is delivered.

Constructivist teaching and learning recognize that knowledge is created in the mind of each learner and that effective teaching approaches delve into the learner's mind through active learning; learnergenerated inquiry; concrete, authentic experiences; collaborative investigations, discussions, and reflection; and structuring learning around primary concepts. (Wilen et al., 2000, p.103)

Yussof et al. (2012) conducted a quasi-experimental study in Malaysia to measure the effectiveness of intervention using graphic and cognitive strategies (e.g., story structure, questioning, visualization, inferencing, and synthesizing), which were embedded in the experimental group's reading comprehension lessons. The control group was taught reading using traditional methods. The study results showed that the

cognitive strategies increased the reading comprehension performance of the experimental group, as indicated by their reading comprehension test scores. Wang (2014) applied constructivism to an extensive course. He emphasized reading the implementation of constructivism by activating students' knowledge, prior grasping the skills of fast reading, and combining reading and writing. Wang believes utilization of constructivism strategies improves reading skills.

This mixed-method action research project will look at tutoring to improve the reading comprehension skills of older adults. The use of cognitive strategies will be the tool of instruction. Constructivism is the theory upon which the tutoring procedures will be based.

Project Purpose

The problem to be addressed through this study is whether tutoring improves older adult learners' reading comprehension and vocabulary skills. An explanatory sequential mixed methods design will be used, and it will involve collecting quantitative data first and then explaining the quantitative results with in-depth qualitative data. In the first quantitative phase of the study, using the Challenger Placement survey for vocabulary and reading comprehension, as well as the WRAT-4 (Wide Range Achievement Test 4th edition), pretest data will be collected from an older adult learner at Adult Education Centers, in Middle Tennessee, to help test the theory of constructivism.

The intent is to assess the older adult learners' reading comprehension and vocabulary skills before and after tutoring. The second qualitative phase will be conducted as a follow-up to the quantitative results to help explain the quantitative results. In this exploratory follow-up, the tentative plan is to explore reading comprehension and vocabulary tutoring with older adult learners at Adult Education Centers in Middle Tennessee. The growing number of older adults in the U.S. requires an examination of procedures for enhancing their reading skills. The results of this study will highlight tutoring as a means of achieving this objective.

Currently, there needs to be more literature that examines reading tutoring and older adult learners. The findings from this proposed action research study on the tutoring of reading comprehension and vocabulary skills should be helpful. Those individuals who are involved in adult basic education, in particular, will find the study beneficial as it examines whether older adult learners could increase their understanding of the text and their vocabulary skills after receiving tutoring as determined by their reading assessment scores at the beginning and end of a tutoring session. The significance of this study lies in its potential to provide adult educators, and other professionals involved with older adult learners, with data to make evidenced-based decisions when planning and adopting tutoring programs for building reading comprehension and vocabulary skills.

The research questions are:

- 1. Will there be a positive increase between pre and post-tests for older adult learners involved in tutoring basic education skills?
- 2. How does tutoring improve the reading comprehension skills of older adult learners involved in adult education?
- 3. How does tutoring improve the vocabulary skills of older adult learners involved in adult education?

The researcher will implement a reading skill tutoring intervention program in an adult basic education center. As an older adult learner, the researcher wanted to determine if tutoring would improve this population's reading comprehension and

vocabulary skills. Initially, it wasn't easy to find older adult learners to use for the study population. However, through a county school's adult education program, older adult learners were identified, and interventions were put in place to assist. Interventions designed for older adult learners were intended to create skill change that could be measured before and after implementation. The researcher believes that tutoring using improve cognitive strategies would comprehension and vocabulary skills for older adult learners.

Literature Review

The skill of reading is an outgrowth of reading development, including understanding what is read, and leads to a continuous advantage in literacy skills. Reading comprehension is the process of extracting and constructing meaning from written texts. "Comprehension involves the reader, the text, and the activity or related task" (Honig, Diamond & Gutlohn, p. 10). Duke and Martin (2019) assert that skilled comprehension is strategic, genre-specific, developmental. Reading situated. and comprehension is a complex ability with aspects becoming increasingly complex. Barrett and Riddell (2019) indicate that fluid intelligence (e.g., processing speed, attention capacity, spatial ability, reasoning, and working memory) begin to decline with age. These are skills associated with comprehension of written text. The extent to which aging impact the reading comprehension skills of older adults is the question.

Fitzhugh, Braden, Sabbagh, Rogalsky, and Baxter (2019) believe that "reading comprehension requires more than just understanding single words and sentences" (p. 569). Comprehension also involves "constructing and understanding the representation of language at its phonological, semantic, syntactic, and

thematic levels" (p. 569). The authors conducted a study to examine "cortical atrophy and brain activity in a large age range of individuals" (p. 570). Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) was used with 65 adults while they read a passive narrative reading paradigm. The reading consisted of "alternating blocks of sentences that formed stories and blocks or repeated letter strings" The authors predicted the (p. 571). recruitment of classic frontotemporal language networks across ages. Further, they predicted older adults would use additional frontal lobe networks to support language comprehension. Results proved their prediction to be accurate. Accordingly, older adults are still able "to engage frontotemporal language networks similar to young adults in a passive reading Fmri"paradigm" (p. 574). However, older adults must also use additional brain networks to guide and focus attention while reading.

Margolin (2018) studied the impact of negated text on cognitively active older comprehension adults' and metacomprehension. Negated text contains words such as no, not, and never. Research has found that comprehension of negated text is difficult for readers to process, understand, and remember. Margolin, quoting a study by Margolin and Abrams (2009), found in comparison vounger to adults' comprehension of negated and nonnegated text, older adults' comprehension is poorer. That study found that working memory rather than age-predicted comprehension accuracy. In Margolin's 2018 study, participants included 64 young adults between 19 and 24 years and 42 older adults between 60 and 87. Material for the study consisted of excerpts from National Geographic Magazine. **Participants** completed the Metacomprehension Scale, which is a selfreport questionnaire to measure aspects of meta-comprehension. Participants read passages, evaluated their comprehension, and answered questions about what they read. Results indicated that both younger and older adult readers had difficulty with negation. Older adults had better overall comprehension. Findings indicated that remaining cognitively active may have contributed the older adults' to comprehension skills.

The role of working memory and meta-comprehension in younger and older adults was also the focus of attention in an older article (De Beni, Borella, & Carretti, 2007). There were three age groups of participants. Young participants were between the ages of 18-30 years. While the young and old participants were between the ages of 65-74 years, and the older participants were between 75-85 years. The study was conducted to understand which factors are involved with reading comprehension considering working memory and meta-comprehension. The authors used narrative and expository texts and predicted that the complexity of informational text would require more working memory. Participants were native speakers of Italian, as the study was conducted in Northern Italy. Reading comprehension measured was by "administering two reading comprehension texts taken from a standardized battery normed on high school students" (p. 194). Working memory was evaluated by an Italian version of a listening span test. Metacomprehension was measured using an Italian standardized Metacomprehension Questionnaire.

Results indicated that the performance of older adults "is within the range of an adequate performance for everyday living for both types of text" (p. 202). In other words, aging did not harm reading comprehension. For expository texts, results showed an age-related decline as older adults differed significantly from younger adults. Age-related differences were also

found in the working memory capacity measure. The authors believe that in their study, age-related differences in reading comprehension "was mainly due to a decline in cognitive processes such as working memory and metacognitive flexibility" (p. 205). Older adults compensated for the decline by using other strategic comprehension skills (e.g., background information and expertise as old readers).

The elements that cause gains and literacy transcend national losses in boundaries. Barrett and Riddell (2019) examined the relationship between age and literacy skills in developed countries. Data are taken from representative population samples using the IALS, ALL, and PIAAC surveys that measure vocabulary, language proficiency, and comprehension. PIACC defines literacy as "understanding, evaluating, using and engaging with written texts to participate in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential" (Kyrolainen & Kuperman, 2021). Participants were residents of four countries, including the United States (U.S.). Findings from the study reported that literacy skills declined with age. Green and Riddell (2013) also looked at data from the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey. The tool measures prose literacy, document literacy, numeracy, and problemsolving, focusing on three countries, including the U.S. Again, literacy declines with age.

Kyrolainen and Kupermann (2021) used the Comprehensive Survey of Adult Skills to collect data from 39 countries. The data "includes direct assessments of information processing skills-literacy. numeracy, and problem-solving in the language of the country" (p. 2). Analysis was conducted with the age range of 25-65 years. Results indicated that "age was a relatively minor contributor to literacy scores when considered across all countries" (p. 9). The authors found that the effects of age may coexist in different domains of literacy skills. As an example, the authors point out that an "overall growth in vocabulary could take place next to an increasingly lesser proficiency in semantic integration of a text's content" (p. 14).

McKoon and Ratcliff (2021) tested whether adults with poor reading skills, older adults, and college students accomplished textually relevant encoding. Using a diffusion model, the researchers wanted to know the meaning of the three groups of study participants assigned to words during reading. The participants read short stories and answered true/false questions. Speed and accuracy measurements were calculated and used as a decision model to separate the information that a reader encodes from the reader's speed/ accuracy tradeoff settings. All three groups encoded sentences as contextually accurate with different speed levels. The findings suggest the importance of effective comprehension and knowing which aspect of a word is relevant in a given circumstance.

Zang, Warrington, Li, Pagan, Paterson, White, and McGowan (2022) raised the question in their research about whether older adults are more risky readers. To answer this question, the researchers conducted a meta-analysis of 102 eye movement experiments comparing the reading performance of young and older adults. The focus was on reading sentences typically performed using alphabetic or Chinese script. Results indicated that "older adults read more slowly, made more and longer fixations and more regressions, and spent longer reading individual words" (p. 251, para. 1) than did younger adults. An important question is the extent to which such behaviors interfere with reading comprehension and whether tutoring can help make a positive impact.

Tutoring for Reading Improvement

Tutoring is the vehicle used to assist adults in building their reading older comprehension skills in this action research project. Nickow, Oreopoulos, and Quan (2020) define tutoring as "one-on-one or instructional programs small group (Introduction, para. 1). These researchers conducted a meta-analysis of experimental findings concerning tutoring interventions. The search for studies of tutoring programs resulted in identifying 96 such studies. These studies explored the impact of preK-12 tutoring on learning outcomes and whether the effects varied by program characteristics and intervention context. In terms of the characteristics of tutoring programs, the researchers determined four categories of tutor types, including tutoring done by paraprofessionals, teachers. nonprofessionals, parent tutoring. and Tutoring length varied, with most programs reviewed lasting from 10 weeks and one school year. Tutoring programs conducted during school hours had a larger impact than those conducted after school.

Johnson, Gupta, Rosen, and Rosen (2013) investigated the effects of a holistic intervention after-school on reading comprehension. The population consisted of at-risk students in the second through fifth grades. The holistic intervention included after-school tutoring, homework sessions, social skill development, after-school snack, home visits, parenting meetings, teacher consultation, and clinical supervision. The study participants consisted of 154 elementary school students who were at risk for truancy and school failure. The Gray Oral Reading Test-4 was used as a measuring tool. Results indicated that after-school peer tutoring from higher-grade students made a difference in the development and outcomes of reading skills. The researchers concluded that after-school intervention might be able to help improve reading comprehension.

A study investigated the impact of an educational program involving peer tutoring at school and home tutoring on reading comprehension. The study was conducted in Catalonia, Spain, with 303 primary school students from 8 to 11 years and 223 family tutors (Blanch, Duran, Valdebenito, & Flores, 2011). The study attempted to identify the characteristics of families that volunteered as reading tutors for their children and the strategies used to improve comprehension. The study also examined the effects of participating in a peer tutoring program with or without family support in comprehension. All of the children participating in the study improved their comprehension skills. However, family involvement explains best comprehension improvement.

The effects of school-based tutoring on the reading scores of third-grade students were examined in a dissertation by Washington (2018). The study examined three types of school-based tutoring (e.g., one-on-one, small, and large group) and gender on the reading achievement of the study population. "The North Carolina READY English Language Arts/Reading Assessment for Grade 3 was administered to all the participants as a pretest (referred to as the beginning of grade 3 test - BOG 3) and post-test (referred to as the end of grade 3 test - EOG 3)" (p. 61). Results indicated that students' reading skills improved more in one-to-one tutoring when compared to the students who participated in small-group or large-group tutoring.

Anderberg (2013) examined the effects of cross-age tutoring on the reading ability of first and second-grade students. The study intended to examine the growth in decoding and comprehension after small group instruction provided by high school tutors. A control and an experimental group were used as the study population. As a pretest, students were given all subtests of the Woodcock-Johnson Reading Mastery Test (WRMT), the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT), the grapheme knowledge test, and the Phonics for Reading pretest. At the post-test, students were given all subtests of the WRMT, the grapheme knowledge test, and the tutee survey was given to the experimental group. Tutoring increased the reading ability of first and second-grade students. Regarding reading comprehension, there was no difference between the control and experimental groups.

Swan (2014) conducted a dissertation study of the effects of peer tutoring on the reading fluency and comprehension of seventh-grade students. "The purpose of this study was to provide a Tier 2 reading intervention using peers as tutors that could be implemented with the staff members typically available in a school setting" (p. 10). The study wanted to determine whether PALS, as a supplemental Tier 2 intervention, improved middle school students' oral reading fluency and reading comprehension. The tools used to monitor progress are the AIMS Web, R-CBM, and USM-maze. In terms of fluency and reading comprehension, students made mixed gains using PALS.

A study was conducted to determine if an adult literacy tutoring program helped participants build confidence and meet goals (Ferguson & Merga, 2021). Fifteen participants, who lived in Australia, were involved in the study. These individuals experienced a variety of issues with literacy. Structured interviews were used to collect data for the study. Results indicated that not all participants made improvements in literacy elements. Nevertheless, all participants felt their confidence in literacy had improved.

Reading and understanding what is read is the foundational skill in a global technological society. The size of the older population in the U.S. and the world is growing. Reading and understanding what is read is an activity in which many older adults engage. Aging comes with literacy losses, an accumulation of vocabulary, as well as increased reading experiences. Older adults are less likely to be thwarted when encountering the use of negation in text. Unfortunately, there is an age-related decline in literacy comprehension skills regardless of country of origin. However, research suggests that older adults compensate for the decline by drawing on cognitive strategies such as tutoring.

Project Questions

This is a mixed method study. The quantitative data will come from pre and post-testing of the Challenger Placement Test (e.g., vocabulary and reading comprehension tests) and the WRAT-4. The qualitative data will come from the formative assessments on reading comprehension and vocabulary skills collected at each tutoring session. The research questions are:

- 1. Will there be a positive increase between pre and post-tests for an older adult involved in tutoring basic education skills?
- 2. How does tutoring improve the reading comprehension skills of an older adult learner involved in adult education?
- 3. How does tutoring improve the vocabulary skills of an older adult learner involved in adult education?

This mixed-method action research project on using tutoring to build reading comprehension skills for older adults is based on the theory of constructivism. Reading is the basic skill for understanding the process of learning and participating in society. Low reading comprehension can influence an individual's active thinking, critical thinking, and employability skills as well as in general society.

Methodology

This study focused on the impact of utilizing tutoring to improve an older adult learner's reading comprehension and vocabulary skills. It was designed to examine the growth in comprehension and vocabulary after one-on-one tutoring by a graduate school tutor. The study used constructivism strategies to increase vocabulary and comprehension skills. This chapter provides an overview of the participant and setting and examines the methodology. Also included is an overview of the data instruments and collection methods. the curriculum implemented, and the procedures followed by the tutor throughout the study.

Participants

Setting. The action research project took place in a single site which was an adult education classroom in Middle Tennessee. The organization operates programs in 14 counties and offers the HISET exam for individuals seeking to obtain their high school equivalency diploma.

The classroom was operated by a retired teacher who worked in the setting for a total of 15 hours. This individual monitored students' progress toward completing the content of the high school curriculum and passing the HISET exam. The classroom consisted of two smaller classrooms. The tutoring took place in the first classroom, which was comprised of two computers, a rectangular table placed at the back of the room, and three chairs. There were motivational posters on the wall behind the computers. Instructional tools consisted of a textbook, pencils/pens, and a computer.

In terms of instructional approach, constructivism guides what is done in the tutoring sessions. Adams (2006) described the following five main elements of social constructivism:

Focus on learning, not performance. View learners as active co-constructors of meaning and knowledge. Establish a teacherpupil relationship built upon the idea of guidance, not instruction. Seek to engage learners in tasks seen as ends in themselves and consequently as having implicit worth. Promote assessment as an active process of uncovering and acknowledging shared understanding. (p. 247).

These five elements correspond with the elements of an effective tutoring session. By using a social constructivist framework, the researcher was able to determine whether tutoring impacted the reading comprehension skills of an older adult learner.

The Tutee. The program served several adult basic education students. However, only one student met the criteria of being age 50 years or older. The tutee is a male of European American ethnicity. He is 50 years of age, lives in Rutherford County, and completed up to the eighth grade in school. He stated that he has no hobbies and receives disability income from social security. He said he had been diagnosed with a learning disability and was tested in school for dyslexia. He stated that he had trouble reading in all grades and received supportive service in a resource room. He finds all components of reading difficulties. The tutee also has been diagnosed with schizophrenia and diabetes and is taking medication for both conditions.

The tutee was ordered, by the court, to attend classes to obtain his high school equivalency diploma. The individual lives with his mother, a dog, and a pet cockatoo. The tutee consistently attends classes three times a week for three hours. He has been absent related to a court appearance because of his medical conditions.

The Tutor. The tutor is also an older adult graduate student enrolled in a literacy

practicum through the Literacy Studies program at a university in middle Tennessee. The tutor provided tutoring from midFebruary through mid-April on the days the tutee attended the class.

The Research Design

Table 3.1 outlines the mixed-method research design, including the research questions, data collection, and data analysis techniques.

Table 3.1

The Logic of Research Design

Research Question	Data Collected	Data Analysis Technique
RQ1 Will there he a positive	Challenger Placement Tool	comparison between pre and
increase between pre and post-tests for older adult learners involved in tutoring basic education skills?	WKA1-4 HISET/TABE Test: Reading Subtest	post-test scores
RQ2 How does tutoring improve the reading comprehension	Challenger Placement Tool: Comprehension Subtest HISET/TABE Test: Reading	Comparison between pre/post-test scores
involved in adult education?	Subtest	Examination of progress monitoring scores
RQ3 How does tutoring improve the vocabulary skills of older	Challenger Placement Tool: Vocabulary Subtest WRAT-4	Comparison between pre/post-test scores
adult learners involved in adult education?	HISET/TABE Test: Reading Subtest TABE Progress Monitoring	Examination of progress monitoring scores

Table 3.2 contains a description of the data collection tools used in this project, a justification for the use of the tool, and a connection to particular research questions. The Challenger Placement Tool, TABE, and WRAT-4 were pre-and post-test measures. TABE Academy, in combination with reading passages from High School Equivalency Basics: Reading, serves as a progress monitoring tool to gauge how reading comprehension skills development was progressing during the implementation of the intervention plan.

Table 3.2

Data Collection Strategies and Justification

Data Collection Tool	Description	Justification	Research Question (R.Q.) Connection
Challenger Placement Tool.	This tool is designed to help place students in the appropriate Challenger book.	The vocabulary and reading comprehension subtests were used as pre/post measures of skills.	This tool will help answer research questions #1-3 concerning the level of skills in vocabulary and comprehension before and after the intervention.
High School Equivalency Basics: Building Essential Test Readiness Skills: Reading. (2016).	Reading comprehension passages were used to measure reading comprehension and vocabulary skills.	The tool is intended to strengthen the skills needed to take the high school equivalency reading test.	These formative print and computer-based tools will help me answer research question #2 concerning whether tutoring assists in building reading comprehension skills.
HISET High School Academy. <u>https://www</u> . mometrix.co m/academy/hi set-reading- practice-test/	TABE Academy is an online remediation program for Adult Basic Education students.	The computerized reading practice tests were used as a means of progress monitoring to prepare for taking the reading section of the HISET exam.	This formative tool will help me answer research questions #2 and 3 concerning whether tutoring assists in building vocabulary and reading comprehension skills.

TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education)	An easy-to-use, web- based assessment of adult basic and secondary education knowledge.	TABE testing indicates the skills and knowledge of adult learners.	This summative tool will help answer research question #1.
WRAT-4 Word Reading Subtest	WRAT-4 is a norm- referenced test that measures the basic academic skills of word reading, sentence comprehension, spelling, and math computation. Only the word reading subtest was used with the tutee.	The word reading subtest tests were used to identify the tutee's skill level in vocabulary.	This summative tool will help answer research questions #1 (pre/post testing) and # 3 concerning whether tutoring assists in building vocabulary skills.

Table 3.3 describes the intervention steps for the action research project. The first week began with the recruitment of an older adult participant and an explanation of project outcomes. The second week involved administering the pretests and identifying instructional objectives for future sessions. Weeks four through five incorporated constructivist strategies during skill intervention. Week six included post-testing with the Challenger Placement Tool, TABE, and the WRAT-4.

Table 3.3

Implemen- tation Steps	Task	Objectives	Materials
Step 1/	Recruitment	Meet with the Education	Read to Succeed
Week 1	of Participants	Coordinator of Read to Succeed	Training Session
	and		
	Introduction	Meet with the Director of the Middle	
	of the Project	Tennessee Adult Education Program	None
Step 2/	Administratio	1. Given a short reading passage, the	Challenger Placement
Week 2	n of the	student can answer literal questions	Tool
	Challenger	related to the story sequence.	WRAT-4
	Placement	2. Given vocabulary words in a short	TABE
	Tool and the	reading passage, the student can use	
	WRAT-4	context clues to determine the	
		meaning of selected words.	
	Design		
	the		
	intervention		
	plan based on		

	the results of the pretest		
Step 3/ Week 3	The student reads short passages and uses context clues to determine word meaning.	 Given a short reading passage, the student can answer literal questions related to the story sequence and can highlight, within the passage, proof for the answer. Given vocabulary words in a short reading passage, the student can use context clues to determine the meaning of selected words and can highlight, within the passage, the proof for the meaning. Given reading passages on the HISET practice tests, the student can read the passage, answer literal comprehension questions, and highlight proof for the answer. 	Carreker., S. & Birsh, J. (2019). Appendix M Comprehension Passages. In Multisensory Teaching of Basic Language Skills: Activity book (4 th ed.). Paul H. Brookes Pub. High School Equivalency Basics: Reading (2016). McGraw Hill Education. (Pages 22 and 24) <i>Steck-Vaughn</i> <i>Fundamental Skills:</i> <i>Reading</i> <i>Comprehension.</i> (2016). Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
Step 4/ Week 4	Read short reading passages and answer literal questions related to the story sequence Complete virtual progress monitoring on TABE Academy	 Given vocabulary words in a short reading passage, the student can read the word and describe the meaning. Given reading passages on the HISET practice tests, the student can read the passage, answer literal comprehension questions, and read the sentence that is proof for the answer. Given reading passages on the HISET practice tests, the student can read the passage, answer questions about the use of transition words, and read the sentence that is proof for the answer 	Job Interview Tips Man Injured at Fast Food Place Reading Exercise. (n.d.). https://www.easypacele arning.com/exercises- basic-level-1-level-2- learning- english/english- exercises-level-1/612- fast-food-place- exercise-reading- learning-english HISET High School Academy: Reading. (2016). McGraw Hill.
Step 5/ Week 5	Use short reading passages (e.g., in print and on the	1. Given a short reading passage and multiple-choice questions, the student can find, within the passage, the proof for the answer choice.	Tire Trouble Dr. Chang's Invention. https://www.readworks .org/article/Dr-Changs- Invention/f02d8969-

	computer) and	2. Given reading passages on the	e155-4b92-b170-
	have the	HISET practice tests, the student can	a933c9dfe742#!article
	student	read a passage and answer multiple	Tab:content/
	answer	choice questions to select the word	High School
	multiple-	that would be correct in context.	Equivalency Basics:
	choice	3. After reading a passage, the	TABE 11 &12.
	questions	student can retell the story in his	https://www.essentiale
		own words and in the correct	d.com/educators/tabe-
		sequence.	academy
Step 6/	Administratio	1. Given a short reading passage, the	Challenger Placement
Week 6	n of the	student can answer literal questions	Tool
	Challenger	related to the story sequence.	WRAT-4
	Placement	2. Given vocabulary words in a short	TABE: Reading
	Tool; the	reading passage, the student can use	
	WRAT-4	context clues to determine the	
	posttest; and	meaning of selected words.	
	the TABE		
	post-test		
	Commission		
	Comparison		
	of pretest and		
	post-test		
	results		

Table 3.4 Pretest Results

Name of Instrument	Raw Score	Level Score
Challenger Placement Tool	57/60	6
Vocabulary		
Challenger Placement Tool	3/5	4
Reading Comprehension		
WRAT 4	38/55	College/university
HISET/Tennessee Adult	Phonemic Awareness 100%	Е
Basic Education (TABE) Test	Phonics 86%	
	Reading Paragraphs 29%	
	Instruction and Forms 86%	

On the pretest, the tutee had strengths in vocabulary on the Challenger Placement Tool. Phonemic Awareness, on the TABE, was another area of strength for the tutee. Reading comprehension and reading paragraphs are areas of need.

Table 3.5 Post-Test Results

Name of Instrument	Raw Score	Level Score
Challenger Placement Tool	60/60	6
Vocabulary		
Challenger Placement Tool	4/5	6
Reading Comprehension		
WRAT 4	41/55	College/University
HISET/Tennessee Adult	Phonemic Awareness 100%	E
Basic Education (TABE) Test	Phonics 86%	
	Reading Paragraphs 29%	
	Instruction and Forms 86%	

3.6 TABE Lessons: Progress Monitoring

Lesson	Score	Date Submitted
Details	50	4/4/2022
Asking Questions	37.5	4/4/2022
Finding Information in a Text	37.5	4/4/2022
Introduction and Form Unit Quiz	85.71	4/4/2022
Simple Forms	37.5	4/4/2022
Simple Instruction	87.5	4/4/2022
Reading Paragraphs Unit Quiz	28.57	3/30/2022
Paragraphs	62.5	3/30/2022
Using Images and Words Together	100	3/28/2022
Points of View	37.5	3/28/2022
Context, Prefixes, and Roots	75	3/16/2022
Points of View	37.5	3/16/2022
Paragraphs	87.5	3/14/2022
Phonics Unit Quiz	85.71	3/14/2022
Reading Longer Words	75	3/14/2022
Reading Irregular Words	75	3/14/2022
Words that Break the Rule	100	3/14/2022
Phonemic Awareness Quiz	100	3/14/2022

The posttest indicated that the tutee maintained his strength in vocabulary skills. He could use his decoding skills to unlock words he encountered. While the tutee made slight gains in comprehension skills, the area continues to be needed.

Summary

A mixed-method research design was used to include both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The WRAT-4, TABE, and Challenger Placement Tool were used to collect pre and post-test data. A sample of one older adult learner was selected to participate in a tutoring experience. The in-person tutoring intended to use constructivism approaches as the instructional tool to impact reading comprehension skills. The intervention plan, as described in Table 3.3, uses constructivism techniques to make an impact on the tutee's skill level. A significant limitation of the study is that it is based on the performance of one older adult individual.

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Blanche Glimps retired from the Department of Teaching and Learning at Tennessee State University. She taught for many years with Detroit Public Schools.