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Last Issue Notice

Dear Subscribers and Readers,

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all the educators that contributed to JARI for the past years as well as the entire staff at NDPC and all of our Research Fellows. The minds and lives of children that have been positively affected by the journal are noteworthy. In our last issue we would like to give a special thanks to our own Dr. Sandy Addis, a true educator that has worked tirelessly in the field of education to increase the achievement and opportunities of ALL children. As we transition as an organization, we will continue to provide effective strategies on our website yearly conferences. NDPC will always be at the forefront of educating ALL children and we appreciate your support.

Robert Peters
Chief Academic Officer
The National Dropout Prevention Center

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Teacher Perspectives on Information Sharing and Parent Knowledge of Special Education

Jennifer Farley, Jacqueline Huscroft-D'Angelo, Kristin Duppong Hurley, A. Angelique, Aitkenand Alexandra L. Trout

Abstract: Policy and professional standards shape the way that special education teachers partner with parents. Such partnership is key to engaging parents in the process of special education and can serve as the foundation for collaboration and information sharing. Although the literature describes recommendations for how teachers can provide information to parents, few studies examine what information teachers provide. The purpose of this exploratory study was to investigate how teachers perceive school information sharing and parents' knowledge relative to special education. To understand these perspectives, we developed and piloted the Parent Knowledge and Resources in Special Education – Teacher Version survey, with a group of 142 special education teachers. Results indicated that 67.6% of teachers perceived parents to be satisfied or very satisfied with the special education information received from schools. However, teachers had varied perspectives on how well parents understand special education, and the majority (56%) did not feel resources and supports to help parents better understand special education exist. Teachers perceived that schools most frequently encouraged parents to access information through conversations with teachers (75.9%), conversations with school administrators (44.4%), and paper handouts provided by the school (41.9%). Teachers also reported that how well school districts provided information varied by special education topic. We also identify implications of the study results and areas for future research.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; 2004) provides guidelines for the administration of special education services and informs the duties of special education teachers. These responsibilities are complex and extend throughout the special education process, starting with student evaluation and ending with transition from school, requiring an expansive knowledge and resource base. Integral to this process is special education teachers' work in partnership with parents, a cornerstone of IDEA. Beyond this, the role and responsibilities of the special education teacher – in general and specific to parent partnerships - is also defined by professional organizations. For example, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), emphasizes family involvement in the Special Education Professional Ethical Principles (CEC, 2015). However, policy and professional standards do not stand alone in shaping the duties of exceptional educators relative to parents. The literature includes numerous studies that explore these partnerships and describe informational resources (Burke, 2012; Foster & Cue, 2008; Schultz et al., 2016), communication (Applequist, 2009; Azad et al., 2018; Dardig, 2005; Vanden-Kiernan & McManus, 2005), parental engagement (Bettini et al., 2019; Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2013; Kasper, 2009), and considerations for culturally and linguistically diverse parents (Lo, 2012; Wenner Conroy, 2012).

Parental involvement in school is strongly associated with positive academic achievement and school outcomes (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2005). Several theoretical frameworks of parental involvement include broad domains such as home-based, school-based, and academic socialization; special education teachers have the opportunity to significantly impact parent roles with school-based parental involvement (Green et al., 2007; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). For example, existing literature emphasizes the importance special education teacher and parent collaborations, working relationships, and consistent communication (Collier et al., 2015; Edwards & Da Fonte, 2012; Whitbred et al., 2007). Research also calls for advancing teachers' role beyond that of a partner, to act as parent guides through the special education process. Kalyanpur and Harry (2004) suggested the responsibility of special education professionals is to support parent acquisition of special education knowledge and navigational skills by proactively providing parents with information. However, limited literature exists specifically focused on how parents access information about special education topics, and the role of teachers in providing such information. Before teachers can fully realize their role as parent guides through the special education process, there is a need to better understand how teachers present special education information to parents and support parents in acquiring knowledge.

Special education is complex, and few studies have examined what information teachers provide to parents about it. Foster and Cue (2008) explored the job duties of teachers of deaf students and found that they provided parents with information about disabilities, educational options, services, and student progress. Trainor (2011) conducted focus groups with 17 special education teachers and found that, overall, they were willing to support parents' understanding of special education policies, resources, and services but expressed concerns about connecting parents to advocacy groups. For parents of students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), teachers provided information to parents during conferences but also reported that parents were searching for information and resources on their own to aid

their understanding (Schultz et al., 2016). Overall, information supplied by teachers is key to parents' development of an understanding of special education, which in turn, serves as the foundation for parental engagement in their child's education (Burke, 2012). Considering parents of students receiving special education services identify teachers as their preferred source of special education information (Huscroft-D'Angelo et al., 2019), it is necessary to better understand the specific content of information provided by teachers, as well as the ways that they provide it.

Azad and colleagues (2018) asserted that special education teachers are concerned about parent communication and frustrated by what they perceive to be the only methods of communication available to them: written and face-to-face. There are limited studies specific to the methods teachers use to provide such information and the available research focuses almost solely on recommendations. According to the literature, teachers should provide parents information about special education in multiple formats, including print, video, internet, and presentations (Salend, 2006). Teachers may provide internet, or web-based resources, through letters, brochures, or websites (Applequist, 2009; Dardig, 2005). In-person approaches, such as teacher or guest presentations, give parents the opportunity to participate in discussions, which may further enhance their learning (Salend, 2006). Furthermore, when providing parents with formal special education paperwork, inclusion of supplemental materials may offer additional explanation (Pogoloff, 2004).

Given both parents' preference for receiving information from teachers and the myriad of ways researchers recommend that teachers provide information to parents, the role of teachers in informing parents is clearly paramount. Although researchers suggest that parents seek advice and information about special education from teachers (Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2011; 2013; Huscroft-D'Angelo et al., 2019), it unknown how these requests for information and advice are related to parents' knowledge of the special education process. There is a need for more research that directly examines parents' knowledge of special education, and teacher's perceptions of their role in building this knowledge. Overall, given the importance of parental involvement in special education (Burke & Hodapp, 2016), there is a need to close the gap between the recommendations for teacher-parent communication in the literature and teacher practices specific to information sharing. The first step in closing this gap, which serves as the purpose of this study, is to expand the research by documenting teacher perspectives on the information schools share with parents of children receiving special education services. This includes examination of both topics and methods of information sharing. This study also explores teacher perspectives of parents' overall knowledge of special education, including their most frequent questions and the resources that support their understanding of special education.

METHODS

The research team conducted an exploratory study through survey research (Ponto, 2015) to better understand teacher's perspectives of information sharing with parents. The existing literature specific to teacher roles and recommendations for sharing information informed the development of a survey, The Parent Knowledge and Resources in Special Education – Teacher Version, which the research team piloted. Participants included teachers providing special education services to students in school settings (e.g., early childhood through high school), located in 16 different states. The survey provided a low-cost and efficient option to collect data from a large number of current special educators across a breadth of topics related to parent knowledge and resources. The study was exploratory, as it was unclear how the recommendations in the literature were practiced in the field, so it was important to ask teachers about all these options for information content and sharing methods. Finally, the use of an on-line survey allowed for the collection of data from a large number of teachers located across the United States.

Measures

A process developed and used previously in the creation of surveys for parents (Huscroft-D'Angelo et al., 2019; Huscroft-D'Angelo et al., 2013; Trout et al., 2014) and administrators (Aitken et al., 2019) was employed by the research team to develop The Parent Knowledge and Resources in Special Education – Teacher Version survey. First, the team reviewed the literature specific to information sharing and parents' knowledge of special education. Next, the team brainstormed survey items regarding the content and methods of teacher communication with parents of students receiving special education services. Then, the team drafted the survey instrument and refined it through an iterative process of review by colleagues (i.e., researchers, professors, school district leaders) from the disciplines of special education, general education, and education research. We then tested the revised survey with a group of current special educators who provided feedback to the team, which informed additional revisions to the survey. The final survey included four domains, (i.e., Teachers Locating Resources Independently; Parent Perspectives on Resources/Supports to Gain Knowledge of Special Education; Parent Knowledge of Special Education Processes and Practices; Parent Training on Special Education) with 102 content items and seven demographic items. This exploratory study focused on two of the survey domains related to teacher perceptions of parental access to special education topics and knowledge of special education (Parent Perspectives on Resources/Supports to Gain Knowledge of Special Education and Parent Knowledge of Special Education Processes and Practices).

The Parent Perspectives on Resources/Supports

to Gain Knowledge of Special Education included 19 items that identified teacher views of parents' satisfaction and understanding of special education, as well as their school's encouragement of parents in accessing sources of information (e.g., conversations, paper handouts, or websites). First, teachers rated their perceptions of parents' overall satisfaction with the information provided by the school (very satisfied, satisfied, neither satisfied nor unsatisfied, unsatisfied, very unsatisfied) and current understanding of special education (excellent understanding, good understanding, adequate, poor understanding, not well at all). Next, teachers identified the question that parents most frequently ask them related to special education (open-ended, text response). Then, teachers provided information about how frequently (never, sometimes, most of the time, always, I don't know) their school encouraged parents to use 13 different sources of information about special education. These sources included into three types: (a) conversations (e.g., conversations with special education teachers, conversations with other parents, conversations with parent support agency staff; seven items), (b) handouts (i.e., paper handouts; one item), and (c) websites (e.g., school district website, state department of education website; five items). An open-ended item followed that asked teachers if there were any other sources that provide parents with information (open-ended, text response). Finally, teachers responded to two items on resource availability. The first item asked if resources and supports to better understand special education were readily available to parents (yes, no). The second item asked whether the teacher had found any specific resources that were helpful in informing parents about special education (yes, no). If so, teachers described the resource (open ended, text response).

The Parent Knowledge of Special Education Processes and Practices domain included 17 items in which teachers shared details regarding the type of information their school provides to parents and how well the school provides this information. First, teachers completed 14 items related to how well (poor, acceptable, good, excellent, or I don't know) they felt their district shares information with parents on specific special education topics (e.g., how special education services work, individualized education plans, classroom placement options). Items fell three topical categories, that included (a) rights (e.g., legal rights of the parent, legal rights of the child; three items), (b) individualized education programs (IEP;e.g., individualized education programs, how often IEP meetings will occur; eight items), (c) communication (e.g., how parents can advocate for their child; three items). Next, teachers reported information on any other topics on which their school provides information to parents. Finally, teachers identified topics on which they wish they had better information to share with parents (e.g., how special education services work, evaluation, IEPs; 12 response options). Additionally, the survey included seven demographic items regarding teacher gender, certification, level of education, grade level taught, years of experience, and zip code of their school building.

Procedures

The University's Institutional Review Board approved procedures for the study. Partnerships with school districts and university education departments facilitated participant recruitment. Initially, research team members sent an email and recruitment flyer with study information to partner organizations, which included school districts, associations for special education teachers, an education non-profit organization, and graduate programs. Partner agencies, located in multiple states, then had the option to share the information with potential participants. These partner organizations used email, social media posts (e.g., Facebook), and printed flyers to notify special education teachers of their eligibility to participate in the survey. However, participating teachers may have also shared the information they received with others (e.g., sharing a Facebook post on their personal Facebook page, forwarding the email or recruitment flyer). In notifications, partner agencies provided eligible special education teachers with information about the purpose of the study as well as a link to the anonymous on-line survey. The identity of both the survey participant and the partner agency that recruited them was unknown to the research team. Participants provided informed consent electronically prior to completing survey items. A total of 212 teachers provided consent and 162 met the eligibility criteria (current special education teacher). At the end of the survey, participants could receive a $10 gift card as a stipend for their time.

Data Analysis

After survey administration was complete, the team exported all data from the online survey system (Qualtrics) into IBM SPSS Statistics 24. Review of the data identified 20 surveys for which the number of items completed was less than 80% of all survey items. The research team excluded these surveys from analysis and analyzed data for the final sample of 142 participants. The research team coded open-ended responses to identify themes and calculated descriptive statistics for all quantitative items.

RESULTS

Population

A total of 142 participants met inclusion criteria and completed at least 80% of the survey. The majority were female (93%) who held dual certifications in general and special education (62%) and had completed a master's degree (61.3%). Participants' teaching experience varied; 43% reported five or fewer years of experience, 17.6% re-

ported teaching between 6-9 years, and 39.4% reported teaching 10 or more years. Participants taught all grades (early childhood to high school) and 64% reported teaching multiple grades. Nearly half taught grades K-5 (49.3%), while 31.7% of participants taught in early childhood settings, 27.5% taught grades 6-8, and 21.8% taught in grades 9-12. Participants reported teaching in school buildings located in 16 states, representing all geographic regions of the United States. An analysis of zip codes indicated that 52% of participants were teachers at a school located in an urban area, as defined by National Center for Education Statistics.

Supporting Parent Knowledge of Special Education

Overall, teachers perceived parents were satisfied (52.8%) or very satisfied (14.8%) with the special education information provided by the school. While 21.8% of teachers indicated that parents were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied, only around 10% of teachers reported parents were unsatisfied (7.7%) or very unsatisfied (2.8%). Despite high levels of satisfaction, teachers expressed varied perspectives of parent understanding of special education. Most teachers indicated that parents had an adequate (40.8%), good (21.1%), or excellent (0.7%), understanding of how special education services work, while 32.4% of teachers reported parents had a poor understanding and 4.9% revealed that parent did not understand at all how special education services worked.

Participants identified what question parents most frequently asked them about special education and the research team coded responses into 13 broad themes (see Figure 1). The most frequently identified questions were related to services and accommodations (n = 31), and included items related to "how to get more services" and "test accommodations." Questions were also frequently related to eligibility (n = 16; e.g., "How do I get my child evaluated?", "Why is my child in special education?", "When will my child leave special education?"), transitions (n = 15; e.g., "What will happen to my child when they become adults?" "What does Kindergarten look like for my child?"), and academic progress or skills (n = 14; e.g., "How is my child failing?" "How can we improve their grades?").

Teachers also shared how frequently they believe their school encouraged parents to access specific sources of information about special education. Results revealed that conversations with school staff were most frequently encouraged (see Table 1). This included teachers who shared that their schools encouraged conversations with teachers always (38.3%) or most of the time (37.6%). Teachers perceived the encouragement of parental conversations with school administrators always (25.9%) or most of the time (18.5%). Teachers also shared that the school encouraged parents to use the paper handouts provided always (25.0%) or most of the time (16.9%). Between 60% and 80% of teachers shared that their school sometimes, most of the time, or always, encouraged the use of the school building website (60.4%), school district website (72.4%), local parent support agency website (73.9%), state department of education website (75.6%), and regional or national websites (80.2%) for families of students receiving special education services. However, results revealed websites to be among the resources teachers perceived parents to be least frequently encouraged to use, to learn about special education, when compared to other informational resources.

Though teachers perceived that their schools encouraged parents to use several sources of information, they also felt that such resources were not easily accessible. When asked if they believed that resources and supports to better understand special education services are readily available to parents, 56.0% of survey participants responded no. Furthermore, 55.3% of teachers reported that they had not found any specific resources to be particularly helpful for informing parents about the special education process. Of the 44.7% of teachers (n = 63) that responded they had identified helpful resources, 79% (n = 50) provided a written description of the resource. The research team coded these descriptions, by resource type, and assessed the total number of references for each code. Most frequently, teachers referenced websites (n = 34), the most popular of which was Wright's Law (www.wrightslaw.com). Additional websites referenced multiple times included state department of education websites (n = 4), federal websites (n = 3; e.g., idea.gov), and understood.org (n = 3). Other references included websites for specific organizations, specific disabilities, and schools. After websites, teachers identified organizations as a type of resource (n = 13), of which parent centers were most frequently referenced (n = 8). The remaining resources included paper books and handouts (n = 7), other online resources (n = 4; e.g., blogs, forums, Facebook groups), and people (n = 4; e.g., special education director, school staff).

Parent Knowledge of Special Education Processes and Practices

Teachers also described how well their school districts shared information with parents on specific special education topics (see Table 2). Teachers perceived their district did an excellent (45.1%) or good (28.2%) job providing information related to how often IEP meetings will occur, the highest rated topic overall. Regarding communication, teachers reported that their school did an excellent (35.9%) or good (31.7%) job providing information about how parents can best communicate with the school. Just under half of teachers reported their district did a good (29.6%) or excellent (18.3%) job providing information about advocacy. Rights-related topics varied regarding how well school districts provided information. Over 50% of teachers indicated that their district did a good or excellent job providing information regarding the legal rights of the parent and the legal rights of the child. However, only 37.4% indicated they did a good or excellent job providing information on the resolution of disagreements between parents and the school. When compared to all topics, the largest proportion of teachers rated this item as poor (20.4%) or

acceptable (36.6%).

Finally, teachers identified which topics they wished they had better information to share with parents (see Figure 2). Of the twelve options provided (of which teachers could choose all that applied), over half of teachers expressed they would like better information related to how parents can advocate for their child (63.4%) and how special education services work (54.9%). The options selected by the fewest teachers were specific to components of the IEP, including how schools notify parents of changes in the IEP (12.0%), the people attending the IEP meeting (8.5%), and how often IEP meetings occurred (7.0%).

DISCUSSION

Research clearly illustrates the positive relationship between parent involvement in school and student success. For the parents of students in special education, such involvement is dependent on their understanding of programs and services, which can be influenced by teachers' partnership and communication. This study was one of the first to document teacher perspectives of parents' knowledge of special education and how schools provide informational resources about special education to parents. Results indicated teachers perceived schools to encourage parents to access several informational resources specific to special education but most frequently, they perceived schools to encourage parents to obtain information from special education teachers. This aligns with parental preferences for receiving information from teachers (Huscroft-D'Angelo et al., 2019). In addition to receiving information from teachers, results revealed that schools frequently gave parents paper resources (i.e., handouts, pamphlets), and less often provided parents with web-based resources.

While schools did not frequently encourage parents to access special education information through websites, as compared to other sources of information, web-based resources made up the majority of resources teachers identified as helpful to share with parents. It is unclear, though, how teachers identify and select these web-based resources. It may be the case that teachers spend time curating their own list of helpful resources, such as the ones reported in this survey, but it is unknown if teachers share these recommendations more broadly with other teachers or school officials. Furthermore, while the literature recommends the provision of web-based resources to parents (Applequist, 2009; Dardig, 2005), methods for identifying these resources and assessing quality are not specified. Given the quantity of information available on the internet, the process of locating and reviewing high quality resources is likely time-consuming for teachers. Such efforts may end up being duplicated by other teachers in a building or district. Furthermore, parents also search for special education information on their own (Schultz, 2016), and may spend time reviewing the same resources as teachers. Efforts to better understand the components of high-quality web-based resources specific to special education and to disseminate these resources to special educators and parents may minimize duplicated efforts to locate informational resources while also ensuring parents' access to the high-quality information to which they access throughout the special education process.

In terms of how well schools provide information to parents, teachers perceived that schools did a good job providing IEP information. This is key, given parents' role on the IEP team and participation in IEP meetings (Burke, 2012). However, according to teachers, schools were less likely to do an excellent job of providing resources specific to parental rights and how to resolve disagreements with the school. This difference suggests that schools may use varying methods for sharing information on each of these topics. Expansion of the methods used to share information relative to the IEP, such as portfolios (Gregg et al., 2011) or web- and app-based systems (Englund, 2009), may assist in providing information on other special education topics. However, it should be noted that information on parental rights and dispute resolution is part of the paperwork schools are required to share with families associated with special education (e.g., prior written notice, parental rights). These complex legal documents may be difficult for parents to understand without supplemental explanatory information (Pogoloff, 2004). Therefore, teacher perceptions may indicate that to do a "excellent job," schools must go beyond simply providing the paperwork and IEP team members must make additional efforts to explain these topics to parents. Given this, resources specific to facilitating partnerships and communication may be helpful to IEP team members (Collier et al., 2015; Whitbred et al., 2007). However, within the time constraints of the IEP meeting, team members are already tasked with providing parents with a tremendous amount of information. Therefore, other methods may be employed to improve parents' understanding, such as discussions during teacher presentations and group meetings with parents (Salend, 2006). Schools may also want to explore other innovations that equip parents with special education information, like parent-to-parent support interventions that connect experienced parents with current parents of youth receiving special education services (Duppong Hurley et al., 2020; Kutash et al., 2011) to complement the efforts of special education teachers.

Survey results also indicated that teachers perceived the need for better informational resources on specific topics in special education. Over half of teachers reported they would like resources specific to advocacy and how special education services work. This corresponds to the need for advocacy-specific resources identified by parents (Huscroft-D'Angelo et al., 2019) but is inconsistent with research documenting teacher concern regarding advocacy organizations (Trainor, 2011). In terms of how special education services work, the topic is broad, and it is unclear if teachers believe parents need guidance with a general overview or a better understanding of specific aspects of special education

services, depending on the needs of the family and stage in the special education process. Taken together, these findings suggest the need for development of additional resources and increased accessibility of existing resources.

Limitations

Though this study reveals new information regarding teacher perceptions of information sharing and parent knowledge, there are several limitations. First, this study used The Parent Knowledge and Resources in Special Education – Teacher Version survey to gather information from teachers. Therefore, results are limited to teachers' perceptions of parents and did not include parent input. This survey also needs psychometric research to ensure validity and reliability. Further, it may be necessary to revise and expand items to include other methods of interacting with families, such as learning communities (Murray & Mereoiu, 2016) and use of portfolios (Gregg et al., 2011). Second, convenience sampling identified participants, so it is possible that our sampling approach only reached certain types of special education teachers. Replication of this study with additional samples is necessary to see if results are generalizable to a larger population of special education teachers.

Implications for Practice

Given the importance of parent engagement in special education (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2005), and the key role teachers play to facilitate partnerships and provide informational resources to inform that engagement (Burke, 2012), the findings of this study may inform teacher supports and future research. Teachers identified a lack of resources to support parent understanding of special education and only about a third of teachers surveyed provided details regarding the resources they find helpful to share with parents. Teachers may benefit from building-, district-, or even state-level supports that allow for the identification and sharing of high-quality resources with parents. Yet, the literature does not identify such supports for resource sharing; professional development may help teachers to identify and create such resources. Learning communities may also promote sharing of resources between teaching teams within buildings and school districts. Additionally, both teachers and parents may benefit from learning about special education together. Models, such as the Teacher-Parent Partnership Model (TPPM; Murray & Mereoiu, 2016), provide a platform within a learning community for enhanced communication, sharing of resources, and joint training and decision-making. Finally, engaging parents in pre-service teacher training, such as in the Family as Faculty program, has been effective in supporting teachers' partnership skills and increased awareness of parental knowledge of the IEP process (Collier et al., 2015; Patterson et al., 2009).

However, for such professional development and resource-sharing efforts to be effective, there is a need for additional research specific to the content and method of providing information to parents. Future research must identify the content of informational resources that best supports parent understanding of services. Teachers expressed interest in additional resources about how special education works; yet, this topic is broad. This may reflect a need for parents to obtain a general overview of the special education process, especially after identification of their child. Such resources would need to be both comprehensive and easy for parents to understand and the field needs additional research to inform the balance between these priorities.

Future research will also increase understanding of the best way to present parents with information about special education. Given that teachers frequently identified web-based resources as helpful to parents, yet perceived that schools did not frequently provide these types of resources, research must examine how web-based information can help build parents' knowledge of special education. Perhaps schools could share other resources in the same manner they share information about the IEP, as teachers perceived schools did a good job providing this information to parents. Yet, additional research is necessary to fully understand the way in which IEP information is provided to parents, and how these methods of information sharing are similar to or different from how information on other special education topics is provided.

Finally, future research should continue to explore teacher perspectives on what parents know, and have yet to learn, about special education. This includes developing a better understanding for the content and method for sharing information that supports parents' understanding. Such research should also explore what type or amount of special education knowledge parents need to fully engage in the special education process.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this study documented teacher perspectives on the types of information schools provide to parents about special education and methods of information sharing. Results detail the ways in which parents may build an understanding of special education processes and services, as well as teachers' perspectives of parents' knowledge. Yet, the field needs additional research to fully understand this transfer of information and how it supports parents' understanding of special education processes and services. Supporting teachers to continue to provide high quality and relevant information to parents is a promising strategy to improving parental knowledge of special education, with the ultimate goal of improving services for students throughout the nation.

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Table 1

School Encouragement of Parents to Access Sources of Information About Special Education (n = 142)

Source of information	Frequency encouraged			
	Never	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
Conversations				
Conversations with teachers	2.8%	21.3%	37.6%	38.3%
Conversations with school administrators	5.2%	50.4%	18.5%	25.9%
Conferences for parents of children receiving special education services	30.8%	29.3%	16.5%	23.3%
Conversations with the school secretary or office administrator	33.1%	38.5%	14.6%	13.8%
Conversations with other parents at my child's school and in our community	30.0%	36.2%	22.3%	11.5%
Conversations with local parent support agency staff	21.4%	48.4%	19.0%	11.1%
In-person trainings or workshops for parents of students in special education	30.3%	43.2%	18.9%	7.6%
Websites				
School building website	39.6%	34.3%	14.2%	11.9%
School district website	27.6%	44.1%	16.5%	11.8%
Local parent support agency websites	26.2%	47.7%	17.7%	8.5%
Regional or national websites for families of students receiving special education services	19.8%	50.4%	22.9%	6.9%
State Department of Education website	24.4%	52.0%	17.9%	5.7%
Handouts				
Paper handouts provided by the school	11.0%	47.1%	25.0%	16.9%

Table 2

How Well Schools Provided Information to Parents on Special Education Topics (n = 142)

	How well information was provided				
Topic	Poor	Acceptable	Good	Excellent	I don't know
Rights					
Legal rights of the parent	12.0%	31.0%	33.8%	20.4%	2.8%
Legal rights of the child	14.1%	31.0%	30.3%	20.4%	4.2%
Classroom placement options	18.4%	29.1%	33.3%	15.6%	3.5%
How any disagreements parents have with the school will be resolved	20.4%	36.6%	27.5%	9.9%	5.6%
IEPs					
How often IEP meetings will occur	3.5%	20.4%	28.2%	45.1%	2.8%
IEPs	2.8%	26.1%	33.8%	35.2%	2.1%
The people who can and will attend the IEP meeting	12.0%	22.5%	31.0%	30.3%	4.2%
How parents will be notified about any changes in their child's education or IEP	9.9%	24.6%	33.1%	28.9%	3.5%
How their child would be evaluated to see if they qualify for services	7.0%	25.4%	37.3%	26.8%	3.5%
How their child's progress will be tracked and recorded	15.5%	31.7%	34.5%	16.9%	1.4%
How special education services work	18.3%	29.6%	33.8%	16.2%	2.1%
An explanation of the different disability categories	20.4%	25.4%	35.9%	14.1%	4.2%
Communication					
How parents can best communicate with the school	8.5%	23.2%	31.7%	35.9%	0.7%
How parents can advocate for their child	16.9%	30.3%	29.6%	18.3%	4.9%

Figure 1

Questions Parents Most Frequently Ask Teachers, by Topic

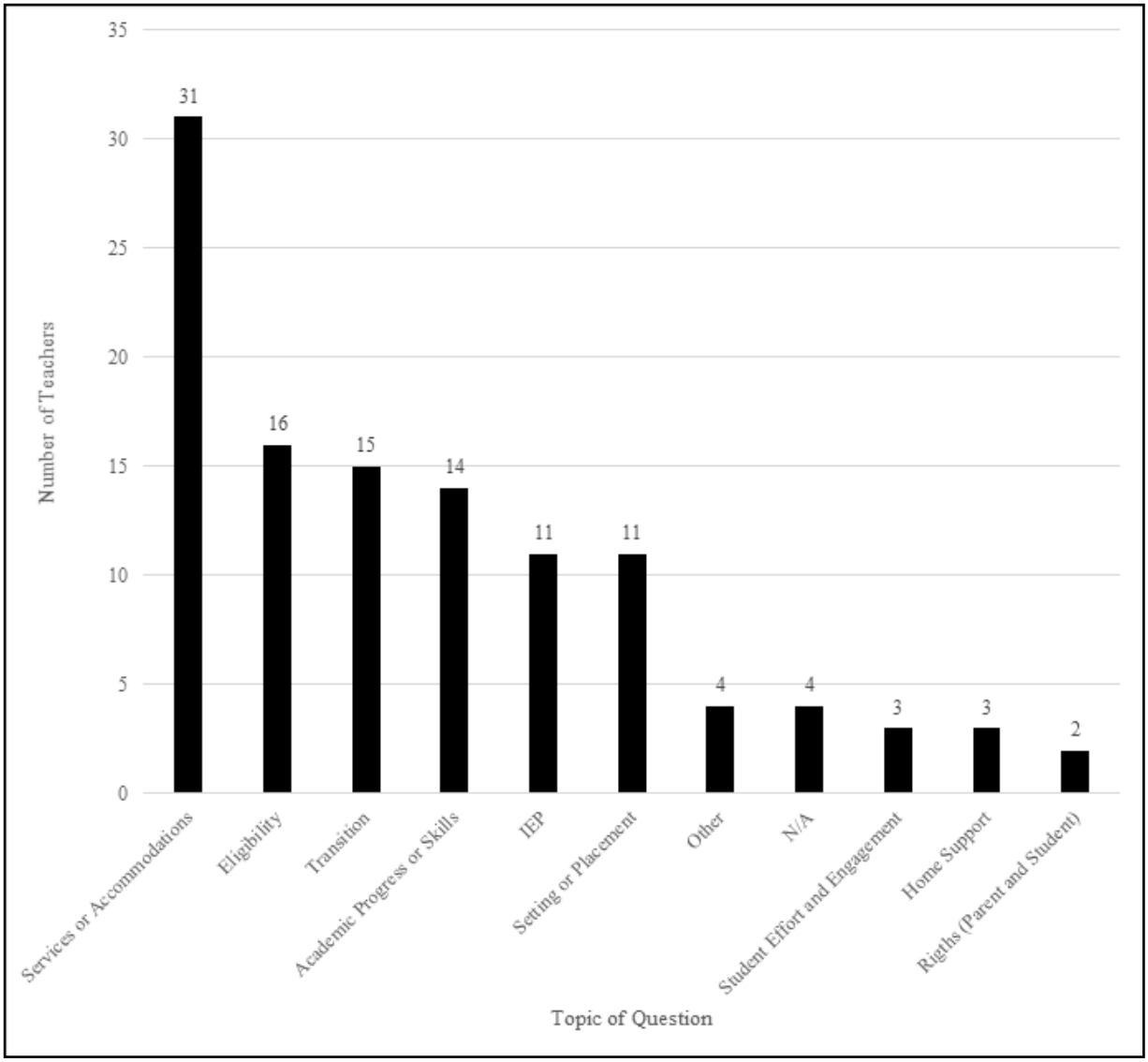
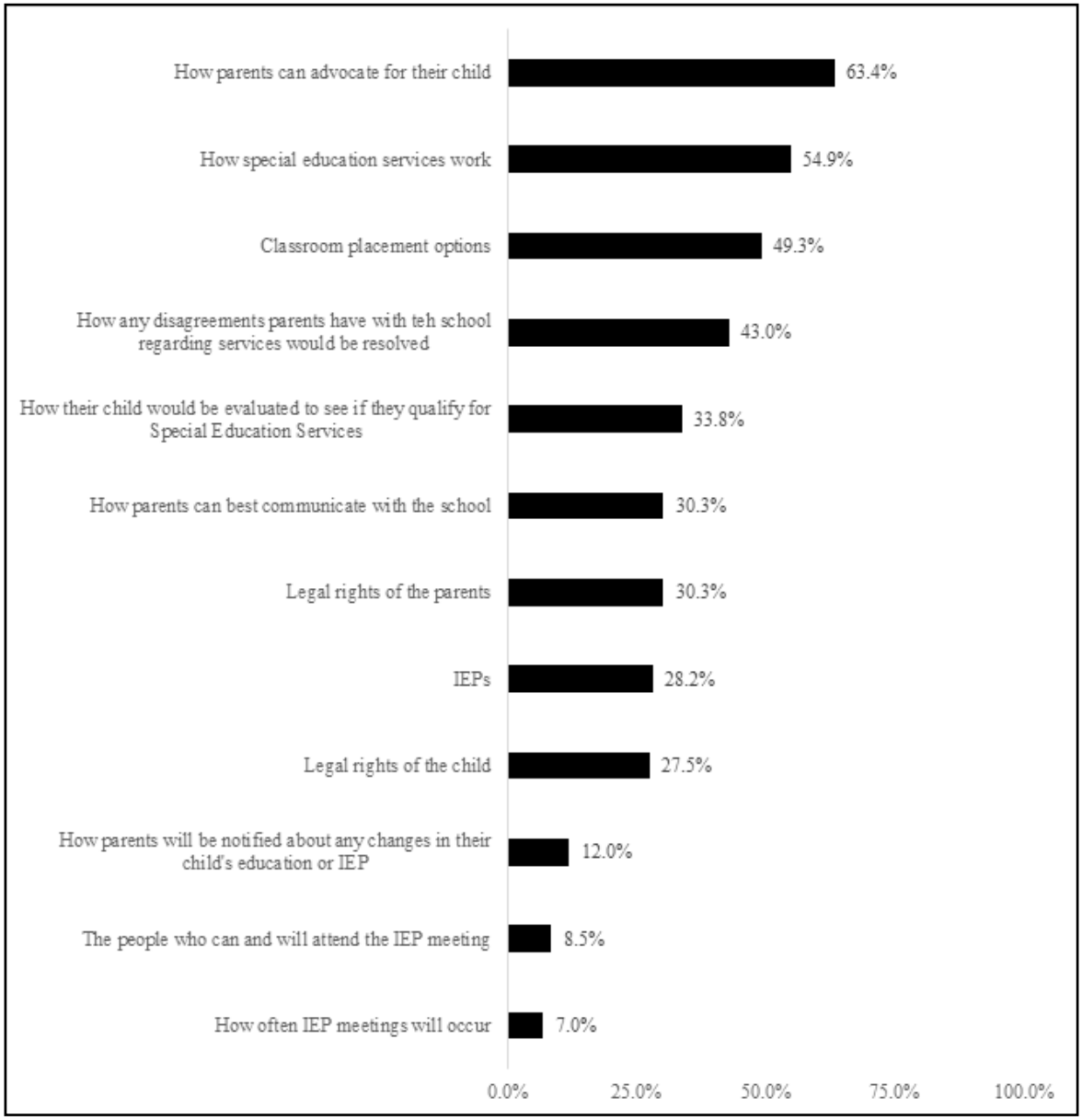


Figure 2

Topics on which Teachers Want Better Informational Resources to Provide Parents



Teacher Perceptions of Supporting Students Placed At Risk Socially and EmotionallyThrough a Virtual Writing Camp

H. Michelle Kreamer, Megan Breaux, and Toby Daspit

Abstract: Students' social and emotional well-being can impact academic performance, the college planning process, transition to college life, and college retention. Many students have had their mental health and well-being negatively affected by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, especially within the educational setting. When instruction was shifted from in-person to virtual settings during the pandemic's onset in March 2020, students across the world found themselves disconnected from school, teachers, and friends. Leaders of schools and extracurricular programs sought online alternatives for connecting with others while physically separated. More than a year after the onset of the emergence COVID-19, educational leaders are still working to provide quality academic experiences while implementing safe approaches to instruction. The Improving the Blank Page (IBP) writing program was one such organization that shifted to a remote setting with facilitators hosting the first-ever virtual writing camp in Summer 2020. The researchers examined perspectives of teachers involved in the virtual writing camp about their beliefs regarding social and emotional impacts for participating students, all of whom attended high-needs high schools (Title 1 schools with all students receiving free or reduced lunch). Findings, including establishing a virtual writing community and opportunities for self-reflection and confidence building, are detailed within this article, along with recommendations for supporting social and emotional needs of students placed at risk.professionals, it is critical that these professionals understand and incorporate the unique perspective of youth in foster care.

Educators know schools are more than a place for academic learning; they are where students explore new interests, discover passions, form bonds with others, and prepare for their lives beyond the school setting. Additionally, schools are a setting in which students' social and emotional competencies can be fostered (Lawson et al., 2019). Since students' social and emotional well-being can influence their academic performance, it is crucial to recognize that schools can serve a vital role when it comes to providing students with needed emotional supports (Masonbrink & Hurley, 2020). The possession of social and emotional learning (SEL) competenciescan influence a student's academic success; whereas, barriers to social and emotional well-being can lead to poor educational outcomes (Dymnicki et al., 2013). While teachers can and should support all students in SEL skills, they can be particularly impactful for students who are considered "at-risk" (Spiegel, 2017).

Some schools have partnered with programs focused on SEL or have implemented SEL-based curricula and researchers have reported positive impacts of SEL programs for students (e.g., Durlak et al., 2011; Zins & Elias, 2006). In a meta-analysis of 213 intervention programs focused on SEL within schools, researchers have cited positive impacts on SEL, "such as emotions recognition, stress-management, empathy, problem-solving, or decision-making skills" (Durlak et al., 2011, p. 417). Furthermore, Durlak and colleagues (2011) noted SEL intervention programs enhanced overall student academic performance. Nurturing SEL competencies can also aid students when it comes to their working memory, critical thinking, emotion and behavior regulation, and conflict resolution (Jones et al., 2021).

When COVID-19 spread across the world, many instructional leaders called for a shift from in-person to online instruction. Students found themselves removed from the physical school setting to which they were accustomed (Hamilton et al., 2020; Kennedy, 2020). Researchers predicted children from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds would experience greater impacts due to the pandemic, compared to their more affluent peers, (Masonbrink & Hurley, 2020) and that inequalities would likely increase for these students (Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020). This is important to recognize as this could result in potentially meaningful impacts for low SES and at-risk students. Although efforts to provide quality instruction in response to school closures were made, concerns were voiced regarding learning loss (Shafer, 2020), an increase in students experiencing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs; Bryant et al., 2020), and a lack of physical, mental, and emotional supports (Masonbrink & Hurley, 2020). Ultimately, these factors could contribute to a widening achievement gap that disproportionally impacts at-risk students (Dorn et al., 2020). As such, immediate efforts must be taken to stop the widening of the already existing achievement gap.

With the wide adoption of online or remote instruction in response to COVID-19, learning experiences became more self-directed (Sahlberg, 2020), and for many, isolating. Polizzi et al. (2020) dubbed isolation "a signature of the COVID-19 epidemic" (p. 59), as physically distancing was largely enforced to reduce spread of the virus. This isolation has been felt by adolescents

generally (Magson et al., 2021) and more specifically adolescents within the education sector specifically, as many students have reported experiencing the effects of isolation (Raza et al., 2020; Tasso et al., 2021). As time outside the classroom continued, those in charge of schools and extracurricular programs looked to online approaches as alternatives for connecting with individuals (Darling-Hammond, 2020; Goagoses et al., 2020). The formation of positive, high-quality relationships between children and adults is one characteristic of beneficial SEL and out of school programming (Jones et al., 2021); therefore, opportunities for students to connect with peers and teachers beyond the physical classroom can be a benefit during an otherwise isolating time. More than a year after the start of the pandemic, educational leaders are still working to determine safe approaches to instruction while simultaneously providing a quality academic experience. Though it is evident efforts are still being made to understand and address impacts associated with the pandemic, there are numerous unknowns, given the radical changes that have occurred in response to COVID-19 in a relatively short period of time.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to critically examine teachers' experiences as part of a virtual writing camp, Improving the Blank Page (IBP), in which they provided writing instruction to secondary students and also engaged in their own writing. As IBP facilitators, it was our belief that teachers and students needed the opportunity to come together for their camp in Summer 2020 and express themselves through writing. We hoped to gain an understanding of ways to better support the social and emotional needs of at-risk students, as well as understanding the perceptions of teachers that could be used to improve the experience for in the future. Within this article, we showcase voices of teachers who worked in low-income schools that have an ongoing partnership with the federal college-access program, Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP). This research is vital since it can be used as an example for ways that those in schools and community organizations can come together to support social and emotional needs of students placed at risk. This information can be beneficial in times characterized by such uncertainty and during "normal" times as well.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Over the past several decades, interventions, policies, and practices on emotional intelligence (EQ), character education, soft skills, and noncognitive skills have coalesced into what is now widely known as SEL (Garcia, 2016). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2015) defined SEL as:

> the process through which children and adults gain and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. (p. 5)

There are many programs that were designed to help educators promote the SEL competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, social management or relationship skills, and responsible decision making (Lawson et al., 2019; Philibert, 2016). Since social, emotional, and mental health barriers can negatively affect students' academic performance as well as success in life (Dymnicki et al., 2013), it is evident there are benefits to embedding SEL into instruction as a means of combatting these potential challenges. Furthermore, many SEL programs were created with the goal of preventing issues students might experience in favor of promoting more positive choices (Zins & Elias, 2006). Anxiety, stress, isolation, and low self-efficacy can impact students socially and emotionally (Zhang et al., 2020). Therefore, when enrichment designed to build social and emotional competencies is implemented, there is potential to support students coping with social and emotional stressors.

According to Schonert-Reichl (2017), teachers' social-emotional competence can impact their students. Teachers with high levels of SEL competence build stronger relationships with their students and foster warmer classroom environments (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Since the environment in which SEL is taught can influence the effectiveness of instruction (Zins & Elias, 2006), SEL competence is important not just for students, but should extend to teachers. SEL competence can be learned by both teachers and students, so programs designed for teachers and students to practice these skills together could be an effective model that supports social and emotional development.

Benefits of Developing SEL

Students who are considered at-risk can benefit from SEL instruction (Zins & Elias, 2006), including the low-SES, first-generation college student (FGCS) population. There is an association between poverty and negative effects on mental, emotional, and behavioral health, which can negatively impact peer relationships, academic performance, and the transition into adulthood (Yoshikawa et al., 2012). Basic needs (i.e., food, housing, and safe environments) must be met first before the benefits of SEL strategies can occur (Philibert, 2016; Yoshikawa et al., 2012). In addition, stable, intensive interventions (e.g., classroom interventions) provided over time have been recognized as effective in mediating the mental, emotional, and behavioral effects of poverty (Yoshikawa et al., 2012).

SEL is important since students can apply these skills to life beyond the K-12 classroom, including the college planning process, transition to college life, and college retention (Dymnicki et al., 2013), as well as during times of transition. Self-awareness involves a sense of self-motivation and satisfaction in goal attainment and, students with a high sense of self-awareness can benefit when it comes to setting and meeting college

and career goals (Dymnicki et al., 2013). Possessing self-management skills can help students transition to and cope with stressors common in postsecondary environments. A sense of belonging, reduced loneliness, and contributions to retention are all benefits associated with well-developed social management and relationship skills. Given the connection between SEL competencies and college and career readiness (Dymnicki et al., 2013), involvement in SEL programs could be beneficial in assisting students as they seek success beyond high school.

Negative Impacts of COVID-19 on SEL

The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated cities and communities around the globe, and concerns surrounding this virus have continued to include impacts on education. Teacher and student mental health and well-being have been noted areas of discussion during a time when many have coped with loss, experienced isolation or instability, or had increased feelings of anxiety (e.g., Baloran, 2020; Magson et al., 2021; Yoder et al., 2020). Social isolation has led to feelings of loneliness, isolation, depression, and anxiety for many (Tasso et al., 2021), as well as increased levels of anxiety, particularly for those who felt socially disconnected (Magson et al., 2021). However, students who reported feeling socially connected had more life satisfaction than those who felt disconnected (Magson et al., 2021). As such, efforts to remain socially connected could be one way to support students' social and emotional health. To combat struggles with mental health caused by isolation and stress, researchers have noted the importance of staying connected with others, recognizing mental health problems and getting necessary support, and providing positive and safe environments (Magson et al., 2021).

Impacts of the pandemic may be even greater for students who are categorized as at-risk. Dorn et al. (2020) explained that "[t]his virus is disrupting many of the supports that can help vulnerable kids stay in school: academic engagement and achievement, strong relationships with caring adults, and supportive home environments" (p. 6). The researchers noted that students will likely be impacted socially and emotionally, even if harder to formally recognize, due to physically isolating for safety and worrying related to the virus (Dorn et al., 2020). Since social and emotional struggles caused by the virus have the potential to result in long-term impacts (Magson et al., 2021), these concerns cannot be taken lightly. Another worry is that while confined to their homes, some children might face an increased risk for experiencing ACEs, including trauma fromabuse or neglect (Bryant et al., 2020). Trauma researchers acknowledged the sizable impact that such a global event will have on the mental health field (Horesh & Brown, 2020), as well as the lasting nature of these impacts (Fitzpatrick et al., 2020). Like social-emotional implications, ACEs can have long-term impacts on children (Bryant et al., 2020), which is an important reminder that even once the virus is "under control," it will continue to have a lasting influence. To lessen potential negative impacts, Bartlett and Vivrette (2020) suggested opportunities for check-ins with influential adults, connecting virtually with others, and recognizing positive things to help children during this uncertain time.

Addressing SEL and implementing SEL-based programs are potential ways to support students coping with effects of COVID-19, including students placed at risk. In their work, Yoder et al. (2020) reported that many states across the nation are working to provide supports aimed at the social-emotional health of students and the adults who work with them. Communicating the importance of SEL, sharing practices to promote social and emotional health, and providing learning opportunities and support for adults so they can more effectively support the students with whom they work has been encouraged (Yoder et al., 2020). Researchers have found evidence of the importance of SEL generally and for students placed at risk specifically. Furthermore, the pandemic has impacted individuals' social and emotional wellbeing and is anticipated to have a lasting influence. Despite this, there is reason to believe students' mental and emotional health can be supported through social connections via technology, the influence of a caring and encouraging adult, and opportunities to check-in with others. In the next section, we describe a program in which secondary students from low-SES schools, many of whom would be considered at-risk, had these experiences through their involvement in a two-week virtual writing camp.

IMPROVING THE BLANK PAGE: BACKGROUND

During seven years of the IBP and GEAR UP partnership, IBP facilitators have worked to provide engaging writing experiences for GEAR UP students. The College and Career Readiness Model that was implemented by program facilitators is depicted in Figure 1, along with an explanation of the types of experiences that have taken place each year from 2015-2020. A central component of the model is a summer writing camp with a final writing showcase. During this first iteration of the creative writing camp, recruited teachers came together for a week-long intensive writing experience. In the second week of camp, a cohort of sixth and seventh-grade students joined teachers and camp organizers and participated in creative writing experiences. As the culminating event, teacher and student participants showcased their writing in the presence of family, friends, educators, and community members. Each summer following the initial camp, camp organizers, teachers, and students complete the seven stage process presented in Figure 2. The same cohort of students has been followed by GEAR UP coaches and invited to attend camp each year, along with enrichment opportunities throughout the academic year.

In Fall 2019, camp facilitators began planning for the 2020 summer writing camp, not knowing we would not be able to gather in-person. However, as we continued to learn about the virus, we knew we needed to do something for the students and teachers with whom we

worked, some of whom had been participating in the camps for years. After much discussion and planning, we announced the first-ever virtual IBP summer writing camp. The virtual camp followed the same format with only teachers present during the first week and students joining in the second week. During the first week, teacher-participants engaged in synchronous writing exercises over Zoom, prerecorded asynchronous writing exercises, and online partner work, which involved the creation of asynchronous writing lessons to be shared with students during the following week. In week two, student-participants logged into Zoom along with teachers and camp facilitators and everyone began the session by engaging in writing. Students were invited to complete teacher-created writing tasks asynchronously and encouraged to log onto Zoom for guidance as needed. These teacher-created writing tasks were designed with an emphasis on creative writing to prepare students to meet academic and professional writing needs. In the afternoon, participants gathered to share writing, debrief, and hear from well-known writers who served as guest speakers.

METHODS

For this study, we employed an exploratory case study research design to learn about participant experiences and beliefs. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained from our institution so data could be collected in a systematic fashion to analyze participants' experiences while being involved in a process-oriented approach to writing and writing instruction.

Invited research participants consisted of teachers who participated in the 2019 or 2020 summer writing camps, along with program facilitators who led the camps (excluding researchers/article authors). In total, 22 potential participants were eligible to be part of this research study. For those potential participants who had been involved in the project beginning in Summer 2019, two separate recruitment emails were sent in December 2019 and the study was also explained at a face-to-face event during Spring 2020. Participants new to the project in Summer 2020 were introduced to the research study over Zoom and then received a follow-up email. When introducing potential participants to the research project, we explained the goal of the project, the voluntary nature of the research, and the informed consent process. For those who chose to participate, an informed consent form was signed by the participant and collected. Nine teachers participated along with three project facilitators (N = 12). Years in teaching experience ranged from two educators who just finished their first-year teaching to one veteran teacher with 35 years of experience. Additionally, several teacher participants were returning to IBP after having been part of the project in previous years.

Our data collection process consisted of document analysis, observations, and participant interviews. Teacher participant application data and end-of-camp evaluations were collected using a Google Form. We recorded observation notes during a pre-institute Zoom session, as well as during the teacher-only week (i.e., Week 1) of the virtual writing camp. Observations were conducted following an observation protocol, which was designed to ensure observer focus on writing activities and instruction provided, as well as participant work. To collect this data, we took turns taking observation notes that were typed into a Word document and later imported into a qualitative data analysis software program.

Interviews were conducted before and after the virtual writing camp. Before camp, teacher participants who were previously involved with IBP were invited to take part in a virtual focus group interview. Our goal in conducting this interview was to learn about participants' beliefs regarding writing and writing instruction and perceived benefits and challenges of writing experiences for teachers and students involved in the IBP program. Prior to camp, we also conducted one interview with each participant who served in a facilitator role, follow-up interviews were conducted with two teachers. After camp, teacher participants were invited to take part in a second focus group interview. Six teachers, including the same four from the first focus group, participated. For this focus group, our aim was to learn about teachers' perspectives regarding the IBP 2020 summer camp for both teachers and students, including the virtual nature of the camp. Similarly, two of three participant facilitators were interviewed after the conclusion of the camp to identify their experiences with and beliefs about the virtual summer camp.

As part of data analysis, the qualitative software analysis program, MAXQDA, was used to code collected data. We co-created a code list, then individually coded the same two documents (one interview and one observation) before discussing the codes to strengthen intercoder reliability. As we continued to code the remaining data, we had on-going discussions to note patterns and initial research themes.

FINDINGS

After collecting qualitative data and engaging in analysis, we discovered a shared focus among study participants regarding social and emotional impacts of the virtual writing camp for student attendees. Based on this research, the following sub-sections highlight the value of creating a virtual community of writers and perceived impacts for students who participated in the virtual writing camp.

Creating a Virtual Community of Writers

IBP camp facilitators saw the virtual writing camp as an opportunity for participants to form a community of writers. During the pre-camp meeting, it was explained that students would receive care packages with a writing journal, book of poetry, and letters from each of the teachers and camp facilitators to get students excited about the upcoming camp. Tom (pseudonym), a camp facilitator, stated that while there would be new challenges, there would also be "opportunities we never had [before]." The importance of establishing a writing

community was also shared by teacher participants. One teacher wrote, "my ultimate goal is to cultivate community around our writing and show students that what they have to say is important and that it is okay to make mistakes. In the end, my goal is to cultivate authentic writers." Another described the importance of identifying as a writer and writing with their students. In talking about IBP, one teacher explained "writing as community is different from what I was used to... I think that our students can really, truly benefit from that because it's not just a literacy skill in terms of academics...it's an empathy building opportunity in processing."

Prior to the start of the 2020 camp, Steve (pseudonym), a facilitator largely responsible for student recruitment, expressed worry over student participation. It turned out that he was pleasantly surprised as this new approach "really opened up opportunities." He explained that students did not need to worry about transportation and could still be available to attend to other responsibilities at home that might arise. When reflecting on the camp, Steve said "the student experiences were so positive that students were looking for ways to keep in contact with each other after." Tom echoed this, noting "the students really seemed to bond quite a bit." Tom also acknowledged that students might be more used to bonding through virtual platforms. He acknowledged the impact of COVID-induced isolation, referring to it as "devastating" for teenagers and said that he believed the camp was a needed opportunity for "being around other people, even if it was virtually." Although it appeared students made connections with one another, teachers seemed divided on whether they felt connected with the students. See Table 1 for examples of teacher comments.

A benefit of the virtual platform included the opportunity for individuals to voice ideas, questions, and writing in varied ways that aligned to their personal preferences; therefore, participants could be part of the writing community on their own terms. Steve shared that some students who enjoy writing "don't necessarily like to be in the spotlight," but they still had "a chance to shine in their own way in their comfort factor" through the virtual platform. For instance, during the teacher-only week, it was noted that the chat feature was a great tool in which participants could make comments while someone was speaking and to have back and forth dialogue. Steve also noted that students being able to seek teacher support during asynchronous writing exercises led to great questions from students they might not have felt comfortable asking in front of everyone.

For some, writing can be an isolating task; however, participants were able to engage in a writing community through the virtual camp. While this allowed for flexibility in participation, some teachers expressed feeling disconnected from students. However, others recognized bonds students appeared to form with one another while participating in the virtual camp.

Perceived Impacts of Student Experience

Participants discussed perceived impacts of students' experiences as part of IBP in general, as well as the 2020 virtual summer writing camp specifically. Major areas of participant focus included the opportunity to express oneself, the chance for self-reflection and discovery, and opportunities for confidence building. One perceived impact was the opportunity for students to express themselves through writing. By participating in the IBP program, those involved were provided with a time and place to write, whether in-person or in a virtual setting. Teachers explained that this helped students to explore writing and also to share their own stories through writing. By engaging in these experiences, students might feel encouraged or prompted to engage in self-reflection and personal discovery.

An IBP facilitator who has been with the project since its inception, shared that her goal for students involved in the 2020 virtual camp was for them to "capture who they are" and "begin to authentically express who they are." When asked about the virtual camp, Steve shared that "there was something to speak to everyone," so all participants could engage in self-expression and reflection. Tom voiced his belief that "students responded to their exercises really well" as evidenced in the writing produced throughout camp and showcased on the final day. By providing these opportunities to write, participants suggested the students were able to express themselves and discover something that they might not have otherwise. See Table 2 for examples of teacher comments.

Another perceived impact expressed by teachers was student confidence. Several participants recognized that students might find writing intimidating, but involvement in IBP in general, and the virtual writing camp specifically, was an opportunity to gain confidence. Continued opportunities to write and feeling part of a safe environment were both cited as ways involvement in IBP can influence students' writing confidence. One teacher explained that students often lack writing confidence "because it is not something they are exposed to enough," however; she said, "the more you write, the less daunting the task becomes." Steve used the metaphor of a marathon to highlight the importance of continued opportunities for writing. He said, "if you are going to train for a marathon, you have to start running some time. And writing is the same way...teaching all writers that writing is not a pain or a chore or something to fear or dread." According to another participant, confidence building was the biggest take-away for students involved in the project, which is important because "confidence writing is going to translate to anything."

Tom said he thought the students improved as writers through their involvement in the camp and became more vocal as camp progressed, although he acknowledged it was difficult to see specific impacts on students' writing. Several teachers expressed that the final showcase where camp participants read their writing while logged into Zoom felt more powerful than in past years

when the showcase took place in-person. One teacher noted "there's a level of trust" that the teachers would be supportive as students read their works, saying "because of the lack of pressure, you can get more confidence and more out of yourself out onto that page."

Throughout the IBP project and the 2020 virtual summer writing camp, teacher participants highlighted several perceived impacts for student writers. Through these experiences, teachers indicated students can express themselves, reflect upon past experiences, and build confidence. While the perceived impacts are based on students' experiences with writing and writing as part of a community, participants suggested that these impacts can transfer to other aspects of students' lives as they continue to learn and grow.

DISCUSSION

SEL has been an area of focus for many researchers, including benefits of SEL interventions and initiatives (e.g., Hagelskamp et al., 2013). Given many individuals have experienced anxiety, isolation, and stress (e.g., Baloran, 2020; Magson et al., 2021) during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is particularly important to consider immediate and potentially long-term impacts on students' emotional health and wellbeing. This is especially critical for students placed at risk, already in high need for SEL interventions.

Need for High-quality, Engaging Virtual Learning Opportunities

The mental and emotional toll of COVID-19 on individuals includes negative impacts on students and other adolescents (Tasso et al., 2021). Ways to mitigate negative impacts include continued involvement in social experiences and supportive home and educational learning environments (Magson et al., 2021). It is also important for students to be academically stimulated and interact with supportive adults, especially for those students who may be considered at-risk (Dorn et al., 2020).

Students connected with peers through their writing in the IBP virtual writing camp. As noted by one participant, the students planned to stay in touch with one another after the camp was over; therefore, interacting with peers through digital means provided one way for students to feel less isolated. Furthermore, after not physically attending school for more than two months, students connected with educators via creative and critical writing engagement. Through creative writing, students shared their stories, which served as an opportunity for them to process trauma and have periodic check-ins (Bartlett & Vivrette, 2020). Students engaged in writing tasks benefited their they preparation for their academic futures, since teachers designed the creative writing experiences with a focus on enhancing students' critical writing even while not in a traditional education setting.

As remote learning becomes more commonplace, it is important to ensure online instruction is engaging. Providing teachers who participated in the IBP virtual writing camp with autonomy to design authentic writing tasks allowed for more meaningful learning experiences. One limitation regarding virtual instruction is a lack of equal access to technology (e.g., Kennedy 2020), which has the potential to create a "digital divide" (Darling-Hammond, 2020). While students who have access to a technological device and internet engage in remote instruction, students who lack these resources are likely to fall behind without these necessary tools, resulting in a digital divide. Some students might not have been able to participate if the camp were not virtual; however, limited technology or access to reliable internet was a concern for others. As such, IBP facilitators need to focus on this area in the future to ensure any students who wish to participate will be able to and not be hindered by a lack of access to necessary technology.

Social and Emotional Supports for Students Placed At Risk

Teachers' perceptions of how the IBP virtual camp provided social and emotional support for students placed at risk was also found. Previous studies have found that writing is a task that can naturally lend itself to SEL competence, as writing can be a way to process difficult experiences and emotions (Gladding, 1987). Relatedly, Ullrich and Lutgendorf (2002) found that reflective writing about the emotional and cognitive effects of stressful events helps individuals to experience growth over time.

Since teachers are the drivers of SEL (Schonert-Reichl, 2017), their perceptions of social and emotional impacts are important. Teachers' perceptions explored in this study align to prior literature (e.g., Gladding, 1987; Ullrich & Lutgendorf, 2002), as they described opportunities for students to work toward self-discovery, reflect on traumatic events, express themselves, build confidence, and contribute to a community of writers as part of their involvement in the virtual writing camp. All these perceived impacts are highly connected to social and emotional competence. Confidence is a common byproduct of self-awareness, since confident individuals can recognize their strengths and contribute to self-efficacy (Philibert, 2016). The prominent role of reflection as part of evaluation (Cipriano et al., 2020) is essential as students continue to respond to trauma associated with the pandemic, which was embedded into writing tasks during the IBP virtual writing camp. Moreover, the virtual writing community established during the writing camp cultivated relationship skills, which is a major SEL competency (CASEL, 2015).

Overall, more research is needed on social and emotional impacts of writing programs for students considered at-risk. One limitation with the current study is that teachers' perceptions were based on one week with students; therefore, it would be beneficial to analyze teacher perceptions over a longer period. Additionally, collecting data on student perceptions of the social and emotional impacts could provide additional insights

to supplement current findings. In future research, we hope to examine students' perceptions of similar virtual events on their emotional health and wellbeing, as well as academic impacts for at-risk students.

CONCLUSION

It is evident that approaches once considered standard educational practices have been altered in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although there has been a push for a return to normal, it is important to learn from experiences that have occurred as a result of the pandemic. Online learning certainly existed previously, but global responses to the virus contributed to an increase in remote instruction. As such, there is a need for leaders of school districts and educational policy makers to focus on addressing technology accessibility (Darling-Hammond, 2020), as well as the quality of virtual instruction delivered. Facilitators of the IBP 2020 summer virtual writing camp utilized asynchronous instruction so participating teachers and students would not have to sit in front of a computer all day long. There were also times for synchronous instruction to ensure participants would not feel disconnected. Through discussion and shared writing, teacher participants engaged in a virtual writing community, providing opportunities for students, many of whom could be considered at-risk, to feel connected in what could be a very isolating time.

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Figure 1

Improving the Blank Page: College and Career Readiness Model

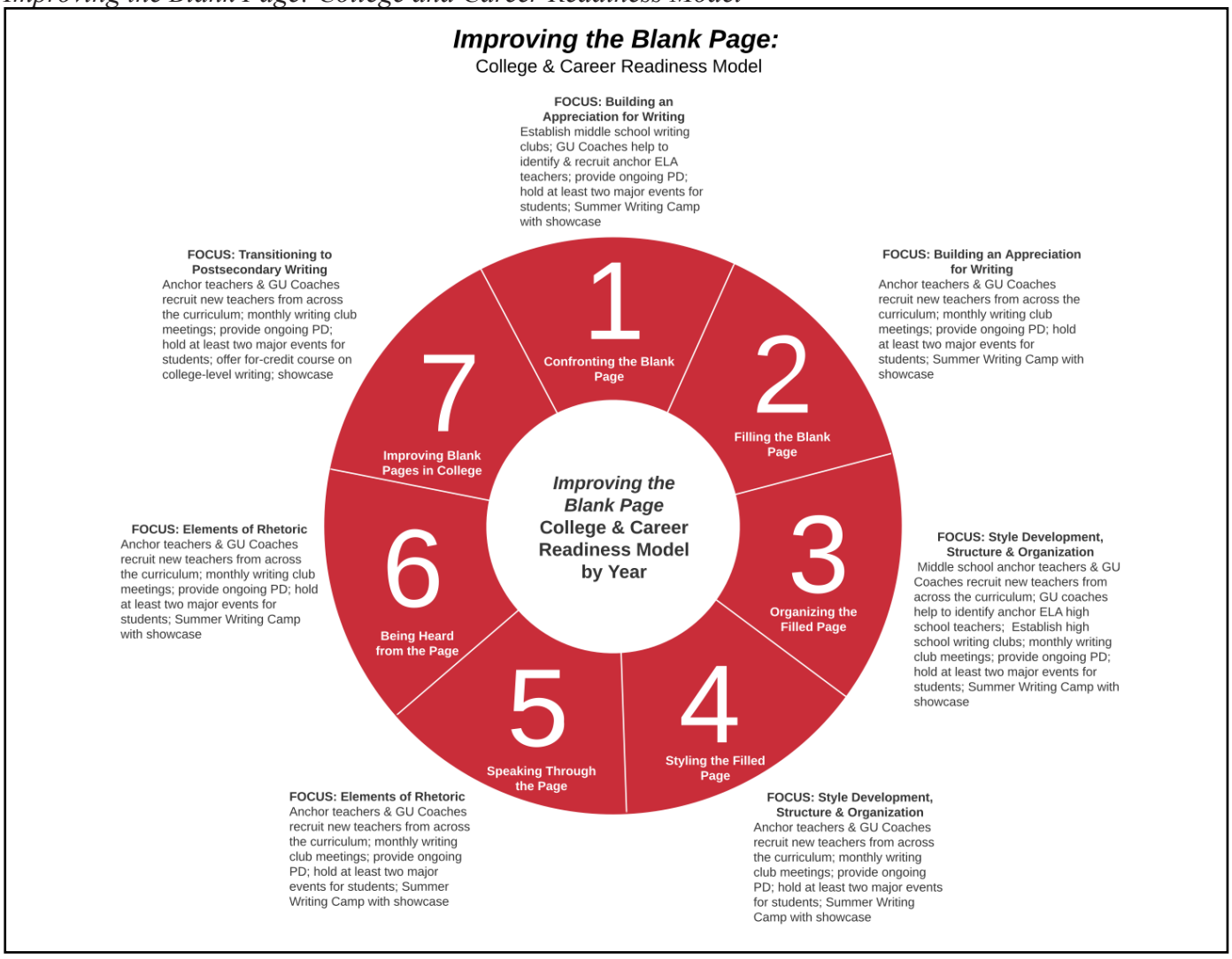

Figure 2

Improving the Blank Page: How the Summer Writing Camp Unfolds

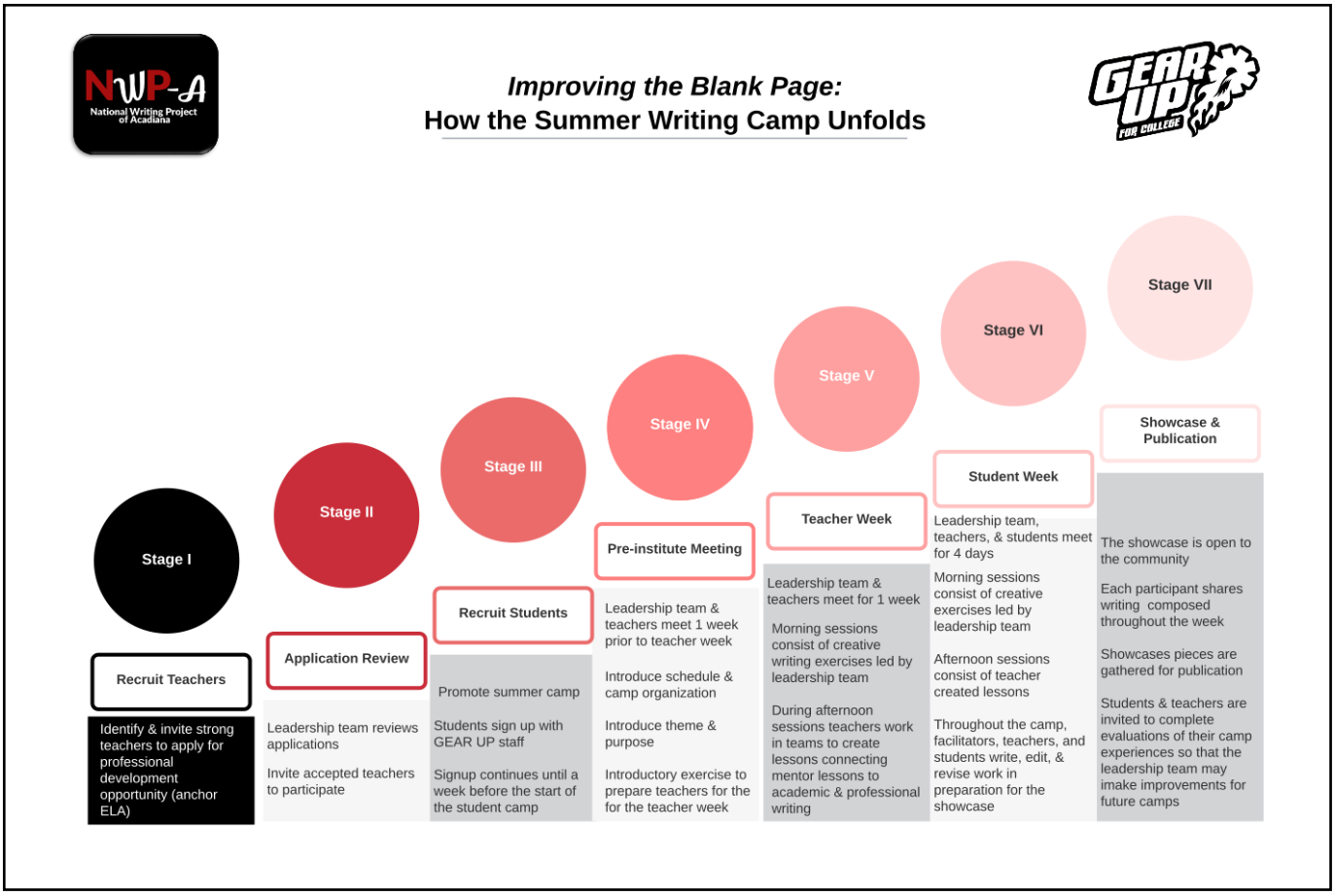

Table 1

Teacher Perceptions regarding Connecting Virtually

- "In comparison to the past, it really felt impersonal with the kids."
- "I felt so disconnected. And then on the last day when they're reading, I was blown away, because I didn't see that process."
- "I do think it might have bothered us [the teachers] more than it bothered the kids because I think the kids are so used to living in a virtual world."
- "I grew up with like, the virtual…so, for me, I felt pretty much the same connection with my students in this than I did whenever I see them in person… the way that I get to know my students is done a lot through more writing."

Table 2

Teacher Perceptions of Students' IBP Experience

Self-expression

- The project "lets them explore writing in a safe environment" and this can "embolden students that are not used to writing and helps equip them with the tools they need to succeed."
- "They take these traumatic experiences that they've had, and they write about them, they change the characters a little bit. But ultimately, yeah, they wrote about their tragic experiences, and they definitely use that to process what's happening."

Self-reflection and Discovery

- "You can see that they use these [writing exercises] as outlets to process the difficulties in their lives."
- The creative writing activities "help students not only to articulate themselves according to academic standards but to actually articulate and discover their selves as they move toward finding and achieving goals for their futures."

Impact of District-Wide Free Lunch on Third-Grade Students' Reading Comprehension

Rita Williams, Greg Hickman, Carmen Leggett, Diane Ricketts, Misty Bryant

Abstract: Poverty has an enormous impact on children and their success in school. Children with low socioeconomic status often perform poorly in reading. Poor reading skills often lead to truancy, low rates of high school graduation, low-paying jobs, and cycles of illiteracy in generations of families. Secondary data was collected from the Tennessee Department of Education website and conducted an ANOVA quartile split to examine the impact of universal free and reduced lunch (FRL) policy changes on third grade reading normal curve equivalent (NCE) scores. Findings from this one-way ANOVA indicated there were no statistically significant differences in third grade reading NCE scores after the policy change to 100% FRL. The social implications of these findings offer the potential to raise awareness of universal FRL and its impact on reading comprehension among third grade students in the educational setting, enabling policy changes in the United States Department of Agriculture's core nutrition program for FRL to children regardless of socioeconomic status.

In 2018, approximately 17.5% of the 39.7 million Americans affected by poverty were children (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2018). In 2017, nearly 1 in 5 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers between the ages of 0 and 5 were classified as poor at the time of most significant brain development (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2018). Poverty among children has an enormous negative influence on their school success, with the main reasons being suffering from food deprivation and poor access to adequate health care (Hair et al., 2015).

Poverty and parental education statuses are also associated with the quality of a child's educational experiences and academic achievement, whether attending public school, private school, or homeschool (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2014). For example, childhood poverty correlates with poor academic achievement starting in kindergarten and extending through elementary and high school, leading to meager rates of high school graduation (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2014). Researchers have long associated low family economic statuses with poor academic performances among children in reading (Amendum & Fitzgerald, 2013). One significant predictor of standardized reading comprehension tests in Grades 1 through 12 is the percentage of children who live in poverty (Bhattacharya, 2015). Reading skills lower than basic reading ability can result in truancy, set children on a path towards low-paying jobs, and contribute to the cycle of illiteracy in the next generation (Alharbi, 2015).

Children of low socioeconomic status (SES) often perform poorly in academics, experience chronic absenteeism from school, and attain low-paying jobs as an adult (Spencer et al., 2019). Children of low SES also often perform poorly in math and reading (Bhattacharya, 2015). Poor reading skills among children often lead to truancy and low-paying jobs as adults (Yildiz & Cetinkaya, 2017). Children who do not master reading by third grade may experience academic problems throughout their school process (Capellini et al., 2015).

The National School Lunch Act of 1946 (NSLA) created the modern school lunch program with the multifaceted goals of providing a means of safeguarding the health and well-being of U.S. children by promoting consumption of nutritious foods (U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA], 2015). Proper nutrition plays a role in providing sufficient development in life for the physical, mental, and social development of children (Rasberry et al., 2015). The NSLA federally funded meal program is in over 100,000 public and nonprofit schools and care facilities (USDA, 2015). The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 included the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program, which are now part of the new universal meal program.

The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 is a universal meal plan that gives LEAs and schools in low-income areas an alternative method for operating school meal programs (USDA, 2014). The CEP implemented the policy change to universal free lunch, which allows eligible districts and schools with high percentages of students living in poverty to receive meals for students at no cost regardless of economic status eliminating the need to collect eligibility data (U.S. Department of Education, 2016a). Universal free and reduced school lunch (FRL) policies removes the stigma of proverty, improves children's health and education, and helps low-income families make ends meet (USDA, 2014). Removing the administrative processes of qualifying for the program allows schools, principals, and teachers to focus on teaching (Brown & Bilski, 2017).

In this quantitative, comparative study, we examined the impact of policy change of universal FRL on third grade normal curve equivalent (NCE) reading scores. Specifically, we compared the different extremes of low, middle, and high levels of FRL in relation to NCE reading scores before and after FRL policy changes. The use of a Q1Q2Q3 split enabled us to examine which schools, based on socioeconomic-status of percentage of FRL, benefited the most from this policy change.

Research Question/Hypotheses

RQ1: What are the differences in third grade reading

NCE scores before and after the policy change to 100% free and reduced lunch?

H0: $\mu^1 = \mu^2 = \mu 3$ – There are no differences in third grade reading NCE scores before and after policy change based on levels of free and reduced lunch prior to policy change.

H1: $\mu^1 \neq \mu^2 \neq \mu 3$ – There are differences in third grade reading NCE scores before and after policy change based on free and reduced lunch levels prior to policy change.

METHOD

To examine the impact of policy change to universal FRL on third grade NCE reading scores we used a quantitative, ANOVA quartile split research study design to compare the differences of low, middle, and high levels of FRL before the policy change. An ANOVA with a pre- and posttest design was used for this study as it enabled us to compare NCE third grade reading scores of schools the year before the switch in policy (i.e., 2013) and year the after the switch in policy (i.e., 2014). We determined the differential NCE reading score by subtracting the NCE reading scores of 2013 from the NCE reading scores of 2014.

The sampling method used for this study was purposive and convenience sampling. We purposively selected schools that met The Community Eligibility Program (CEP) criteria and implemented the policy change to universal free lunch. Convenience sampling included the purposive sampling of elementary schools with third grade NCE reading scores (see Tennessee Department of Education, 2016b). The sample size utilized was the population of elementary schools in Tennessee (N = 575) that participated in the CEP of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, Section 104a and made the switch to 100% FRL in 2014 (USDA, 2014). This large sample size was optimal as it offered the opportunity for enhancing the ability to detect effects (Field et al., 2017).

Independent Variable

PUniversal school percentage of FRL was the independent variable (IV). Universal FRL was defined as meeting the eligibility criterion based on the CEP guidelines of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, Section 104a that allows eligible districts and schools with high percentages of students living in poverty to receive meals at no charge (USDA, 2015). To promote reliability and validity, data from the IV group of schools that changed to FRL was derived from the official data of the Tennessee Department of Education and the CEP of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act.

We conducted an ANOVA Q1Q2Q3 split of FRL before and after the policy change. Using a quantitative, comparative design enabled us to examine which schools benefited the most from this policy change. This Q1Q2Q3 split was conducted to assess whether the means of NCE third grade NCE reading scores were significantly different among the groups based on the indication of FRL among the three groups. We looked at FRL for all 574 schools that made the policy change and ran quartile analysis based on the total sample of schools and their current FRL% in 2013. Those schools at and below the 25th percentile was classified as Q1, those schools at the 75th percentile and higher were classified as Q3 and those schools between Q1 and Q3 were classified as Q2. Given that FRL is an indicator of SES, we wanted to assess how third grade NCE reading scores were impacted by this policy change among these three groups.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable (DV) was the differential of NCE reading scores in 2013 and 2014. The formula for this differential was the 2014 NCE reading score minus the 2013 NCE reading score. For example, if a school in 2014 had an NCE reading score of 50, and in 2013 they had an NCE reading score of 46, the differential NCE reading score would be 4

(i.e., 50 - 46 = 4). The DV was defined as a way of measuring where students fall along the standard curve. NCE scores range from 1 (lowest score) to 99 (highest score), which indicate an individual student's rank (Ebert & Scott, 2014). The NCE scoring system follows the National Percentile (NP) score when reviewing achievement test reports (Whitford et al., 2018). NCE scores have a preset mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 21.05 (Ebert & Scott, 2014).

We obtained the DV scores from official school data from the Tennessee Department of Education (2016b). NCE scores are deemed reliable and based on an equal-interval scale, meaning the difference between any two successive scores on the scale has the same meaning throughout the scale (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The NCE scores are valid ways to measure student's performance with the performance of other children in the same age or grade (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Finally, NCE scores are norm-referenced test scores that compare student performance nationally or locally (Ebert & Scott, 2014).

RESULTS

Analysis of the descriptive statistics is presented in Tables 1 and 2. After conducting a frequency analysis of the total population of schools that changed to 100% FRL (N = 575), one school provided no NCE reading scores; therefore, this school was removed, which resulted in N = 574.

As presented in Table 1, an ANOVA, Q1Q2Q3 split divided the range of NCE gain scores. This process enabled us to examine which schools benefited the most from the FRL policy change. This split was conducted to assess whether the means of the DV were statistically and significantly different among the groups based on the indication of FRL/SES linked to the different groups. We conducted this split to see if this change in policy impacted NCE 3rd grade reading scores based on FRL Free and reduced lunch as an indicator of SES.

Statistical Assumptions

The three assumptions for one-way ANOVA (i.e., independence, normality, and homoscedasticity [homogeneity of variance] were met in this study. The observation (i.e., independence) was the first assumption addressed; this was achieved by purposively sampling selected schools that met the CEP criteria and implemented the policy change

to universal free lunch. The ANOVA was used to assess whether an unequal number of participants in each group (i.e., the means of the DV of NCE gain scores 2014 minus 2013) were significantly different among the groups.

The second assumption addressed was normality. The assumption of normality is based on the F-statistic, where the DV is usually distributed equal in each group (Field et al., 2017). This assumption was met in that the DV had a normal distribution in each group. According to Field et al. (2017), homogeneity of variance assumes that all observations came from the same underlying group with the same degree of variability (see Table 2). To address this third assumption, we used the Levene's to test of the quality of variances, $F(2, 571) = .835$, $p = .434$. There were no significant violations in the assumptions of independence, normality, or homoscedasticity.

Table 2 shows the mean scores of the three groups. NCE gain scores ranged from a mean of .17 to .41. More specifically, Q1 had a mean gain of .41, Q2 had a mean gain of .16, and Q3 had a mean gain of .17.

Hypothesis Testing

We tested the hypothesis for the research question utilizing a one-way ANOVA to examine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the third grade NCE reading gain scores of 2014 (i.e., the year schools implemented the policy change of 100% FRL) minus the 2013 scores (i.e., the year before they implemented the policy change). Table 3 presents a summary of the between groups and within groups. The value of the F ratio is

$(2, 571) = 1.356$, $p = .259$ (which is greater than .05 alpha level); therefore, a post hoc test was not warranted. See Table 4 for a complete summary of the between groups and within groups. Since the p value is greater than 0.05, there were no statistically significant differences between group means as determined by the one-way ANOVA, therefore, we accepted the null hypothesis that there are no differences in NCE third grade reading scores based on the policy change in 2014. In other words, this policy change did not impact third grade NCE reading scores from 2013 to 2014 regardless of the level of FRL prior to the policy change.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this quantitative, one-way, ANOVA, Q1Q2Q3 split study was to examine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the third grade NCE reading scores in Tennessee schools after a policy change to 100% FRL. The use of a Q1Q2Q3 split enabled us to examine which schools benefited the most from this policy change, and splitting FRL into quartiles before policy change allowed us to see if this policy benefited students in schools with lower, middle, and higher percentages of FRL, which is an indicator of SES. First, we examined if the dependent variable of NCE reading scores was equal between groups and within groups. The findings revealed the schools with lower FRL had the highest gains in 2014 regarding third grade NSE reading scores. The schools with middle and high FRL percentages gained very little in NCE reading scores in 2014. Schools with the lower FRL, or more affluent schools, did gain from this policy change, although not statistically significant.

The CEP allows local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools that meet the program's requirement to offer free meals to all children (USDA, 2015). Under the CEP, eligible districts and schools provide meal services to all students regardless of economic status (USDA, 2014). The eligibility criterion to qualify is based on the CEP meal program that allows eligible districts and schools with high percentages of students living in poverty to receive meals at no charge (Tennessee Department of Education, 2016a). Conversely, our results suggest that the schools with the lower FRL percentage (i.e., more affluent schools) had the highest gains in NCE reading scores in 2014 based on the indication of SES linked to the different and extreme groups. The middle and high FRL schools gained very little.

According to Kieffer and Lesaux (2012), understanding children's SES and reading comprehension is critical as low SES yields a higher risk for reading difficulties. The high FRL schools were already receiving a higher FRL due to having the highest need and lowest SES. According to Brown and Bilski (2017), school lunch is the only nutritious meal many students eat all day; however, eating FRL has a stigma, and despite the need, 1 in 3 eligible students skipped lunch to avoid the shame . Children who qualify for FRL at the lower FRL or more affluent schools may have wanted to eat lunch but did not do so because of the label and stigma (see Brown & Bilski, 2017). The findings of this study suggest that changing the FRL policy to 100% did not increase NCE reading scores among third grade children.

The impact of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Reading First Initiative over the past three decades of the nation's children's failure to read proficiently has been consistent and ongoing (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). There continues to be many contradictory views on the effectiveness and strategies that best meet the needs of improving reading proficiency among young children, with several studies on nutrition, education, and SES. According to Phelan et al. (2010), general knowledge includes literacy about the health gained through access to doctors, medical resources, the ability to read and understand medical information in the healthcare marketplace. The relationship between money and health is linear with a positive slope: The more money a person has, the better their health is, with some exceptions (Benezal et al., 2014; Goldberg, 2014).

Başkale and Bahar (2011) explored several reasons children's diets may be inadequate, such as low levels of education of mothers, low SES, and insufficient family knowledge about nutrition, which may interfere with a child's growth and development. Mensah and Kiernan (2011) conducted a study on general maternal health and cognitive development and behavior in children through the early years. The authors found a relationship between general maternal general health and children's learning and cognitive development. Conversely, the results of our

study suggest that schools who provide lunch through the Community Eligibility Provision Act had a higher percentage of students on FRL before the policy change and showed no statistically significant difference in reading gains after the policy change to 100% FRL This finding can be explained by the fact that high FRL schools were already receiving close to 100% FRL. Hence, they had less to gain from the policy change even though such schools were the reason for the policy change. Conversely, schools with the lowest FRL percentages gained because they had more opportunities for growth or progress in reading scores, even though the policy change was not created for such schools. In other words, the policy change was designed to benefit high poverty schools but because they were already close to 100% FRL the policy change was not as beneficial to such schools as originally hypothesized.

Limitations

There are three noteworthy limitations regarding this study. First, the utilized secondary data was only available at the school level and not at the individual student level. Inclusion of additional variables such as zip codes, specific age, SES of individual respondents who are now receiving FRL because of the policy change, and such students' NCE reading scores before and after the policy change may better offer more insight of FRL and NCE reading scores. Second, the data also was limited to third grade students at one given school year. That is, we did not track and compare the same students from 2013 and 2014. Rather, we compared two but different third grade reading classes from two different years (before and after policy change). Third, this study was delimited to schools in the state of Tennessee.

Future Research

Given the findings from this study, there are several avenues of future research. Additional statistical tests are needed to examine the difference of universal FRL and the impact on NCE third grade reading scores across more than one year of data. Perhaps examining the impact of this universal FRL program from 2015 to 2021 would provide insight regarding the longitudinal effectiveness vs. the short-term effectiveness of this program that we examined. Moreover, additional statistical tests to examine other variables such as demographics of race, age, gender, limited English Proficient, and students with disabilities to study the difference of universal FRL and the impact on NCE third grade reading scores. A mixed-methods design study may help identify the use of theoretical lenses related to gender, race/ethnicity, and class. In addition, a qualitative exploratory case study design with a small group of students conducting structured interviews for data collection and questionnaires could potentially better understand schools, which benefitted more, such as more affluent schools.

CONCLUSION

The process of reading proficiency is one of the necessary fundamental skills that enhance academic success in schools (Capellini et al., 2015). In the United States, having the ability to read is closely connected to how much a person can achieve in their personal and professional lives (Fives et al., 2014). The findings of our study yielded no statistically significant differences between third grade NCE reading gain scores in schools that changed to 100% FRL after the policy change. Based on the finding of our study, we would suggest that USDA, policymakers, and educational institutions consider the process through more thoroughly when establishing policies and procedures related to students from low SES backgrounds. The policy did not benefit low SES schools, which it was intended to do. In hindsight, the policy really could not have benefited high poverty schools as they were already close to 100% FRL. Utilizing the information from this study may afford educational institutions, policymakers, and community partners the opportunity to make data driven to address the problem of poor reading skills among third grade students.

makes it difficult for teachers to provide the understanding and support likely needed for these students. Day et al., (2012) found that foster youth want teachers to be aware of their personal challenges and available for assistance and support. Given the evidence that shows foster children and youth benefit from the involvement of key adults (Leve et al., 2012), supporting educators in their interactions with foster youth is critical.

Youth reported two critical factors related to their participation and progress in school—self-motivation and a relationship with a caring adult. Several youth described taking responsibility for their education as part of their self-determination for a better life. In addition, having one caring adult, whomever that may be, was a repeated theme and highlights the role that teachers and other school staff can have in supporting foster youth's educational and social well-being. In a study of former foster youth who achieved academic success and were attending a four-year university, the most frequently cited role models were teachers (Merdinger et al., 2005).

This recurring theme in the foregoing study—the importance of the presence of one caring adult in the lives of at-risk youth—is strongly represented in the resiliency literature (cf Werner & Smith, 1992; Winfield, 1994; Wolin & Wolin, 1993), and bears repeated emphasis. There is a certain poignancy in the notion that the difference between success and failure may rest on such a strong, but slender thread, and it underscores the tremendous potential contribution of the singular actor—be it a teacher, child welfare social worker, or paraprofessional—to the success of these youth.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for NCE Gain Scores (2014 - 2013)

Quartile	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*SE*	95% CI for Mean			
					LB	UB	Min	Max
Q1.00	143	.41	1.558	.130	.15	.66	-4	11
Q2.00	287	.16	1.439	.085	-.01	.32	-5	4
Q3.00	144	.17	1.686	.141	-.01	.45	-6	5
Total	574	.22	1.535	.064	-.10	.35	-6	11

Note 1. 2014 reading 3-year average NCE scores. *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation; *SE* = standard error; LB = lower bound; UB = upper bound; Min = minimum; Max = maximum. Q3Q1 split represents the means at three levels. Q1 is the lowest half of the data at 25th percentile. Q2 is in-between or middle at 50th percentile of the data, and Q3 is the highest 75th percentile of the data.

Table 2

Test for Homogeneity of Variance

NCE gain scores 2014 - 2013	Levene Statistic	*df1*	*df2*	Sig.
Based on mean	1.028	2	571	.358
Based on median	.835	2	571	.434
Based on median with adjusted *df*	.835	2	546.641	.434
Based on trimmed mean	1.140	2	571	.321

Note. Levene's test tests the null hypothesis that the error variance

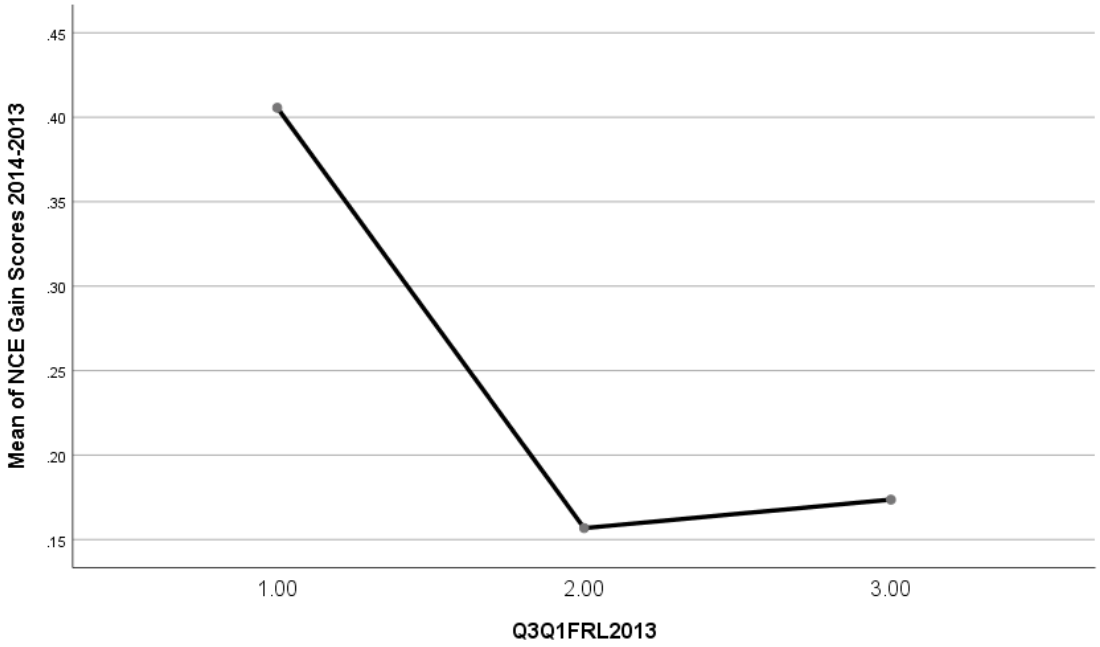
Table 3

Results of ANOVA Examining NCE Grain Scores (2014-2013)

	Sum of squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	Sig.
Between groups	6.377	2	3.188	1.356	.259
Within groups	1343.079	571	2.352		
Total	1349.456	573			

Figure 1

Means Plot by Year



Note. This Figure 1 shows that the IV FRL Q3Q1 levels are the differential means of NCE gain scores from 2013–2014. The Q3Q1 split shows the means of the DV. There were no significant differences among the Q3Q1 split levels: Q1 ($\bar{x}\bar{x}$ =.41) is to the left of the means, Q2 ($\bar{x}\bar{x}$ =.16) is in-between the means, and Q3 ($\bar{x}\bar{x}$ =.17) is higher and right of the means, so there seems to be some practical differences between the groups.