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2021

# Lessons from the Pivot: Higher Education's Response to the Pandemic

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## Recommended Citation

Davis, Janine S.; Irish, Christy; Watson, Ellen; Arneson, Rosemary Huff; Walker, Jennifer D.; Hodges, Tracey S.; Murphy, Olivia; Skallerup Bessette, Lee; and al., et, "Lessons from the Pivot: Higher Education's Response to the Pandemic" (2021). *College of Education Books*. 1.
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# Lessons from the Pivot:

## Higher Education's Response to the Pandemic

**Editors:**

Janine Davis
Christy Irish

2021

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**Tracey S. Hodges, Ph.D. \*** is an assistant professor of Elementary and Literacy Education and an Associate Director of the Belser-Parton Literacy Center at the University of Alabama. She earned her Ph.D. in 2015 from Texas A&M University, majoring in Curriculum and Instruction with a literacy emphasis and Advanced Research Methods certificate. She is a former middle grade English teacher, which influenced her interest in developing high quality literacy teachers. Her current research interests include developing methods, strategies, and interventions for improving writing instruction in grades K-8 and integrating children's literature in content area and literacy instruction.

**Shannon Holder** is a doctoral candidate in the Learning, Leadership, and Education Policy Ph.D. program in the Educational Leadership Department at the University of Connecticut. Her research focuses on detracking, curricular tracking reform, school choice policy, desegregation efforts, and urban education policies. She is from Hartford, Connecticut, and currently resides there. Shannon is a former social studies teacher in an interdistrict magnet high school in Connecticut.

**Cailin Kerch, Ph.D.** is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Early Childhood and Elementary Education at the University of Alabama. She earned her Ph.D. in 2018 from the University of Alabama at Birmingham Early Childhood Education with an emphasis in early intervention and curriculum. Her Masters of Education in Educational Leadership is from Lehigh University. Cailin was a pre-kindergarten, elementary school teacher, and school leader for over a decade. Her current research interests include social emotional learning in early childhood settings, teacher beliefs, and related professional development.

**Ekaterina Koubek, Ph.D. \*** holds a Ph.D. in Second Language Acquisition/Foreign Language Education from University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Her research interests include preservice teacher attitudes and beliefs, the use of action research in teacher preparation programs, and high-impact practices for student engagement. She is an associate professor and TESOL coordinator at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, where she teaches both undergraduate and graduate courses in TESOL programs.

**Marla J. Lohmann, Ph.D. \*** is an Associate Professor of Special Education at Colorado Christian University. She taught in self-contained special education classrooms in Houston and Chicago before receiving her doctorate at the University of North Texas in 2013. Dr. Lohmann's research interests include effective online teacher preparation, Universal Design for Learning in higher education, and using technology tools to support pre-service and in-service teachers.

**Olivia Murphy**\* is a doctoral candidate, teacher educator, and preservice teacher mentor at the University of Maryland, College Park. Her research interests include teacher education and social justice literacy practices, and her dissertation research focuses on investigating the teacher identities and pedagogical practices of highly effective high school critical literacy educators. Olivia was previously a high school literacy teacher who taught 9-12th grade in Brooklyn, NY.

**Ruby L. Owiny, Ph.D.** is an Associate Professor of Education at Trinity International University. Prior to earning her doctorate from the University of Kentucky in 2013, she taught both second and third grade general education and K-5 special education. She is passionate about supporting both pre- and in-service teachers in developing inclusive classrooms. Dr. Owiny's research interests include inclusive practices, specifically in effective teacher preparation for inclusive classrooms, Universal Design for Learning in K-12 and higher education, high leverage practices, and evidence-based practices.

**Margaret Thornton** is a doctoral candidate in educational leadership and policy at the University of Virginia. Her research interests include how school leaders support or undermine equity work in schools. Thornton's work on school leaders is centered around issues of detracking, access to rigorous coursework, and racial and socioeconomic equity. Prior to moving to academia, she taught and served as a teacher leader in detracking programs at rural and urban public schools in the U.S., most recently working for four years at a comprehensive, public high school on occupied Monacan land in Charlottesville, Va.

**Cathryn van Kessel, Ph.D.** is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta in amiskwacîwâskahikan (Edmonton, Canada). Her research interests include social studies education, curriculum theory, philosophy in/of education, and teacher education. Specifically, she is interested in how the concept of "evil" and its manifestations function in relation to what individuals and communities experience in curricular and pedagogical contexts.

**Jennifer D. Walker, Ph.D.** is an Associate Professor of Special Education and the Program Director of Special Education at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Her research interests include teacher preparation, classroom and behavior management, and tiered behavioral interventions. She has a passion for working with pre-service teachers as they learn to implement inclusive practices. Prior to teaching in higher education, Jennifer was a special education teacher and behavior specialist.

**Jennifer Ward** Jennifer Ward is from the Umpqua Nation. She lives and works in ᐊᒥ�ᐢᑿᒌᐚᐢᑲᐦᐃᑲᐣ amiskwacîwâskahikan (Edmonton, Alberta). She is the Lead Educational Developer, Indigenous Focus in the Centre for Teaching and Learning and a doctoral student within the Faculty of Native Studies at the University of Alberta. Jennifer works with faculty to Indigenize and decolonize their curriculum and teaching pedagogy. Her doctoral thesis explores decolonizing and Indigenizing the academy and post-secondary education. Her current

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research, as part of a collective alongside Indigenous women scholars, examines how decolonial self-love is empowering collective ideologies of wellness in the academy.

**Ellen Watson** is a Ph.D. candidate (ABD) with the Department of Secondary Education as well as a Lead Educational Developer focused on Assessment at the Centre for Teaching and Learning at the University of Alberta (Canada). Ellen supports instructors across campus to become reflective and knowledgeable pedagogues. Her research interests include secondary science education, epistemic beliefs, teacher advocacy, and teacher concerns. Ellen enjoys collaborating with colleagues to drive critical reflection about teaching, focusing on those areas important for inclusive, equitable, and socially just education.

**Eleanor V. Wilson, Ph.D.** is an Associate Professor of Curriculum and Instruction in the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Virginia. She taught elementary school in Massachusetts, Michigan, Iowa and Charlottesville for twenty years prior to earning her Ph.D. in Social Foundations of Education at the University of Virginia. She has been on the elementary education faculty at Virginia since 2001 where she authored the *The History of the Curry School of Education* for its 100th anniversary. As part of her role in teacher education she designed a practicum for Virginia elementary preservice students in England which still is thriving (with time out for Covid restrictions).  She has published articles focusing on the value of international opportunities and associated outcomes for preservice teachers. Another area of interest is the history of influences on the education of women and girls; she is hopeful about future opportunities for women in governance based on the outcomes of the 2020 U.S. elections.

# *Introduction*

Janine S. Davis

The intensity of major events often leads us to remember minute details of where we were and what we were doing when they occurred: what we wore as we watched the towers fall on September 11, 2001; the faces of our classmates when the space shuttle Challenger exploded on January 28, 1986; the smell in the air when we lived through a major earthquake, fire, or other personal tragedy. Similarly, faculty, staff, and students will remember the series of moments that led to the closure of their schools and universities as the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic spread throughout the world--the timeline varies, but on the East Coast of America, this occurred in early March. *Unprecedented* became the word of the year in our emails and texts and Zoom calls. We adjusted our expectations; we pivoted our planning, instruction, and interactions; and we continue to do so.

The scope of human loss and economic impact in many nations around the world is still ongoing at the time of this volume's publication in the first half of 2021; however, we have learned from our adjustments during the last year, and the chapters in this volume offer some important lessons that may inform the work of others as they plan and teach in this and similar circumstances in the future.

This text includes chapters from instructional designers, university faculty and staff, and undergraduate and graduate students, and the text has been divided into three sections to reflect these varied perspectives. Each section begins with research-based perspectives, but also contains more personal narratives at the end. While the context of most of the chapters is the United States, there are also chapters with a Canadian context. It is also important to note that, as of the first half of 2021, the pandemic rages on, and mentions of COVID-19 in the following chapters will be reflective of the state of affairs in North America in the spring and fall of 2020.

Open-access publishing is crucial for sharing relevant and timely findings with the public in accessible ways. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major economic impact on universities and on scholars' research productivity; it is our hope that by sharing this text in an open access format that there will be no financial barrier such as a paywall to prevent others' learning from the lessons shared in these chapters.

*Instructional Designers*

## Chapter 1

# "Shaka, When the Walls Fell": The (Temporary) Dissolution of Service Silos During COVID-19

Lee Skallerup Bessette

There were rumblings, quiet preparations being made, when our students were sent home, mid-semester, from our Italian campus (ok, *villa*), who were now going to be completing their study-abroad semester online. This was two weeks before our own campus shut down and transitioned to emergency distance delivery. Websites were updated, platforms were upgraded, infrastructure was mobilized, and resources were created, rapidly and efficiently. Our center, the Center for New Designs in Learning and Teaching (CNDLS), was made *the* central hub for all Instructional Continuity efforts, including resources, training, and support.

What I witnessed and experienced during the spring of 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic at Georgetown University was an unprecedented breaking down of service department silos, silos that even existed within our own center; we are a combination of a traditional teaching and learning center, an academic technology unit, and an instructional design center. Typically, the three units work fairly independently from each other - the faculty development team does traditional faculty cohorts and pedagogy workshops focused on improving the classroom experience for our students; the academic technology group does workshops, consultations, and other programming focused on incorporating technology into teaching; and the online and hybrid course design team worked with schools and programs to develop new courses or adapt existing ones for online or hybrid delivery. But once the campus shut down and the semester had to be completed remotely, we were all called into service to support faculty for distance delivery.

This also doesn't include the various other units on our campus who support faculty and students in and around the classroom: University Information Services (UIS), the Academic Resource Center (ARC), Classroom Educational Technology Services (CETS), the GU Library, and the Gelardin New Media Center, among others. While CNDLS had various relationships with all of these units, rarely were we all called, at once, to work together towards a common goal of ensuring students' success during a pandemic.

I chose my title from one of the most well-known and popular episodes of the 1990s TV show *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. In this episode, in a first-contact type situation, where a new species is granted admission to the Federation, Captain Picard is alone and stuck on a planet with a species who communicate by exclusively using metaphors. At first, Picard can't understand his companion, nor can his companion understand him. "Shaka, when the walls fell" is a metaphor for this opening encounter; Picard understands it too late to save his companion, but is now able to understand this new species and welcomes them to the Federation.

I hope you see my own metaphor.

Our various units on campus are often siloed and isolated from one another, and we tend to even speak different languages across professional organizations and units. Even seemingly simple and obvious words like "service," "workshop," or "consultation" can have important differences depending on the context of the particular unit using them. We quickly had to learn how to communicate with one another and smooth over misunderstandings in order to best meet the needs of our campus.

This language divide isn't the main reason that service units on campus infrequently work together. An overview of what little literature there is about successful collaborations (see Behling & Linder, 2017; Cavanagh, 2019; Hutchens & Sorcinnelli, 2019; Kinsie *et al*, 2019) find the challenges to more of these kinds of collaborations include conflicting priorities, time and logistics, campus culture, and limited resources. Ultimately, organizational changes are *hard*. Institutional culture is notoriously hard to change and bureaucracies are often ossified. Anecdotally, we assert that we want to collaborate and that more inter-unit collaborations would be ultimately beneficial, saving us all both time and resources, but the amount of investment needed to make said changes is larger than anyone can spare and not sacrifice the day-to-day workings of their units.

COVID-19 changed all of that. Our day-to-day tasks disappeared and we were all thrust into a new working environment, facilitating new collaborations. We were making up our responses as we all went along, allowing for space to invent, instead of falling back on what had always been done. And so, while we all eventually figured out how to do virtually those things that we had always done (consultations, workshops and other training, advising, etc.), we also found space to work together to create new forms of programming and engagement.

As challenges arose, units across campus pitched in with their efforts to assist faculty and students with the transition; for example, the unit responsible for classroom technologies transitioned to support faculty use of Zoom (our video conferencing software) for teaching, as that was their new classroom space. Initially, they were also willing to attend classes and help facilitate class sessions while faculty got used to the new teaching environment. That experience led CNDLS to collaborate with multiple units on campus to create a program for Federal work-study students to work as "Instructional Technology Aides" (or ITAs) in remote classes that did not already have a graduate student TA assigned to them. Students were able to keep their work-study jobs while also learning about technology and pedagogy, and faculty benefited from having an extra set of hands to help with technical issues and liaise with the students in the class.

Another example was our closing faculty-facing event that took place virtually just before the start of classes at the end of August, Digital Learning Days. Over three days, CNDLS, the Library, Gelardin Center, UIS, and ARC came together to *collaborate* on digital tools and pedagogy-based workshops for faculty. Typically, each unit would offer its own programming during an event - there would be library workshops and UIS workshops and ARC workshops

and CNDLS workshops, all separate but under the same event banner. In 2020 we all worked together to create and facilitate workshops that combined the expertise and experience of members of various units to prepare faculty efficiently and effectively.

This level of effective collaboration is a reflection of the values of our institution, but also the investment that had been made previously into our various service units. Our response to COVID-19 was stressful but relatively smooth, a situation that I recognize from watching my colleagues at universities across North America was, while not an anomaly, certainly not the situation everywhere. I watched as turf wars developed between units; they fought over scarce resources and staff, while faculty were left largely to themselves to figure out what they were to do in the fall. In some places, already understaffed and under-resourced units were unable to meet the demand for the fall, even while working together. Our institution also decided relatively early that we were going to start the semester remotely, despite our best efforts to incorporate some sort of HyFlex model with a select population of students invited back to campus. This allowed time for all of us to adequately prepare programming and adapt all of our work.

One other positive outcome from these collaborations and increased visibility was that we were suddenly no longer "in the margins" of the institution, to borrow a phrase from the title of Connie Schroder's (2011) edited volume. Service units on campus are often left in the margins, excluded from the shared governance model that universities practice. COVID-19 provided an opportunity to show our expertise and importance to the institution, gaining us a level of respect that we often lacked given (among other things) the common rhetoric of "administrative bloat" (see, for example, Simon, 2017). The level of institutional goodwill towards our units is, like the situation we find ourselves in, unprecedented.

We are moving forward through the fall and into the unknown spring of 2021 with a renewed sense of purpose, but also moving in ways to ensure that these collaborations continue, that the walls remain fallen. Internally, for our unit, this has meant a restructuring of our sub-units to allow them to be more responsive, but also to ensure continued cross-unit collaborations for projects and initiatives. We recognize, as well, that our faculty are at a new level of digital literacy and pedagogical knowledge, so together we must work to figure out "what's next" to best help our faculty and ultimately help our students.

There are still struggles, of course. Circumstances change rapidly, and we are trying to be responsive, which can lead to miscommunication, or even no communication at all between units. As I write this, we are scrambling to prepare a handful of faculty to teach again on campus in a small pilot, and while it hasn't been smooth sailing, it has certainly been easier to try since we already have an established relationship, where we are no longer assuming the worst ("you are purposefully excluding us!"), but instead giving each other the benefit of the doubt and working together with a spirit of generosity.

It took being isolated on a dangerous planet for Picard to finally understand his counterpart, and it took a global pandemic for our units to really come together to best help our faculty and help our students succeed. May it be the start of something greater than the sum of our units' parts.

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# *Chapter 2*

# Embracing the Pivot: Engaging Wahkohtowin in Building Anti-Racist Learning Communities

Jennifer Ward
Ellen Watson
Cathryn van Kessel

Soon after the University of Alberta transitioned to remote instruction, an instructor came to the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) seeking help handling racist posts on discussion forums. One of their students had posted a racist comment implying that "Asian people" were the cause of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, other instructors have come forward with similar concerns. These instructors knew that ignoring such comments was not an option, but were unsure how to proceed.

The University of Alberta is located in the city of Edmonton, Alberta which Cree people call amiskwaciy-wâskahikan ᐊᒥᐢᑿᒋᐩ ᐋᐧᐢᑲᐦᐃᑲᐣ. As the largest city in the northern half of the province, Edmonton is home to approximately 970,000 people (City of Edmonton, 2019). Over 50,000 Edmontonians self-identified as Indigenous and 36% as a member of a visible minority (Statistics Canada, 2016). Within this context, the University of Alberta (2019) is the largest post-secondary institution in Alberta with over 40,000 students, including over 1,200 Indigenous students and 9,000 international students representing 156 countries; the majority of the student population consists of students from urban or rural Alberta (many of whom may come from settler backgrounds; we cannot know for sure, because Canadian universities do not collect race-based data). The University of Alberta (2020), like many universities across North America, has expressed its commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusivity to lessen the fractures caused by societal differences. Yet, such aims can be thwarted by the settler-colonial logic of elimination which contributes to racialized online discourse, which is why we (the authors)—as Indigenous and settler scholars— came together with the support of our university to help instructors address this issue (Quad, 2020): to examine why these types of comments might occur in online discussions during times of duress.

**The Context of White Supremacist Ideology**

Racially imbued language (DiAngelo, 2011) can take many forms in the classroom but is enhanced when students enter an environment of (relative) anonymity such as the online classroom (Eschmann, 2019; Gin, 2019). As a result of the perceived anonymity in online

spaces, instructors may see an increase in racist comments in their courses. Students from the dominant society, in this case, white Canadians, are experiencing a palpable, potential threat to their lives for the first time. Thus, white Canadians showed not only an increase in their prejudice (Greenberg et al., 2001), but also an increase in their rage due to inaccurate (and racist) narratives about Canada; these effects are coupled with a lack of perspective.

Some white Canadians may feel that their lives are in danger because of the COVID-19 virus, while existential threats against Indigenous peoples have raged in Canada since European settlers arrived on Indigenous lands in 1492. Settler colonialism's "logic of elimination" constitutes white possession over Indigenous bodies, lands, and resources and has led to the genocide and assimilation of Indigenous peoples (Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Wolfe, 2006). This "logic" entails the false assumption that white settlers are superior and they rage against Indigenous peoples and their rights to lands and resources. This rage is embodied through racist comments and beliefs that somehow Indigenous peoples are receiving something to which white settlers should also be entitled or that Canadian taxpayers support Indigenous peoples through their tax dollars, which is wholly inaccurate (Vowel, 2018). As one example, Chaudry (2015) showed that Twitter users in Edmonton and Calgary, Alberta's two largest cities, had high instances of racist tweets directed at Indigenous people. As a second example, due to racism and hate speech directed at Indigenous people, the Canadian Broadcast Company (CBC) (2015) has shut down the comments section of their online news articles. These situations in Canada (and Alberta) enable racially-biased conversations which often silence Indigenous and racialized students (Clark, 2004; Thomas, 2001).

This rage is also extended to persons of color, who are excluded from the Albertan majority through aggressions such as being told to "go back to their country," (Mosleh, 2020). Since the pivot in March 2020, racists berating others (Elsiufi & Butler, 2020; Slimm & Robinson, 2020) and a student-created racist group (Antoneshyn, 2020) have been reported in Edmonton. Hate groups attempt to shut down anti-racist events in Alberta (Mosleh, 2020; Omstead, 2020) and Alberta has been identified as one of two provinces with a higher-than-average proportion of people who do not recognize systemic racism as a problem in their context (Parsons, 2020). It should be noted that this opinion is the majority in Alberta but not the majority in Edmonton, though "there is a significant segment of people in Edmonton who [do represent this belief,]" (Parsons, 2020). It should be recognized that racism in Alberta is not a recent problem; in 2019, Bashir Mohamed (2020) released an archive dedicated to detailing Alberta's racist past (Braat, 2019). Building on this work, Mohamed (2020) has highlighted that systemic racism is woven into Edmonton's history.

Edmontonians, and students at the University of Alberta by proxy, are no strangers to racism in their city, in-person and online. Since universities are a microcosm of what is happening in society at large, it should be recognized that systemic racism is woven into the history of the University of Alberta. As one example before the pivot, xenophobic posters recruiting students to a racist organization were posted across campus (Mertz, 2016). As another example, instructors were raising concerns about racist sentiments being expressed in their courses. The University, as an institution, stands against racism (as stated by Turpin, 2020) but its student body is made up of individuals, some of whom share overtly (or covertly) racist opinions.

With the perceived anonymity of online learning, instructors at the University of Alberta raised questions about helping students navigate potentially fractured learning spaces. As a result of the racist comment in an instructor's discussion forums, our team provided instructors with a variety of communications to prepare for teaching in the pivot. We started with a podcast,

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*Addressing Racism in the Classroom* (Ward et al., 2020), which hundreds downloaded in the first months of the pandemic. This spurred a webinar conversation of the same title, which registered 275 instructors. Yet, these conversations brought forth more questions including;

- *I have had a couple of students complain that forums are rooted in a colonial mindset. Can I use them?*

- *How do we create an inclusive environment and incorporate diversity into our case studies without reinforcing stereotypes?*

- *I don't typically see racism in my class because I teach pretty objective content. Will it really be that different online?*

At least these instructors were thinking about the systemic racism inherent in traditional education.

When interacting online students might feel permitted to act in a way that is not typically considered socially acceptable (Gin, 2019). As a result, instructors were concerned about how they might handle comments that perpetuate structural violence; e.g., a racist statement in an online forum. Our response to such questions is twofold. First, it is important for instructors to anticipate the potential problem and develop language to discuss this with learners before such occurrences can unfold (as well as during the troubling moment). Second, instructors need to consider how they might establish their classroom community online to avoid a fractured space.

**Anticipating Defensive Reactions**

We know from terror management theory (TMT) (Pyszczynski et al., 2015) that reminders of death affect our behaviour in both logical and illogical ways, including increased intolerance (e.g., Greenberg et al., 2001; Hayes et al, 2008). It makes sense that instructors have witnessed racist comments in their online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Being in a situation where we are constantly reminded of our bodies' vulnerability to disease and death can take a toll on our personal and collective well-being because of our constant state of mortality salience (i.e., the state of having death on our minds) (Burke et al., 2010).

Humans tend to become more rigid and militant in our worldviews when reminded of death (Greenberg et al., 2001; Schimel et al., 2007). This situation occurs because worldviews and worldview groups give us a sense of permanence (i.e., security in an insecure world). When we encounter a different worldview, we can be put in a state of worldview threat, which has all kinds of effects (Solomon et al., 2015), including denial (e.g., an instructor thinking that a racist comment could not happen in their class) and insulting those who are exhibiting different beliefs or behavior from us (e.g., ad hominem attacks posted in a forum). Some defenses are more subtle, such as appropriating an aspect of an opposing view and incorporating it into your own; e.g., using a term for racial justice like "BIPoC" but then claiming to "not see race" (which we know from countless scholars to be misguided) (e.g., Kendi, 2019) and refusing to acknowledge that tension. Our defenses can even go unnoticed, such as decreased reading comprehension of worldview-threatening material (Williams et al., 2012).

Our conscious and unconscious fears of death affect our behavior, and a pandemic provides particular challenges for us as individuals as well as our relations with others, but we can use a framework like TMT to anticipate potential problems and thus mitigate, or even prevent, some of those reactions. Freezing up when we hear or see a racist comment may be a common reaction within and beyond an online classroom, but instructors can develop their

understanding to respond differently. Instructors can help learners in their classes to understand why they might become defensive.

TMT provides some guidance for examining a racist comment as a problem that is simultaneously individual, structural, and emotional. Although part of any antiracist project involves some examination of personal responsibility, without a tie to policies and structures, it is all too easy to see racism resulting from individualized and unfamiliar evil actors and thus ignores the ever-present context of white supremacist structures (e.g., Crowley & Smith, 2020; Hawkman, 2020; Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013; Moreton-Robinson, 2015), as well as how from moment to moment the same person can be racist or antiracist (e.g., Kendi, 2019; Shim, 2020). Sources of prejudice and its manifestations are complex, but TMT offers some insight into one aspect: defensive emotional reactions. It is important for instructors to realize that a learner (who is otherwise an affable human being) can make a racist comment in an online forum. Racism is, sadly, very ordinary and not reserved for extremists, but the emotionality of realizing that situation can be intense and thwart antiracist goals (Matias, 2014). Furthermore, addressing that racist comment is fraught with difficulty because of the threat to self-esteem, such as exclamations of "I'm not racist!" and hollow moves to innocence such as "I voted for Obama" and "My best friend is Black" (Matias et al., 2016, p. 6), as well as threats to worldview connected to claims of a post-racial society.

It is important for instructors to monitor their own and their students' emotional responses, and collectively to work through our emotional worlds (Shim, 2014). We can become more aware of what we are feeling and why. By naming the problem and giving some context, we might not fall prey to more destructive tendencies—but this strategy is not enough on its own. It is vital that we also create spaces that make us feel connected to our bodies and communities. A genuine connection with others and a community can shape a group, and thus when members are in a state of mortality salience, they become more adamant in that inclusive value (Vail et al., 2012). However, settler-colonialism and white supremacist ideology is more than just mortality salience—it's the logic of elimination. Hence, fostering a classroom community built upon Indigenous worldviews is one-way instructors can create a respectful online learning community.

**Wahkohtowin as a Possible Solution**

This rapid transition to online instruction highlights the importance of explicitly outlining acceptable behavior in communities of learning (both in face-to-face and online). There are unwritten rules about classroom norms with students in the face-to-face classroom which ensure professional and respectful interactions in the classroom. However, in online or remote instruction this may not happen. As previously shared, online dialogue can feel anonymous and, as a result, become racialized, oppressive, and emotionally laborious. Remote students are not sharing physical space with their classmates and cannot experience the reactions of other students. Learners may not feel responsible for their classmates' wellbeing nor take the time to understand another individual's lived experience. This situation, in part, could be the result of a Western education system built upon capitalist ideologies and competition rather than collaboration, but it could also be structural racism that enables white settlers to be successful while hindering the success of BIPoC students (Sum & Jessop, 2012).

It is particularly important that a community of learners be built into remote and online classrooms. We assert that explicitly addressing white privilege and weaving *wahkohtowin* into classroom practices could intercept those students who might believe that racist comments are acceptable in online discourse. We suggest that instructors consider building their communities

upon *wahkohtowin*—the Cree natural law of reciprocity, respect, relationship, and responsibility—early in their course so as to minimize racism in the online classroom (Borrows, 2012). *Wahkohtowin* promotes classrooms and communities of learning as sites of kinship while valuing differences (Buhler, Settee, & Styvendale, 2016). In this worldview, we are all related—including our other than human kin—and we are in a reciprocal relationship with all things (Dumont, 1996; Wildcat, 2018). Reciprocity, or how we ensure that we are giving back or taking care of everyone and everything, is paramount to an equitable, inclusive, and diverse learning community. Within an online or remote course, the instructor must not only embody these principles but consciously enact these tenets of building a respectful community.

As an instructor in the Faculty of Education, Educational Policy Studies, at the University of Alberta, one of our authors, Jennifer Ward, grounds their teaching practice and classroom ethos in *wahkohtowin*. Recent feedback from students has been overwhelmingly positive. Students who are pre-service teachers learn how to weave community-engaged pedagogy into their K-12 teaching practice through experiential learning opportunities. Students share their feelings of being a part of a community—built upon *wahkohtowin*— and feel that both they and their ideas are respected when engaging in remote learning with their peers.

Instructors need to do the hard work of building community in their classrooms, which may mean more social-emotional connections with students. Although this approach takes effort, it will create a much more respectful community. Fears of appropriating Indigenous practices, such as *wahkohtowin*, in the classroom by non-Indigenous scholars can be mitigated through acknowledging that this practice is a nehiyaw (Cree) worldview and pedagogy (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Moreover, Indigenous and settler scholars Buhler, Settee, and Styvendale (2016) showcase the use of *wahkohtowin* in the classroom is an important process that disrupts settler-colonialism and hierarchical structures that exist in universities (p. 101). Jennifer Ward is also an Educational Developer-Indigenous Focus at the University of Alberta and she supports the weaving of Indigenous pedagogies into teaching and learning. She encourages instructors to use *wahkohtowin* as a way to engage students and create a respectful learning environment that is based upon respect, relationship, reciprocity, and responsibility.

The pandemic response to online/remote course delivery has impacted how we deliver course content and the idea of a course community. What does it mean to be in relationship with one another? For *wahkohtowin* to occur, trust must be built. But how can we build trust and true accountability in this panopticon of an online environment? Such an approach can take a variety of forms. Instructors could upload an introduction video of themselves and encourage students to do so as well. Instructors might introduce themselves in a more personal way other than their academic credentials. As an example, Indigenous folks often introduce themselves by the land, relatives, and ancestors they are connected to so that we might find other relatives and connections we did not know existed. In doing this we can begin the groundwork for relationships and community.

Being vulnerable and open to other people's ideas is necessary for the creation of an empathetic and generous community that embodies relationality and reciprocity. Robin Wall-Kimmerer (2013) deftly argues that "reciprocity is a matter of keeping the gift in motion through self-perpetuating cycles of giving and receiving" (p. 165). We must disentangle the concept of individual-personal success as the arbiter of societal success. A community of learners is more successful when they learn to rely upon and be of service to others, thus acting out of kindness rather than in competition with their student colleagues. Learning about and from one another is the greatest gift we can give as humans since gifts from one another establish a relationship built on reciprocity (Wall-Kimmerer, 2013). Within the classroom, if learners create and abide by

their community's value system of *wahkohtowin*, the learning environment can be generative and inclusive rather than exclusive, thus limiting racist discourse in the online/remote classroom.

## Concluding Thoughts

In an effort to support instructors, the University of Alberta CTL hosted a podcast and a webinar to address racism in the classroom in response to a reported rise in racist comments during the pivot to remote learning. Although instructors did not want to let racist comments stand, they needed the tools with which to change the conversation or to mitigate racist dialogue. Racism and racist ideologies towards Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPoC) are not new, but they are an indication that our society has a racism problem stemming from white privilege and settler colonialism. Moreover, terror management theory (TMT) explains that mortality salience triggers peoples' anxiety about death and leads to engagement in racist discourse or blaming certain cultural groups for the pandemic. To thwart racism in the classroom, instructors should ensure that classroom values align with Nehiyawak (Cree) kinship values of *wahkohtowin*—reciprocity, respect, relationship, and responsibility—which are necessary for the creation of an inclusive learning community.

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# Chapter 3

# Supporting Instructors During a Crisis: Expanding the Wants of Instructors to Address their Needs

Ellen Watson

Bryan Braul

On March 12, 2020, approximately 24 hours after the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global pandemic, our institution, the University of Alberta, told instructors to prepare for emergency online remote delivery. On March 14, in-person courses and exams were canceled and instructors were told that classes would resume online on March 17. For many instructors, this transition was harrowing. As highlighted by Philipsen et al. (2019), transitioning to online instruction with inadequate direction can evoke frustration which slows the process. We represent two educational developers who sought to provide this necessary direction to instructors.

Most instructors were not prepared to pivot so quickly and to completely rethink the last few weeks of their courses; we, the educational developers, braced ourselves for the impending need for our expertise to support instructors during this shift. We, the authors, are two educational developers from two separate units within the same university; in this chapter, we discuss how we supported instructors to suddenly transition to emergency online remote learning. Through sharing our stories and insights, we explore our experiences as educational developers during the pivot and our attempts to encourage a shift in what it meant to teach.

**Describing the Shift**

**Ellen's Team**

In the afternoon of March 11, 2020, our team of educational developers met to discuss how we might support instructors should our university decide to move online. We were a team of four educational developers supporting three campuses which provided (relatively traditional) courses for over 40,000 students. Prior to the pivot, our instructor support focused on one-on-one consultations—between one and 20 hours of contact with one instructor—and small group workshops. Over the previous year we recorded contact with approximately 80 instructors and delivered in-person workshops several times per month with a maximum of 40 participants. We were making a difference with instructors but worried that we could not maintain individualized support as our university transitioned all of their courses to remote online delivery.

Following the lead of other teaching support centers, we quickly produced documents to help instructors shift their work from face-to-face to online. One example, *A Brief Introduction to Remote Teaching* (Watson et al., 2020), was posted on March 12, 2020. Our course for teaching online was released early and we began designing an online resource. We tried maintaining individualized support by offering drop-in support through Zoom and handled incoming consult requests as best we could. Over the next two months, our group of four handled 220 unique consultation requests and held 20 webinars averaging 180 participants. Over 500 instructors enrolled in our online course. Our small team of educational developers worked around the clock to offer support that was as 'normal' as possible. Educational developers are used to managing change, but the disruptions in March 2020 showcased the difficulties in managing such massive change in a short period of time using our existing approaches (Huijser et al., 2020). We needed something more sustainable.

To streamline our support, we surveyed instructors about what support they needed to prepare for the upcoming online terms. Instructors wanted written, online resources and individual consultations focusing on delivering online lectures, assessment, and student-centered learning. We shifted our efforts from individualized service to developing an online resource about remote teaching. Instructors were coached to find answers on our website instead of requesting one-on-one consults. Initially, we were met with some resistance with comments such as "I want someone to walk me through it," or "I requested a consultation so that I could talk to someone," but as we directed more traffic to the online resources, this eventually became the first stop for most instructors. Five months later, instructors were surveyed again and asked how they were likely to engage with our teaching support centre in the future—95% of participants intended to access the online resources and only 50% intended to request an individual consultation.

**Bryan's Team**

I am a Team Lead and Educational Developer with a support unit responsible for designing, building, and supporting online courses for a continuing professional education faculty. Some of our main programming areas include occupational health and safety, business and leadership, information and privacy, communications and design, and language instruction. Courses are scheduled anywhere from three-day intensive seminars to full-term (13 weeks) courses. The majority of our students are between the ages of 30-50 and our unit supports over 300 courses per year.

The COVID-19 response announcement set in motion a series of rapid planning and action items for our faculty. In the first few days it was vital to coordinate efforts with all internal stakeholders affected by the emergency. Faculty leadership, program staff, and support units came together to develop a plan. The goal was to get the instructors and students through to the end of their winter term course work and develop effective online assessment strategies. Delivering a highly sophisticated educational product was not an option in these unique circumstances. We could only do what we could with the time available. This meant that we had to rely heavily on our instructors and students to do the best they could with what they had. With that in mind, each faculty group set out on a path with dedicated responsibilities and duties to achieve this goal. In these early stages, faculty leadership played a key role bringing everyone together and developing a coordinated action response plan.

Our team was first responsible for working with the program staff to compile a list of courses requiring immediate attention, and then contacting instructors to arrange consultations. In total, we had 56 courses that needed to transition to an online format in the winter term. Since

the emergency online remote instruction was to begin on March 17th, we focused on the courses that would be taught that first week. Many instructors had a strong sense of the urgency and demands the COVID-19 situation created. For the most part, they were engaged and willing to invest the effort to navigate the transition as best they could. As a support unit, we had very little time to spend with each instructor. We only had time for one or two consultations with each instructor where we established a remote online teaching transition plan and determined what level of support they needed.

Initial instructor consultations revolved around what could be done to finish their courses in the online format. In this sense, we limited the options because the instructors, at this point, wanted to be given a solution, which our team was in a position to provide. Once a plan was established and explained, we defined the instructor responsibilities and how our team would support their efforts. To deliver course content instructors either developed voiceover Powerpoints or used Zoom or Adobe Connect. Most of the instructors also had to learn how to, at the very least, upload documents to the learning management system and adapt existing classroom-based assessments for online delivery. Depending on the online course requirements, our unit provided basic training with the tools needed. Still, it was also important to guide the instructors to additional resources where they could continue learning about teaching online.

## Lessons Learned

### About Supporting Instructors

In this time of crisis, instructors did not have the time or resources to deeply explore the changes required for effective online teaching. Instructors wanted to "transition online" as quickly as possible, yet instructors could not assume that how they taught in-person would translate to online remote teaching; the definition of teaching is slightly different in online learning (Gloria & Uttal, 2020; Palloff & Pratt, 2011). Ideally, to make this shift, instructors should have access to educational developers and/or instructional designers over an extended period of time (Brinkley-Etzkorn, 2020; Hundey et al., 2020). However, neither educational developers nor instructors had the time to establish these extended relationships. Oftentimes, it felt as if the educational consultations were a stop along the journey, a pit stop along the instructor's path to help with a quick translation to help them reach their destination. We, as those translators, had no way of knowing whether they reached their intended destination; we could not know if our pedagogical guidance changed their practice.

As we tried to change instructors' thinking about what it meant to *teach*, particularly to teach online in this crisis, we also recognized different groups of instructors. We noticed that those instructors previously engaged with our support services—those already invested in improving their teaching—required less support during this time. Typically, these instructors had quick questions or wanted to check that their ideas were pedagogically sound. These already-invested instructors took responsibility for their own professional development and learning. Consultations with these instructors often focused on checking that they had mapped the best educational path forward.

Alternatively, a second group of instructors was less frequently engaged in professional development about teaching. It was positive to see instructors who had not previously sought teaching support coming to us, yet these instructors struggled to shift their mindset about teaching. Often, these instructors insisted they "talk to someone" instead of reading/viewing resources. Admittedly, many of these instructors were overwhelmed; we dealt with tears, anger, and yelling about being forced to move online. Nonetheless, the pivot proceeded and they had

to follow the directive. As a frequent example, these instructors asked questions about using video conferencing software because they intended to live lecture during class time, as they had with their traditional classes. When we, as educational experts, explained why that might not be the best strategy, instructors were not always receptive to rethinking their teaching. Instructors who had previously not "worked at" their teaching were forced to reconsider what teaching looked like when learning was remote. Many wanted to mirror the face-to-face classroom as much as possible. As educational support, we took these opportunities to challenge instructors' assumptions about teaching while helping instructors transition their courses online.

## About Leadership and Supporting Change

During the pivot, some leaders with instructional/pedagogical knowledge were called upon to quickly develop a rapid response and implementation plan. It was determined early that successfully transitioning instructors to remote delivery required support from senior leadership, educational developers, instructional designers, and technical support. During the first few days, new information was released daily; there was little time for perfection, we were forced to operate with "in-the-moment" direction. Educational developers, as they are agents of change (Taylor, 2005), disseminated these decisions and explained how they might impact teaching. As the leadership at our university made decisions, it was imperative that the campus community followed this vision and remained focused on the common goal of supporting students and instructors through this transition.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, educational developers had moved from the fringes of the institutions to the center as advisors but not necessarily decision makers (Gibbs, 2013; Saroyan, 2014; Timmermans, 2014). As a result of the pivot, educational developers were integrated into decision-making committees. A few weeks after the initial shift, both authors were invited to contribute to a team focused on advising campus leadership about best practices in teaching and learning. This connected us to deans and other university leaders involved with teaching and learning. We were able to comment on and influence policy and decisions being made about core educational practice at our university. As Gibbs (2013) highlights, educational developers often move from supporting individuals to supporting groups and, finally, supporting their institution as their centers mature. Our centers had been supporting individuals and groups of teachers since their inception but, with the pivot, we were thrust into supporting institutional change that was happening at an exponential rate.

Working at a large institution, we, the authors, had accepted that educational change occurred at a glacial pace. Typically, any large-scale change had to be passed through several committees for acceptance before being rolled out to instructors. For example, in 2008, the Community for the Learning Environment at the University of Alberta formally supported the use of multi-faceted evaluation of teaching (Marin, 2020). However, it was not until the Fall of 2019 that a framework for this evaluation was developed and it was finally released in spring 2020. The educational disruptions created by COVID-19 showed just how responsive established institutions can be when directing their resources to supporting students' and instructors through a necessary change.

## Looking Ahead

Educational developers are no strangers to change; we are chameleons, able to adapt to the changing needs of higher education (Kensington-Miller et al., 2015). In this sense, we were able to make the pivot in stride, providing the support that instructors needed. However, as we reflect on these adaptations, we cannot help but notice how differently we work after only six

months. We do not anticipate these changes reverting back to what we considered normal before the pivot and so we are prepared to adapt and live in a new normal.

One of the biggest changes we noticed was how we offered support to instructors. As Ellen mentioned, most of their work in supporting instructors before the pivot was focused on one-on-one consultations and small, in-person workshops. This was a great way of developing deep relationships with instructors but not an efficient, nor sustainable, way to offer widespread teaching support. Bryan's team also had to make similar shifts to reach more instructors. Both situations required workflow changes to optimize the use of personnel and create ways for instructors to learn about online teaching without having to meet one of our educational experts. Five months after the pivot, our services have changed with instructors most likely to engage with us through accessing online resources and attending webinars. This shows a significant change in the way instructors interact with our services; one that would not have been possible—at least not as quickly—without the changes forced by the pivot.

Finally, as a result of this pivot, we have seen our teaching support centers move from the periphery to essential, involved, and centrally located. This type of shift was described by Gibbs (2013), but few would expect such a quick transition in a pre-pivot university. As we prepared for the predominantly online Fall 2020 term, more instructors were aware of, and accessing, our educational services than ever before. As we move forward, we expect this to continue as higher education determines the "look" of future learning. Globally, COVID-19 has pushed much of the world into online learning and shown the effectiveness of this modality. In our geographical context, the winter can bring -40 ℃ temperatures and we must say that online learning looks mighty welcoming if it means not having to leave our homes. Whether or not online teaching remains a significant part of the higher education landscape, we expect (and hope) that educational developers continue to be viewed as essential to any institution focusing on supporting students in their learning.

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# Chapter 4

# Reflection

# The Academic Library during the Pandemic: Reflections at the End of the Road

Rosemary Huff Arneson

I never expected to spend my last year as an academic librarian worrying about how long we should quarantine books when they are returned to the library. I did not expect to throw copyright caution to the wind as we began scanning large sections of library books to make them available online, with little or no thought given to copyright. I did not expect not to be able to mark the retirement of three staff members, whose total years of service at the institution exceed 120 years, with no more than an email. After a career of planning library spaces to encourage collaborative learning, I did not expect to be moving furniture around so that no one sits too close to anyone else.

And yet, as I entered my last year of professional work, that was where I found myself. Like all of my colleagues around the country, I spent the spring and summer of 2020 trying to figure out how to deliver library services during a pandemic. This essay offers a look back at the decisions my staff and I made and the plans we put in place for moving forward.

**The Library as a Great Good Place**

Most of my career as a chief library administrator has been focused on ways to make the library building a place that students want to use. My vision of the ideal academic library building has long been one that embodies the ideals of sociologist Ray Oldenburg's Great Good Place. Oldenburg devoted his academic career to exploring the idea of "those happy gathering places that a community may contain, those 'homes away from home', where unrelated people relate" (Oldenburg, 1999).

Oldenburg (1999) looked at coffeehouses, beer gardens, cafes, beauty salons, and other places where people gather. These are places that are not the home, and they are not the workplace. They are, to use Oldenburg's term, "Third Places." These are the places we go to be with people other than our families and coworkers, where we can discuss ideas, share our stories, and be a part of our communities.

For the last couple of decades, library construction and renovation has moved from the "box for books" model of the past to incorporate the ideas of the Learning Commons. Scott Bennet (2008) argued that the Learning Commons had replaced the card catalog as the thing that defined academic library spaces. The Learning Commons was characterized as a space where students and faculty can encounter each other, where collaboration was encouraged,

and where furniture could be moved easily to meet the needs of the moment. These were technology-rich spaces, with flexible and comfortable seating, and they were meant to be centered on the students who used them.

Susan Montgomery and Jonathan Miller of Rollins College (2011) described this type of space using Oldenburg's frame. They argue that academic libraries need to focus on creating opportunities and spaces for community and collaboration. By providing collaborative spaces, a variety of seating, student-centered services, and a welcoming environment, academic libraries can become the Great Good Place on their campuses (Montgomery & Miller, 2011).

Simpson Library at the University of Mary Washington opened in January 1989. Its design follows more traditional library models, with most of the space being devoted to stacks for books. A great deal of the furniture is heavy and immobile; service desks are barriers, separating staff from patrons. Most of the study spaces for students were designed for individuals, not groups.

Renovation remains a dream for the future, but we have done what we can to make Simpson Library more welcoming. We have rearranged furniture to create conversational and collaborative areas, and, when funds allowed, we invested in newer, more comfortable furniture. Slowly but surely, we were becoming a Great Good Place.

**The COVID Pivot**

Our first hint that our lives were about to change dramatically came in early March, when UMW, like most other institutions, began talking about COVID-19. The first meeting I attended on the subject, and one of the last face-to-face meetings I had, was on Monday, March 9. This was our first day back from Spring Break, and students had just returned to campus. During the meeting, we were told to plan for multiple contingencies – from continuing business as usual to moving classes fully online. By March 18, the decision was made to send all students home and to move all classes online.

Through the following weeks, we in the library tried to cope with uncertain circumstances, limited information, and a rapidly changing situation. At first, we hoped to be able to keep the building open with limited hours so that students would have a place they could go to for reliable internet and computer access. Within a week, we decided that this was neither feasible nor safe, and we closed the library on March 23.

Our goal was to do whatever we could to support students and faculty to the end of the semester. We began an aggressive program of scanning textbooks and library reserve items for faculty and students, along with providing scanned materials through interlibrary loan. We worked with faculty to find electronic editions of textbooks and other required readings. Reference services switched to chat, email, and phone instead of in person. Most staff transitioned to working from home, although a few staff members were present in the library each day.

Our efforts to scan print materials to make them available to students and faculty were aggressive. Our decisions regarding copyright were based on the Public Statement of Library Copyright Specialists: Fair Use & Emergency Remote Teaching & Research, issued on March 13, 2020. This document asserts that, in a time of crisis, making resources available so that students can continue to have access to learning resources, is within the scope of fair use. We encouraged faculty to use Canvas and to give students access to scanned materials, since Canvas limited access to students enrolled in a course.

As the semester ended, it was clear to all of us that we were going to have to remain closed through the summer, and that the ability to have in-person classes in the fall was uncertain. At the same time, the university announced that significant budget cuts would have to be made, and the governor of Virginia froze all hiring in state departments and institutions.

**Planning for Fall 2020**

Across the university, focus shifted from surviving the spring to planning for the fall. The President appointed a Task Force to develop a plan for repopulating the campus. At the same time, the library, like all other units, was asked to submit a plan for the fall. We were all working with limited information, unclear and often contradictory advice from state and federal authorities, and the lack of clear communication across the institution. I felt that I spent most of every meeting with my staff answering their questions with "I don't know."

At this point, I made what I consider to be one of the wisest decisions I have made in three decades of library administration. I asked a member of the staff to serve as a sort of ombudsperson. I asked staff to send her any questions and concerns they had about our reopening plans as these developed. She would remove any identifying information from these comments, and then pass them along to me. This allowed me to hear where the staff's concerns lay while also allowing individuals to be anonymous. I have always tried to be the kind of administrator who listened to her staff, but I know that in any organization, there are people who do not want to speak out in public, even when "public" is a Zoom meeting.

Throughout the long, hot, and frustrating summer, one of the things that kept me moving forward with reasonably good humor was the work of VIVA, our statewide library consortium. Every two weeks, the VIVA Executive Director would arrange for a Zoom meeting of all the directors of the member institutions. VIVA serves public and independent institutions, from two-year institutions to doctoral universities. These meetings allowed us to share our concerns with each other, hear what others were planning, and to offer each other moral support. As VIVA members developed reopening plans, VIVA served as a repository for them. The strength of academic libraries in the United States is our ability to cooperate with each other across boundaries of size and type, and the regular communications with my VIVA colleagues helped me find the fortitude I needed to take the next step.

Another bright spot over the summer was the opportunity that the switch to online education gave us to promote open and affordable educational resources. When students moved away from campus in March, they lost access to the print textbooks on reserve in Simpson Library. This brought home to faculty the fact that having an easily accessible open textbook allowed students working online to continue their coursework without interruption. My colleagues and I offered two workshops for faculty on finding OER and other ways to incorporate library resources into online courses over the summer. Thirty-one courses are marked in the university's course schedule as having incorporated OER, and we are continuing to field requests for help in locating open resources.

**Looking Ahead**

We will be digesting the lessons learned through this pandemic for many years to come. I do not know what the next iteration of the academic library will be, but there are, I believe, reasons to hope. We are grounded in a long tradition of service to our communities, we are committed to providing equal access to all our users, and we have proven that we can adapt even in the most challenging of circumstances.

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# Teacher Educators

## Chapter 5

# Multiple Means of Engagement during COVID-19: A Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Approach to Supporting Teacher Candidates in the Online Classroom

Marla J. Lohmann
Kathleen A. Boothe
Ruby L. Owiny
Jennifer D. Walker

During the spring of 2020, teacher preparation programs across the nation unexpectedly moved to fully remote instruction due to the coronavirus with a large number of universities planning to continue fully online instruction during the Fall 2020 semester (Burke, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic created and continues to create educational barriers for traditional and non-traditional teacher candidates in both graduate and undergraduate programs. Barriers include (a) lack of access to technology, (b) lack of technological skills, (c) financial stress, and (d) loss of connection to the university and classmates (Patel, 2020). To support students during remote learning, universities must rely on evidence-based instructional practices. One promising practice is Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which is a framework for creating expert learners by providing multiple means of (a) engagement, (b) representation, and (c) action and expression (Meyer et al., 2014).

This chapter provides examples of how four special education professors used the existing literature to guide us in providing multiple means of engagement to support teacher candidates in both undergraduate and graduate programs during COVID-19. We teach in both traditional on-campus and fully asynchronous online special education programs and learned that supporting student needs during a pandemic presents unique challenges that can be addressed through the UDL framework. As aspiring expert learners, we are constantly seeking to learn and grow in our own expertise as it applies to teacher preparation and COVID-19 provided us with the opportunity to enhance our own skills.

**Supporting Multiple Means of Engagement**

Universal Design for Learning is based on the premise that traditional education and curriculum includes inherent barriers that prevent all students from accessing learning (Hitchcock et al., 2002). The purpose of the UDL framework is to create expert learners who can take charge of their own learning (CAST, 2018) and experience success in the classroom (Novak, 2019). In order to create expert learners, teachers use UDL guidelines to create intentional and flexible planning for instruction and student interactions (CAST, 2018). It is important to note that, because UDL is flexible, there is no right nor wrong way to implement the framework and the implementation will look different in every classroom (Murawski & Novak, 2019).

The engagement principle of UDL addresses motivation and affect, meaning students' general feelings toward learning and their level of interest toward the learning environment (Owiny & Hartmann, 2020). In addition, intentional planning for student engagement can support students in monitoring their own progress and persisting during difficult learning activities (Walker & Russell, 2019). When faculty intentionally focus on student engagement, student success (Kahu & Nelson, 2018), satisfaction (Martin & Bollinger, 2018), and retention (Deschaine & Whale, 2017) are all increased. University faculty may engage students through a variety of strategies including (a) instructor availability, (b) prompt feedback on assignments (c) student choice, and (d) content presented in a variety of ways (Boothe et al., 2018). Online engagement may be increased by (a) using technology tools to connect with students, (b) calling students to check-in, (c) providing optional synchronous sessions (Lohmann et al., 2018), and (d) offering student choice in assignment format (Tobin, 2014). During Spring 2020, the chapter authors used their knowledge from previous research to support student engagement for students who were already taking online courses, but found themselves in novel home and work situations, and for those whose on-campus courses suddenly moved online. The remainder of this chapter describes the specific strategies used by the authors.

### Engagement Strategies for Previously Online Courses

Marla and Kathy teach asynchronous online master's level courses. The majority of their students are working adults who were already balancing the demands of school, work, and families before the pandemic. When COVID-19 began, our students continued receiving instruction through the same methods we had previously been using, including (a) recorded videos, (b) readings, (c) online discussions, and (d) optional synchronous class sessions. Despite the fact that the course delivery did not change, we quickly realized that students needed adjustments to be made in order to support their continued engagement in the coursework. While we took different approaches to supporting student needs, we both found success.

Marla chose to support students' social-emotional health. When students are experiencing a crisis, it can be challenging for them to stay engaged with learning (Davis et al., 2018), but the impact of the crisis may be reduced when students have a sense of community and belonging (Schultz et al., 2016). In order to build community (Checkpoint 8.3), she used motivational videos that she sent to students twice weekly, on Mondays and Thursdays. These videos were one to three minutes in length and included messages to indicate that she was thinking about the students and provided messages of encouragement as students navigated the challenges they were facing. Based on student feedback, these videos had a positive impact on student attitudes and well-being; students reported that they appreciated receiving them (Lohmann, 2020). Figure 1 provides the transcript from the video recorded on the first Thursday of the summer semester. During the first video, Marla used a background of the ocean. In

addition to the videos, she checked on individual students through phone calls, emails, and text messages to check on their well-being and provide individualized encouragement.

**Figure 1**

*Transcript from Video*

Good morning, special education students. It is Thursday, April 30. Today, I'm coming to you from the ocean. I chose this background today because I really want to send you the message to keep swimming. Don't give up when things are hard or challenging. Every day brings a new adventure. The challenges you have faced over the last few months, and continue to face, are tough. You have been keeping up with the needs of your families and the needs of your jobs and the expectations of graduate school. It's a lot and I understand. I want to encourage you to keep swimming. Don't give up. Don't forget your goal. Keep working hard. It's going to be worth it. I am proud of you. You all are amazing! You have worked so hard; keep it up! Have a beautiful weekend and please let me know if there is anything I can do for you.

Given that the COVID-19 pandemic was also impacting online graduate students, many of whom were practicing K-12 teachers, Kathy decided to make course changes to alleviate student stress. She used her knowledge of UDL principles to make changes in the class focused on meeting the self-regulation, sustaining effort, and persistence (8.0 & 9.0) checkpoints. Collaboration in online courses is one way to meet the engagement aspect of UDL (Boothe & Lohmann, 2019). To promote effort and persistence (Checkpoint 8.0), Kathy added two additional collaboration spaces to the course. The course already had an optional weekly virtual meeting where Kathy provided lectures and clarified weekly assignments and projects. To assist with students' social-emotional health, she used part of that one-hour meeting to allow students to discuss and/or vent about the challenges they were facing with their schools being shut-down or moving online. Additionally, at the request of one of her students, Kathy created a COVID-19 discussion board to help reduce distractions and fears related to the pandemic (see Figure 2). This discussion board allowed students and the instructor to provide resources, as well as ask questions of their in-service teacher colleagues related to virtual learning (Checkpoint 7.3 & 8.3). To promote self-regulation, she did a weekly check-in with students (Checkpoint 9.1). The check-in included discussions about self-care and ways to create work-life boundaries in order to take care of their families and themselves. Additionally, she made adjustments to the course requirements by removing the discussion board aspect of the class. Because this was an accelerated seven-week course, there was minimal content that could be removed. However, removing the requirement to participate in the discussion boards eased the workload burden for students (Checkpoint 8.2). According to student feedback, the students, who were working longer days than they did before COVID-19, were extremely grateful for the reduction of this one small assignment.

**Figure 2**

*COVID-19 Online Discussion Board*

**Online Learning Teaching Support**

As you navigate from seeing your students daily to teaching them in an online learning environment, use this discussion board to post resources, ask questions, vent, whatever you need during this time. We are all in this together!

## Engagement Strategies for Moving Face-to-Face Courses Online

Ruby and Jennifer were teaching traditional on-campus courses and providing supervision to teacher candidates in March of 2020 and had to make sudden changes to their instruction to support students. Ruby implemented several strategies to promote engagement in the online platform that had not been in place for the in-person course sessions. First, for a course which met three times per week, synchronous sessions were cut to once per week and the other two sessions were asynchronous; in these sessions, students were led through course content in varying ways with varying levels of demand, such as webquests, videos, voiceover google slides, as examples (Checkpoint 8.2). Second, she loosened attendance policies for synchronous sessions and deadlines to complete the asynchronous activities (Checkpoint 7.1). Ruby checked for completion of asynchronous activities and used this for a record of attendance throughout the remainder of the semester. She emailed students who had not completed sessions to remind them about what needed to be completed and to ask if they needed any assistance in getting those tasks completed. This was done as a means of supporting students during the transition and assisting them in maintaining effort and persistence, while also providing flexibility with varying student needs. This method also provided students with the opportunity to practice self-directed learning (Checkpoint 8.0), a key to success in online courses (Novak & Thibodeau, 2016). Self-directed learning became a key component to successfully completing the spring 2020 semester. Students commented that this flexibility was helpful in reducing their stress levels. Because students were at home, some sharing internet bandwidth, taking on additional household or work responsibilities, or dealing with a myriad of other stressors that were not present in the same way as before the quarantine, the instructor did not require attendance during the live class sessions. Rather, Ruby recorded sessions for students to watch when it was convenient for each individual. Interestingly, the majority of students still opted to attend each live class session.

To address social-emotional needs during the live class sessions, Ruby implemented a "Check In." This was simply a few minutes, at the beginning of the live session, to answer a question and socialize a bit in the online platform. Questions varied from silly to serious: This or That? Baseball or soccer? Music or sports? What is worrying you most right now? What one thing do you look forward to when quarantine is over? Students were encouraged to answer via voice, chat box, private email to Ruby, or not at all. This allowed a few minutes for fun and checking in on student needs. Ruby made a note to check in on students throughout the week regarding the situations in which students were worried. These strategies provided an opportunity for the instructor to "promote expectations to optimize motivation" and for students to practice "coping skills and strategies," two of the engagement guidelines (e.g., 9.1 and 9.2) in UDL (CAST, 2018). Finally, to lighten students' cognitive load, she carefully analyzed the most important concepts that students were expected to learn, and taught only those that were most important for students' future success as a teacher to assist them in their ability to maintain effort and persistence in the midst of a challenging time (Checkpoint 7.2).

Jennifer was teaching a face-to-face undergraduate course and supervising preservice interns in the public schools. When considering the UDL Guidelines, she focused on Checkpoint 8.3, fostering collaboration and community and Checkpoint 9.2, facilitating personal coping skills

and strategies. To encourage peer interactions in a virtual environment, class discussions were moved to Padlet boards where students could interact and comment on one another's posts. To further optimize individual choice and autonomy (Checkpoint 7.1), students could utilize gifs, photos, short video clips, audio clips, websites, or written responses on the Padlet boards. All modes of media were acceptable and welcomed ways of interacting. Students were prompted to not only demonstrate knowledge of the content, but interact with one another to expand upon ideas and make connections between individual discussion posts. This maintained the sense of community that existed prior to the move to remote instruction, but was more challenging to maintain online. In an effort to support personal coping skills and strategies (Checkpoint 9.2), Jennifer developed very small extra credit opportunities for students that required direct interactions with her. She asked students to text or email emojis, gifs, or photos about themselves. She then used those initial interactions as a way to follow up with students to determine whether they needed additional support or were struggling during the initial stages of the uncertainties of COVID-19. These conversation starters served as a catalyst to support students not only with assignments they were struggling to understand or complete, but to also support students' overall well-being. This engagement strategy was particularly helpful for students who were struggling with organization and time management in their home environments, due to executive functioning challenges (Walker & Russell, 2019). Almost all students engaged in these interactions and several students asked for additional support, including coping skill ideas as a result of the prompts. An example of some of these prompts is included in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

*Prompt Examples for Instructor Interactions*

> Prompt A: Still hanging in there? Getting through these modules and directions? Text or email me your name and a gif of your favorite television show and I'll add 0.25 points to one of your quiz grades from earlier in the semester.
>
> Prompt B: Text or email me your name and an emoji of something you love and I'll add 0.25 points to one of your quiz grades from earlier in the semester.
>
> Prompt C: Go outside this week and get some fresh air. Text or email me a picture of something you see while you're outside. I'll add 0.25 points to one of your quiz grades from earlier in the semester.

## Conclusion

COVID-19 brought numerous challenges to teacher educators, but also provided an opportunity for us to increase our own knowledge and skills by learning more about engaging learners during times of crisis. The strategies we used (Figure 4) are a representation of the myriad of options instructors can use to promote engagement in their virtual courses to support students during stressful times. We suggest being creative and open to new ideas to encourage students' well-being, motivation, and positive affect. As we look towards future semesters of online teaching, we are excited to continue using what we have learned regarding engaging online learners and continuing to enhance our own skills through trying additional strategies.

**Figure 4**

*Summary of Strategies Used in Spring 2020 Virtual Courses*

| Checkpoints Addressed | Strategy Used |
|---|---|
| **Guideline: Recruiting Interest** | |
| 7.1 Optimize individual choice and autonomy | ● Choice of how to attend class (live or recorded) <br> ● Padlet discussion choices |
| 7.2 Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity | ● Reduced number of concepts taught |
| 7.3 Minimize threats and distractions | ● COVID-19 discussion board |
| **Sustaining Effort & Persistence** | |
| 8.1 Heighten salience of goals and objectives | |
| 8.2 Vary demands and resources to optimize challenge | ● Reduced demands in assignments <br> ● Varied class session demands |
| 8.3 Foster collaboration and community | ● Additional collaborative spaces <br> ● Class time spent talking about personal experiences and needs <br> ● Check-In <br> ● Discussions in an online format with response opportunities |
| 8.4 Increase mastery-oriented feedback | |
| **Self-Regulation** | |
| 9.1 Promote expectations and beliefs that optimize motivation | ● Motivational videos <br> ● Flexibility in deadlines to complete coursework |
| 9.2 Facilitate personal coping skills and strategies | ● Wellness check <br> ● Direct interactions with the instructor |
| 9.3 Develop self-assessment and reflection | ● Check-In |

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*Chapter 6*

# Dual Writing Pedagogies during COVID-19: Preparing Technologically- and Highly-Qualified Writing Teachers

Tracey S. Hodges

Many colleges and universities require all students, regardless of major, to take courses focused on writing in general and writing in their specific discipline. This focus on integrating writing into the college curriculum started in the 1990s with the "writing across the curriculum movement" (Farris & Smith, 1992; Grauerholz, 1999). Most college curricula require a certain number of courses with this writing designation, though the courses do not have to focus specifically on teaching writing, but rather, encourage students to practice and learn writing as it relates to their future career. The requirements for what constitute writing also differ based on major. For example, an engineering writing-intensive course may focus on developing plans for city buildings with a written component, whereas an English writing-intensive course may focus on literary analysis. Most writing-intensive courses are used as a means for teaching foundational writing skills such as conventions, syntax, and formatting guides along with content knowledge to help reduce the number of courses students must take to complete their undergraduate degrees (Grauerholz, 1999).

In preservice teacher education specifically, there is an additional layer of writing methods courses, which are courses devoted to training teachers to instruct on writing, as opposed to the general courses that improve one's writing abilities. However, in many cases, the writing methods courses are tasked with *both* providing instruction on how to teach writing *and* providing instruction about improving the writing abilities of future teachers. While these courses seem as if they would be a requirement of all teacher preparation programs, they are in fact still largely a novelty (Myers et al., 2016; Scales et al., 2019). According to a recent study, only 28% of teacher preparation programs offer a course devoted entirely to the pedagogy of writing in K-12 classrooms (Myers et al., 2016). An additional 72% of preparation programs indicate that writing is integrated into the general literacy courses; however, upon closer inspection, the time spent teaching writing instruction was lacking in comparison to the time spent on reading instruction (Myers et al., 2016).

Because many states, to date, do not require writing methods courses for teacher certification, the small doses of writing provided in writing-intensive courses are paramount to helping preservice teachers develop their skills for writing and teaching writing (Martin & Dismuke, 2015; Morgan, 2010; National Commission on Writing, 2003). Therefore, writing-intensive courses in education programs have the added layer of also preparing preservice teachers to teach writing. The specific learning objectives of these courses differ; however, they

are intended to provide future teachers with tailored, authentic practice in writing that both inform their knowledge of the content and allow them to practice effective teaching writing effectively.

While these findings suggest that writing methods courses are still a novelty within many teacher education programs, they do not capture the complexities of preparing preservice teachers to be future teachers of writing (Street, 2003; Wahleithner, 2018). In teacher education, dual pedagogies are at work. Future teachers are learning to improve their own writing and writing skills, as they will need these to communicate with education stakeholders in the future, but they are also learning to teach writing effectively. Many individuals believe they can accomplish a task, such as writing, however, they may not feel they have the skills to teach someone else to do this task (Hodges, 2015; Tchannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011).

These dual pedagogies, defined as increasing teacher knowledge of instructing writing and improving their writing abilities, add more content and require more expertise in teacher education writing-intensive courses. Scales and colleagues (2019) studied expert writing instructors regarding their sequence and inclusion of topics, writing assignments, writing pedagogy, and other elements of their writing instruction. Many of these experts (54 out of 63) indicated that their primary training for writing came from research and/or self-study.

From the large national surveys and questionnaires shared above, writing instruction within teacher education programs may have already been experiencing some challenges before the added pressures of sudden and swift remote teaching expectations. For those and many reasons that will be explored in the proposed chapter, the dual pedagogies of learning to teach writing and improving one's own writing now must also engage with virtual writing instruction and learning to teach writing in new ways.

The challenges to teaching writing before the pandemic reveal that several barriers and concerns may be present in teaching writing and meeting the dual pedagogies in a pre-COVID-19 setting such as teaching writing in virtual settings and limitations about providing in-the-moment feedback during remote instruction. Likely, the ramifications of the worldwide pandemic exacerbate these concerns. Anecdotally, teachers are reporting that writing instruction occurs less during COVID-19 because the limitations of technology and lack of explicit instruction required to teach writing well lead to decreases in motivation and engagement in writing.

In this chapter, I share the dual writing pedagogies as: (1) teaching preservice teachers about writing methods and pedagogy; and (2) improving future teacher's own writing abilities. Additionally, this chapter will explore how to successfully integrate both pedagogies in virtual instruction settings. The first pedagogy in response to COVID-19 relates to shifting course content, design, and delivery in a short amount of time to continue developing preservice teacher competencies about teaching writing effectively. The second pedagogy relates to improving one's own writing abilities through virtual learning, which could translate to future teaching. Finally, I will provide ways that future teachers can support current teachers who are battling the same dual pedagogies, likely with less support.

### Instructor Perspectives: Shifting Writing Instruction during a Pandemic

I teach a writing methods course for preservice teachers, those who are in a teacher preparation program with hopes of entering the teaching profession upon graduation. In this course, I teach students the theory, research, and practice behind writing instruction, while also working to improve the preservice teachers' writing skills. Teachers spend more and more time daily preparing reports to help students receive individualized education benefits, communicate

test scores to state leaders and policy makers, and informing parents of class activities and progress. These dual pedagogies have long been challenging to merge into one course.

With the sudden onset of COVID-19, I am more aware of the need to prepare my future teachers for a new reality: virtual, remote, and distance education. While I need to ensure that my future teachers can teach writing well in an in-person classroom situation, I feel called to prepare them to teach in a myriad of settings simultaneously. For example, some local schools that I partner with to allow my teachers to practice their writing pedagogies have shifted to fully online while others are engaging in remote instruction by sending physical work to students that is void of technology. Therefore, I must prepare my future teachers to instruct using technology in new ways but to also be prepared to create materials that can be sent to students physically and worked on independently of the teacher. Even after the pandemic has reached some sort of conclusion, education stakeholders may still want to include virtual, remote, and distance options to include all students.

Historically, I have always provided technological resources to my students and encouraged ways to augment classroom instruction with these tools. In 2020, that is not enough. Now, I and other teacher educators are preparing future teachers to move all instruction to and between multiple platforms. The goal is not just to prepare highly-qualified teachers of writing, but technologically- and highly-qualified teachers of writing.

### Teaching Preservice Teachers about Writing Methods and Pedagogy

In preparing future teachers for writing instruction, there are three primary perspectives, based in theory, research, and practice: (a) cognitive; (b) motivational; and (c) sociocultural. First, I'll briefly discuss these three perspectives related to in-person education settings, then will share how they inform virtual, distance, and remote learning.

### Cognitive Perspectives for Writing Instruction

In the 1980s, the Cognitive Processes Theory of Writing by Flower and Hayes (1981) explained how children think about writing and how they proceed through the writing process. This theory dominates writing instruction research and is still widely used to explain the brain functions and cognitive processing required to write. In preparing future teachers, this theory and research base provides support for using the writing process, considering writing in a recursive manner, and planning for writing-to-learn activities, in which students use writing to learn new content (Bangert-Drowns et al., 2004; Hodges, 2017). Many teachers use graphic organizers or other infographics to help children visually represent writing, which is also supported through cognitive perspectives (Hodges, 2017).

In remote instruction, the visual aspect of learning is heightened. Teachers must adapt their writing-to-learn practices, infographics, and other media to digital, virtual, and other remote formats. In these settings, if children have access to technology, they can create graphics using online forums and can practice writing-to-learn activities through Google Docs or Blogs. One of the primary opportunities of these methods is that children are exposed to potential audiences outside their classroom. These media can be shared with family members, friends across grade levels, or community members who could provide added engagement for students.

In the shift to virtual instruction, I continued to help my preservice teachers learn about the Cognitive Processes Approach to Writing by asking them to create video-based lessons about writing. These lessons were filmed by the students and included the students teaching one aspect of the writing process. The videos were intended to be watched asynchronously so

that teachers could use them to supplement lessons, students could watch them to learn content, or parents or care providers could use them to help the children.

## Motivational Perspectives for Writing Instruction

While less researched in writing instruction, motivational perspectives describe the reasons that students engage in or avoid writing tasks, as well as why teachers may integrate writing or not in their classrooms (Hodges, 2015). From the teacher perspective, research has indicated that prior negative experiences with writing or lack of training may lead teachers to not feel confident in teaching writing (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Pajares, 2003). Moreover, when teachers do not feel confident or prepared to teach writing, they often avoid it or do not spend as much time on writing (Cutler & Graham, 2008). Unfortunately, other research shows that the consequences of these negative beliefs mean that writing occurs less than 30 minutes per day in many classrooms, which is not nearly enough to improve writing outcomes (Coker et al., 2016). From the student perspective, writing motivation includes students' beliefs about themselves as writers, beliefs about writing, and attitudes toward writing tasks (Wright et al., 2019). These beliefs can be harnessed by teachers but are more likely to increase if the teachers also have positive views of writing. Future teachers need to learn to cultivate these skills and embed their instruction with motivational components such as choice of writing topic, variability in writing products, and a focus on the writing process over product.

Motivation becomes additionally important in remote settings as some children may face Internet fatigue. Internet fatigue comes from spending too much time engaged in activities online or via screens. Young children's brains can be negatively impacted by too much screen time and their motivation toward content, including writing, may diminish. Cultivating motivation requires teachers to consider the emotions, social situations, and cultural implications of remote and virtual teaching. More specifically, children may become frustrated or overwhelmed by the change in routine and instructional expectations. At the same time, students may feel stressed by not seeing their friends or may notice a change in their learning as they are not engaged in as much collaboration with peers. Finally, from the cultural viewpoint, students will have different norms in their homes that may contradict what the norms were of the school day. All of these factors may influence how students engage in virtual instruction. Teachers need to continue to provide engaging, interactive activities, along with choice and autonomy to nurture motivation.

In my writing methods course, I modeled practices that increase student motivation for my future teachers. My approach to teaching is structured on meta-approaches, so I engage my future teachers to think about why I make instructional decisions and how they can modify those practices for their future classrooms, which will be at the elementary level. For example, I continued to foster motivation by providing my students choice in their writing activities. They were allowed choice in topics, formats, and media used (video versus audio, for instance). Additionally, I engaged with students in a weekly video chat that was structured as an open discussion and question-and-answer session. During these times, students could discuss course content, life events, or ask questions. After completing assignments, we met as a group for a live Zoom chat in which we could further discuss content and could analyze the practices that would be most beneficial to K-12 students' writing success.

## Sociocultural Perspectives for Writing Instruction

In recent years, sociocultural theories have dominated writing instruction. Sociocultural perspectives emphasize motivation, affect, and social influences and examine how students learn from each other and more knowledgeable others (Prior, 2006; Vygotsky, 1980). From these perspectives, students' unique experiences, social interactions, and cultural influences

strongly impact their writing and writing instruction. Within teacher education programs, future teachers learn to integrate these perspectives into their instruction by focusing on student collaboration, peer-editing and revising activities, or conferencing as formative assessment.

While some aspects of writing such as motivation may be diminished in virtual settings, other aspects such as collaboration are increased. In virtual settings students can collaborate in new ways. One example would be sharing a Google Doc with a collaborative writing activity and asking students to work simultaneously on the document. A second example could include asking students to write a script for a short video reflection or demonstration and then using that script to create the video with classmates.

Finally, in my virtual writing pivot, I shifted the focus in the moment to using digital tools. Students collaborated with their peers to create strategy demonstration videos. In these videos the students taught their classmates about important content related to writing strategies and content. These videos were posted, and their classmates were given the opportunity to watch them and then ask follow-up questions or share their own use of the different strategies.

## Shifting Perspectives to Virtual, Remote, and Distance Learning

While all these perspectives are relevant in teaching future teachers about writing instruction, COVID-19 added the challenge of embedding these perspectives in virtual, remote, and distance learning settings (Fisher et al., 2020). Future teachers must be prepared to help all students succeed despite their access to technology (Hodges et al., 2020). One way to accomplish these goals is to integrate virtual, remote, and distance learning into all teacher education methods courses. Preservice teachers can complete learning modules and readings related to teaching writing instruction with technology and can complete assignments such as teaching virtual, video-recorded writing lessons and preparing websites with writing-based resources.

In my own experiences shifting my writing methods course during COVID-19, I infused instruction with virtual writing components. Future teachers researched and studied methods for teaching writing effectively in virtual, remote, or distance settings. Then, they applied this knowledge to create virtual lessons that could be used by teachers to augment their instruction or used by parents to teach students about writing. The goal of these videos was to create options for young students to work through with guidance or alone to learn writing strategies, skills, and processes. Through these activities, the preservice teachers learned the dual pedagogies of how to teach writing and how to teach writing. They also had the added focus of doing learning how in virtual settings.

### Preparing, Curating, and Developing Materials to Teach Writing to K-12 Children

When COVID-19 reached the United States and school buildings closed, resulting in virtual and remote learning, teachers asked for resources to help them navigate the new demands. As a third aspect of the dual pedagogies, the need of teachers, parents, and other education stakeholders for resources to teach in virtual settings became a call for universities (Hodges et al., 2020). Specifically, teacher educators and future teachers began curating, preparing, and developing materials to teach writing and provided those resources to teachers.

Video-recorded writing lesson plans created by preservice teachers were shared through social media groups and password-protected websites for teachers. Additionally, preservice teachers assisted teachers in the field in building online learning platforms, even teaching lessons to students in real-time through video conferencing platforms. Finally, preservice

teachers used their experiences in their teacher education program to conduct research and provide informal professional development to teachers. Through these events, future teachers shared research on best practices in virtual learning and created infographics with additional resources for parents and teachers. These infographics provided resources, games, and interactive activities to enhance students' learning.

## Implications and Conclusions

Writing instruction is commonly viewed as a difficult topic and one that brings teachers some anxiety. Many teachers report feeling unprepared to teach writing (Cutler & Graham, 2008) while most would appreciate more training and time to devote to writing in the classroom. Adding virtual, distance, and remote options to that already challenging task makes writing instruction even more complex. Teachers may now face competing anxieties based on their experience with technology, as well as their self-efficacy and confidence in teaching writing. These anxieties can be present even for future teachers, many of whom are digital natives, as they grapple with how to use technology and effective writing pedagogy to increase student motivation and achievement. Teacher educators have an opportunity to step in and help those future teachers become equipped with the skills they need for the current and future times.

Teacher education is facing a time of great change in response to COVID-19, and that change is likely to stay. The key is for teacher educators to determine what lasting changes, such as including virtual and distance learning instruction in their course content, are necessary to improve education. For those teacher educators who focus on writing, the task is now to prepare technologically- and highly-qualified writing teachers who can meet the needs of all learners, regardless of access to technology or resources.

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# Chapter 7

# Pandemic Pivoting: Preparing Preservice Teachers through Methods Courses and School-Based Placements

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Teacher education has long presented an interesting approach to instruction, merging traditional philosophies of higher education (e.g., lecture, theory, studying research) with apprenticeship (Coiro, 2011; Collins et al., 1990; Darling-Hammond, 2017)). Teacher educators base their instruction on educational theory and evidence-based research while grounding their instruction in lectures, discussions, and in-class activities, mirroring traditional approaches to higher education. However, that only details half of the valuable instruction that future teachers receive. The other half of teacher preparation comes from a heavy emphasis on apprenticeship, based on observing, collaborating, and teaching alongside model teachers in their own classrooms. Within our teacher education program, students obtain 120 credit hours of instruction, with approximately 1025 hours of apprenticeship (also called "practicum") from the time they enter the program until they complete their formal student teaching internship in the field as an elementary education major. This model is customary to most teacher education programs, though the hours required for practicum/ apprenticeship experiences vary (Darling-Hammond, 2017). In light of COVID-19 and the sudden closing of physical school buildings, we were tasked with making immediate decisions about how to maintain the integrity of our field-based model.

In education, the theoretical framework of cognitive apprenticeship indicates that individuals are actively engaged in purposeful metacognition through experiences (Flavell, 1979). Cognitive apprenticeship and metacognition include the following components: declarative knowledge, or stating what has been learned; procedural, or knowing the steps to replicate the learning; and conditional, or knowing when to use and apply specific knowledge (Brown, 1987; Paris et al., 1983). In teacher education, the knowledge is that of how to teach (pedagogy) and what to teach (content knowledge), along with knowledge of student development and social and cultural factors that impact the classroom. Acting together, these knowledge bases help teacher candidates learn to teach effectively in classrooms with children. Cognitive apprenticeship depicts the expert teacher scaffolding for teacher candidates (apprentices) into acquiring and utilizing cognitive skills to master teaching (Coiro, 2011; Collins et al., 1990).

The model we outline is heavily focused on developing and cultivating relationships between the institute of higher education (i.e., the university) and local community partners, such as schools, childcare centers, and youth-oriented non-profits. Community and university partners co-construct mutually beneficial school and community experiences (PK-12) to help teacher candidates continually improve their preparation and develop skills needed in the profession (Hodges et al., 2020). These partnerships for pedagogical preparation follow a range of models and have mutually agreed upon expectations and requirements for candidates to ensure that theory, practice, and research are linked to maximize outcomes for the teacher candidates and school/community partners. Finally, shared accountability provides avenues for collaboration between universities, schools, and communities (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2019).

One of the greatest impacts of COVID-19 on teacher education has been the shift of the methods-based courses. At most institutions, methods courses are designated as those courses teaching specific pedagogy or teaching methods related to specific content. For example, a science methods course instructs teachers on the best evidence-based methods for teaching through experiments, engaging students in reading and writing as a scientist, and promoting inquiry-based thinking practices. These courses are directly tied to apprenticeship experiences, and as such, were impacted greatly by the closure of K-12 schools and the decision to move all instruction to digital platforms. Nearly all K-12 buildings and universities closed for at least a portion of 2020 (Hodges et al., 2020), eliminating the traditional methods of implementing practicum in teacher preparation courses.

With the sudden onset of COVID-19, suddenly, half of the course experiences, namely those centered on apprenticeship, were no longer practical to implement. As a teacher education program, we had already begun the intentionality of embedding standards for students and educators recommended by the International Society of Technology in Education (ISTE) into our methods courses, because we realized that in today's technology driven world, students and educators must exhibit digital literacy in order to maintain productivity as a citizen (ISTE, 2020). However, the need for digital literacy was greatly magnified when schools and universities moved to online platforms. Embedding these standards became the baseline practice, and we were tasked with developing new practicum experiences for our preservice teachers while rapidly providing them with advanced knowledge of teaching via virtual and remote platforms.

In the present chapter, we discuss how teacher educators shifted their methods-based instruction online and continued to provide many elements of the invaluable practicum experiences for preservice teachers. Specifically, we examine how different instructors simulated practicum experiences online, how teacher educators managed class sessions via video-conferencing, and how teacher educators modified assignments to fit the needs of future teachers while addressing K-12 concerns brought about by the pandemic. Finally, we discuss unique challenges for different content-specific methods courses, including early childhood, science, and literacy instruction.

### Teacher Identity and Simulating Practicum Experiences with Technology

Simulating virtual teaching in practicum courses in teacher education is not "new;" however, replacing all or most classroom-based experience with virtual options quickly became the new normal during the global pandemic (Bradley & Kendal, 2014; McGarr, 2020; Sasaki et al., 2020). Local school systems offered virtual or remote teaching due to local community spread and therefore our practicum courses existed side-by-side with cooperating teachers in

the virtual or remote setting. Problematically, yet understandably, classroom teachers who were assigned to mentor our preservice teachers and higher education faculty were at varying levels of proficiency with technology and virtual education (Rapanta et al., 2020). This created an inequitable barrier for early childhood and elementary children. Would a child or preservice teacher be placed in a classroom or course with an educator capable of harnessing technology to simulate a pedagogically sound format? How did systems and institutions ensure each student or pre-service educator receives the education they deserve during virtual or remote learning? These questions remain largely unanswered and vary from school system to school system and from university to university.

Post-secondary institutions quickly transitioned to emergency remote teaching (ERT) which is not the same as intentionally prepared online learning (Hodges et al., 2020; O'Keefe et al., 2020). Institutions created varying levels of infrastructure to train faculty to create optimal online learning courses. A colleague, Evelyn (pseudonym), who is close to retirement, laments about the transition to hybrid and online teaching:

> Moving to online format elicits a sense of fear of the unknown (referring to technology) and unintentional resistance to change. I feel abandoned by my institution with little professional development beyond tips, tricks, and tools. Moving online flips my instructional design on its head. I know a structural and pedagogical shift is needed, but I am offered no guidance on *how* to change it. These changes push me to the brink of leaving the profession.

Many faculty members relate to the "fear of the unknown" of technology conversation. Many faculty and teachers who began their careers before the technology boom of the 1990s and 2000s may not have the level of comfort that those who had technologies as children feel.

Institutions are responding to this discomfort by offering virtual training of different tools but not comprehensive pedagogical overhaul of instructional design. With the shift to ERT, many teachers reacted with fear, anxiety, and resistance, while others perceived the shift as an opportunity to reinvent course structure and teaching and to take calculated risks with technology to benefit student learning. For our program, there are professional development offerings provided by the institution, however more effective practices emerge from faculty collaborating to plan and develop course pedagogy and content. This humanizing collaboration provides support, structure, and systems for faculty who feel less comfortable with technology. In Table 1, we outline how faculty can consider virtual tools regardless of their comfort level with technology, embedded within a practicum course pedagogy.

**Table 1.**
***Virtual tools to assist virtual and hybrid teaching in early childhood, literacy, and science***

| Discipline | Course Format | Virtual Tool | Recommended Use |
|---|---|---|---|
| Early Childhood | Virtual or Hybrid | ● Curating child observation videos<br>● Creating virtual family involvement videos and lessons | ● Observing and assessing young children in virtual placement experiences<br>● Shadowing with mentor in virtual settings |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | ● Integrating national webinars or modules for intermittent trainings<br>● Conducting virtual interviews with national experts | ● Building capacity and early educator pedagogical development |
| | Methods Paired with Virtual or Hybrid Placement | ● Supporting teachers in the field administer lessons virtually<br>● Co-teaching and assessing children virtually<br>● Providing training to teach virtually | ● Working side-by-side in classrooms with educators or via distance for internships/placements<br>● Using assessment data to inform planning |
| General Elementary Education | Virtual or Hybrid<br><br>OR<br><br>Methods Paired with Virtual or Hybrid Placement | ● Working with assigned teacher to plan and teach virtual lessons<br>● Using small group sessions to present in-depth guidance on technology tools (peer-teaching) through Zoom breakout<br>● Participating in panel discussions with school administrators and faculty<br>● Preparing videos of lessons for Facebook group<br>● Tutoring virtually with local organizations<br>● Conducting action research centered upon the world of virtual teaching<br>● Responding using Flipgrid to videoed lessons and social justice videos | ● Bringing in community leaders via videoconferencing<br>● Working remotely with teachers, students, and education stakeholders<br>● Complementing virtual practicum with in-class supports |
| Literacy | Hybrid | ● Viewing and analyzing videos of practicum<br>● Inviting cross-institutional guest speakers<br>● Creating video-based lessons | ● Teaching via virtual platforms<br>● Interacting in distance book clubs between preservice teachers and students |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | ● Creating infographics as virtual resources for parents and teachers<br>● Videoconferencing discussions and panels | |
| Science | Hybrid | ● Analyzing video case studies of science lessons<br>● Co-teaching/planning inquiry-based technology lessons through Zoom with assigned classroom teacher<br>● Collaborating as a team to prepare investigations using Zoom breakout<br>● Planning virtual STEM Family Night<br>● Preparing virtual field trips<br>● Interacting with informal science institutions to plan interactive activities<br>● Creating Bitmoji science classrooms for interaction during placements<br>● Creating virtual unit design utilizing virtual tools | ● Developing community partnerships<br>● Hosting video conferencing panels of teachers and administrators<br>● Providing family STEM nights in virtual settings |

The resources above are not exhaustive, but a sample of options that have worked for our colleagues within our teacher preparation program. The content and course objectives are constant, but how faculty provide the students with interactive, meaningful learning experiences has shifted as we pivot in the pandemic.

Practicum experiences are intended for the live, in-person classroom setting. However, our capacity for innovation is only limited by our perspective, our technology capacity, and our knowledge base. We could choose to transition our courses online without changing content or structure, but at what cost? On the other hand, re-imagining courses takes time and effort, and without institutional support, faculty members are left to re-construct a better experience for students on their own metaphoric dime and time. We view the "pandemic pivoting" as an opportunity, an opportunity to add programmatic changes that were not possible previously. We choose to widen our perspective, stretch our faculty's bounds with technology, and utilize our networks as we pivot to provide the best experiences possible for practicum students. If our

perspective is bound to field-based, classroom-based opportunities, then we set our students up for a potentially disappointing term. We choose to perceive the challenges that face our pre-service students' field experiences as an opportunity to broaden our reach and our virtual impact (e.g., statewide, nationally, internationally), as well as to craft many experiences that may linger far beyond the pandemic itself. Creating virtual, sustainable partnerships with colleagues and communities offers mutual benefits.

## Maintaining Practicum Models through Community Partnerships

University/school/community partnerships have long been a cornerstone of teacher preparation programs (Hodges et al., 2020). A goal of such partnerships is to establish a collaborative and transparent relationship between community and school stakeholders, along with higher education institutions, in order to meet the educational needs of all involved (University of Alabama School Partnerships, 2018). These partnerships can be innovative and provide a vehicle for fundamental development of preservice teachers, while also serving as a catalyst for professional development among practicing teachers. Moreover, these collaborations may provide extended opportunities for family involvement within local communities.

In educational partnerships, it is critical to consider equitable distribution of resources so that the diverse needs of different types of schools are satisfied instead of focusing only on affluent educational settings. Higher education institutions often have a strategic approach to engaging preservice teachers and faculty in community partnerships, so a gap in social capital among districts and types of schools is prevented (Birdwell-Mitchell, 2019). Such endeavors are also critical as teacher identity can be positively or negatively impacted by the context where novice educators and veterans attempt to navigate and modify their identities as they move through different settings and contexts, assimilating themselves and situating their ideologies about teaching and learning while also trying to maintain professional relationships. In a sense, the context where teachers practice can make them vulnerable and alter their teacher identity (Avraamidou, 2019).

This issue of equity in school partnerships, while seemingly easy to accomplish, becomes increasingly challenging during a pandemic. Physical school buildings provide resources to teachers, families, and students such as security, food, wellness, exercise, socialization, and other needed resources. Moreover, school buildings that once were used as sites for community outreach and innovative practicum experiences are no longer usable for those purposes. Schools that were once a hub for preservice teacher development, in-service teacher professional development, and community events now stand somewhat silent and deserted. However, while the buildings are vacated, for the most part, the needs of the children, educators, administrators, and the surrounding communities have been exponentially magnified.

These realities of closing physical school buildings while maintaining robust educational experiences in virtual and remote settings leads to the question of how to maintain and reimagine partnerships. In this new model, teaching is occurring largely online or in socially-distanced formats where only a small portion of students are allowed on campus at one time, and the doors have been closed to guests who were once welcome to join in the educational endeavors. Thus, partnerships must be reimagined to meet the new crisis presented by COVID-19.

Through much collaboration, we sustained and even enhanced university/school/community partnerships that provide reciprocity among stakeholders. Preservice teachers have become co-curriculum developers, as they work with their assigned practicing classroom teacher to develop and teach online lessons that can meet the needs of children working from home in a virtual environment. In many cases, preservice teachers provide a buffer between veteran educators and new technologies, easing the feelings of inadequacy. As undergraduate students and teachers work together to share the development and teaching of lessons, a strong collaboration occurs. Additionally, administrators and veteran educators have participated in virtual panels, providing tips for interviewing, securing a job, and navigating the first year of teaching.

While the aforementioned approaches to teaching during the pandemic have proven valuable, meeting the needs of the community has also been reconceptualized. Families often struggle with filling the gaps in providing educational opportunities for their children while keeping them safe. To address this problem, we reimagined our approach to community outreach. Family involvement in a child's education leads to greater success for the child (Mendez & Swick, 2018). Therefore, we have provided opportunities for virtual tutoring, virtual teaching, and social media platforms that distribute video-prepared lessons.

Additionally, we prepared a Virtual Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Family Week to supplement a previously held STEM Family Night that serviced between 500 and 600 families and community members annually. The benefits of this event have been immeasurable and many members in the school and community anticipate it with excitement. Through the virtual experience, we will cast a wider net to reach schools all over the state, rather than just focusing on those within about 100 miles of our institution. Students and their families will be invited to attend virtually by Zoom, as preservice students in their science methods course engage in inquiry-based STEM challenges. A list of simple household materials and a description of each virtual station, along with the scheduled time of the station and Zoom link, were provided. The children and their families gathered the common household items needed in order to participate from their homes as the preservice teachers guided them through the STEM challenges, asking for participation in problem-solving, predicting, building, investigating, inventing, and answering questions. The goal was that by providing many virtual stations each night, families could seize the opportunity to interact with their children while learning science. Issues of equity still present a challenge as we seek to find innovative ways to share this event with families who may have limited access to technology and other resources, but we hope to solve some of these issues through collaborative efforts with community stakeholders. Local businesses and libraries were invited to donate supplies and to create socially-distanced spaces where family members can safely access technology. Reaching out to schools, businesses, and libraries statewide can help prevent social capital inequalities (Birdwell-Mitchell, 2019).

## Humanizing Pedagogy During Crisis

At the heart of shifting our practice is a strong focus on the human experience - that of both teachers and students, as well as parents and other education stakeholders. In 2020, these individuals may feel unmoored by the unanswerable and moment-by-moment changes. Our perspectives above and the models of supporting future and current teachers and their students are based in easing those tensions and bringing steadfastness to in-person, virtual, remote, and distance (and every combination of those) education.

Humanizing pedagogy is empowering and provides agency to the individuals it affects. For example, rather than viewing the current changes and shifts as happening to us, we view the current shifts as opportunities to push boundaries, call for improvements, and take advantage of the vast and endless possibilities presented. New collaborations with community organizations and developing practicum experiences outside of the local environment are opportunities to prepare teachers for more diverse expectations while providing educational experience to diverse populations of students.

As with everything during the current pivot, challenges are ever-present, but opportunities are also here to stay. We advocate for focusing on the opportunities and using them to expand creative, engaging, and effective options for practicum and methods-based experiences for future teachers. Rather than asking, "what limitations are put upon us?" ask, "what can we do that we did not have an option to do before?" For us, this has led to extended community partners across a large state, reaching populations that were previously exempt from our support, as well as focusing on what experts in the field can share with our future teachers. We also view ourselves and our future teachers as resources that other teachers, schools, and communities can turn to for help during this time. We hope these opportunities become the currency of education and continue to move us toward more inclusivity and providing the best educational opportunities possible for all children.

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*Chapter 8*

# (Re)Imagining Remote Teaching and Learning: Meeting Students Where They Are

Ekaterina Koubek

In March 2020, the outbreak of COVID-19 forced the majority of higher education institutions to close campuses and pivot instruction to remote learning in the United States. As a result, many educators were scrambling to develop engaging remote instruction while experiencing fear, anxiety, and a sense of uncertainty. As a teacher educator at a mid-sized master's comprehensive university in the eastern United States, I quickly realized that I needed to overcome several obstacles to teach my courses effectively and to promote student learning. First, I had to exercise cognitive reframing to redirect my anxiety and confusion (Morin, 2020). Cognitive reframing is a strategy that can be used to help create a different outlook on stressors in order to promote a more positive life. By looking at the present situation from a slightly different perspective, I was able to alter my perception of the pandemic, which in turn helped me focus on my students and their needs. This technique empowered me in my decision-making and contributed to enacting change in my instructional practices. Second, I had to re-evaluate each course's objectives to determine which ones were building blocks for other courses and were not prone to changes. Third, I had to capitalize on a wealth of online resources offered by vendors and publishers in response to COVID-19 in order to select appropriate materials and textbooks.

Situated in the conceptual framework of high-impact practices (HIP) set forth by Kuh and his associates (Kuh et al., 2013) and adopted by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), this chapter aims to discuss what one teacher educator did to identify and build on student strengths in order to successfully finish the 2020 spring semester courses. In addition, the chapter will highlight what students thought promoted their learning and sustained their engagement. While much of the research on HIPs has been conducted on undergraduate residential campuses, new evidence that HIPs can be implemented successfully in online environments (Linder & Hayes, 2018) is emerging. Collaborative projects and undergraduate research, which are part of 11 HIPs, were the focus of the outcomes in my courses in which students created group lessons and individual unit plans, as well as individual inquiry research projects. These activities required higher-order cognitive skills based on Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Bloom et al., 1956).

Realizing that in order to continue teaching content, I needed to consider my students' social and emotional learning first (CASEL, 2020). The saying "Maslow before Bloom" became even more prevalent in the midst of a global pandemic. One of the canons of education is that learners have to be ready to learn. Maslow's (1968) Hierarchy of Basic Needs asserts that to

reach the highest level – self-actualization – learners' previous four levels have to be satisfied. While the first two levels of physiological needs and safety/security could have been met when students traveled back home and stayed with their immediate families, the needs such as belonging and esteem became the driving force when redesigning my spring semester courses. This sudden turnabout further underscored the challenges of making these needs the priority for remote teaching.

The section that follows provides specific examples of how I used cognitive reframing and took these challenges as opportunities to meet my students where they are in order to promote their engagement and learning outcomes. These ideas became reality and were made possible due to Broome's (2020) Higher Ed Learning Collective Facebook group that focused on aiding college and university educators transitioning from in-person to online instruction. This group has become a community of global educators who share their cognitive capital and experiences to support educators around the globe. My gratitude also extends to all my students and colleagues who continue to grapple with being vulnerable while trying to make meaning and having a sense of purpose in the time of a pandemic.

## Lessons Learned

Polling students offered important reactions to the pivot. The following will discuss the lessons learned throughout the pivot. There was a need to shift thinking in order to keep a community of learners that was engaged and self-managed. This was accomplished through scaffolding, monitoring for understanding, and providing feedback.

### Polling

Using technological affordances and capitalizing on formative assessments, I first polled my students anonymously using a Google Form to explore the types of resources and technologies they had at the time of transitioning to remote learning. Based on their responses, it became apparent that their textbooks were left behind in dorms and their preference was for asynchronous remote learning due to low Internet bandwidth and poor connectivity in their homes. The results from each polling were shared out in a class announcement on Canvas, our university's learning management system.

### (Re)Creating a Community of Learners

Consequently, the type of teaching, i.e., asynchronous, was dictated by my students' needs and experiences. However, regular check-ins through either virtual office hours using WebEx or individual phone calls were implemented to alleviate student anxiety and uncertainty associated with COVID-19 and to connect with each student individually. As evidenced in this anonymous course evaluation response, creating a safe learning environment was my utmost priority:

> She worked so hard to create a safe learning community in our classroom and demonstrated exactly how to teach through her teaching. I also want to say that she went above and beyond to communicate with all her students after the COVID situation and set up personal WebEx conferences with each of her students to check in with them and get feedback on the transition to online.

As educators, we should create remote classroom spaces where students feel their voices matter and they belong, thus mitigating a sense of loneliness found on so many campuses even prior to the pandemic (Twenge et al., 2019). To build relationships and to create a sense of community, Darby (2019) has suggested three relational levels for remote courses, such as the relationships that instructors have with students, students have with instructors, and students have with each other.

To assist in building these relationships after pivoting to remote learning, I created an introductory video on FlipGrid and posted it in Canvas inviting students to join me in creating their videos addressing the following task: "Choose a peer and record your 90-second video cheering them up and sharing your ways of staying positive in the current situation. Your peer will return the favor to you as well." Imad (2020) has proposed seven ways educators can help students thrive in class in times of trauma with the first one working to ensure students' emotional, cognitive, physical, and interpersonal safety. This simple but powerful strategy facilitated peer support and fostered authentic discussions online.

## Providing Self-Management & Scaffolding

Furthermore, a detailed weekly schedule for each course that outlined tasks, objectives, due dates, points earned, and assessment procedures was created and shared with students on the announcement page in Canvas prior to the start of each week. Suggested preparation times for activities mapped with certain days of the week and locations to submit assignments were an integral part of each weekly schedule. These detailed weekly schedules served as part of self-regulation and instructional scaffolding techniques and were highly appreciated by all students, as evidenced in the following anonymous student course evaluation statement: "In the online section of the semester, I had more work in this class than other classes but it was the least stressful because the schedule was so clearly defined." Lowering anxiety through established structure and routine helped students to work smarter and more efficiently, which in turn contributed to their overall academic success as measured by each course grade and student satisfaction on student course evaluations.

## Promoting Active Engagement

To ease students into remote learning, activities that capitalized on social interaction and positive interdependence (Johnson et al., 2007) were emphasized. Focusing on (re)establishing a community of learners and providing students with a real audience, such as their peers, became an integral component of each course. This, in turn, promoted student self-esteem, which is an important aspect of psychological health and a higher level of Maslow's (1968) Hierarchy of Basic Needs. As Johnson et al. (2007) have asserted, "The studies that have been conducted at the college level found that cooperation promoted higher self-esteem than did competitive (effect size = 0.47) or individualistic (effect size = 0.29) efforts" (p. 20). Even though these collaborative activities took much more time online, they were perceived as beneficial and necessary by students. One of the examples of active engagement was creating lesson plans in small groups and providing group peer feedback to other groups. Each lesson plan was evaluated based on instructor and student (self- and peer) feedback. Students had opportunities to revise their lesson plans in light of this feedback prior to submitting it for a final grade.

## Monitoring and Checking for Understanding

Interactive technologies, such as FlipGrid, Kahoot! and Nearpod, were integrated to promote a sense of belonging as well as to instill structure and mutual accountability for students and the instructor alike. These also served the role of periodic formative assessments and became paramount to ensure that students were engaged in their learning and to monitor their understanding of content and their progression toward meeting each course outcome. These low-stakes assessments were used and regularly evaluated using individual and whole class check-ins in addition to feedback supplied via anonymous Google Forms.

Figure 1 depicts an example of how students were surveyed on their perceptions of the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the first six statements using a five-point Likert-item response (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) as well as their overall satisfaction with FlipGrid using an open-ended response in question seven.

**Figure 1**
*Example of Questions on the Use of FlipGrid*

1. I find FlipGrid useful for learning.
2. FlipGrid helped me develop confidence in the subject area.
3. I find FlipGrid easy to use.
4. Using FlipGrid is a bad idea.
5. FlipGrid makes learning more interesting.
6. I would like to use FlipGrid in future modules.
7. What in particular did you find useful about FlipGrid? Is there a way that the use of FlipGrid could be improved?
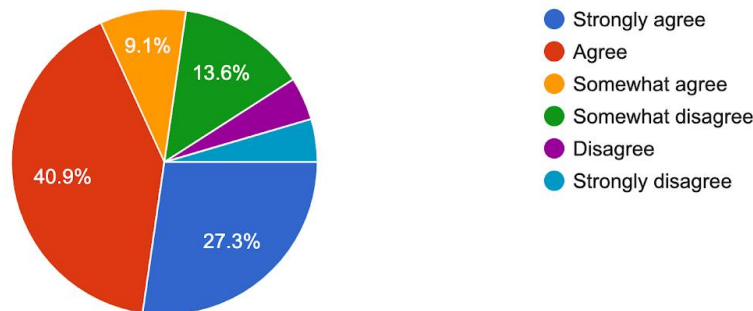
Student survey responses, as shown in Figure 2 for question five, were overwhelmingly positive. Over 77 percent of students (22 responses) saw tremendous value in using this technology to connect with others and to build a sense of belonging, as garnered in the following anonymous response: "I think this is one of the best modules we've used throughout online learning! They [FlipGrid posts] are relatively simple to make, and is the closest thing we have now to a real class discussion."

**Figure 2**
*Example of Student Responses on the Use of FlipGrid*

Choose a statement that you identify with: I enjoy FlipGrid assignments in this class.
22 responses



Legend: Strongly agree, Agree, Somewhat agree, Somewhat disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree. Values shown: 40.9%, 27.3%, 13.6%, 9.1%.

Similar surveys based on the use of Kahoot!, Nearpod, and Canvas discussion boards were administered to gather student perceptions on the effectiveness of these technologies to engage them and promote their learning.

**Instructor Preparation and Feedback**

Planning out each weekly agenda and schedule, albeit overly time-consuming, was a necessity for successful remote teaching and learning. DeBrock et al. (2020) have postulated, "Effective online teaching often requires more planning and more overall effort than traditional classroom teaching of the same material" (para. 8). Keeping in mind time frames, rearranging student groups, and scaffolding activities from lower to higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy required undivided attention to detail, an understanding of students' backgrounds and experiences, and a keen desire to help each student succeed.

This support was provided through timely, relevant, and specific instructor and peer feedback on student drafts of assignments. This feedback was grounded in clearly delineated rubrics and checklists with specific prompts for feedback. Figure 3 depicts the checklist for the inquiry/action research project that shows key elements students needed to attain in order to successfully complete this assignment. It was also used to provide peer feedback on a draft of this key assignment.

**Figure 3**
*Checklist for Inquiry/Action Research Project*

Directions: Please fill out this checklist and provide written responses to help your peer revise their inquiry/action research paper. Remember this is not an evaluative checklist, but rather a formative way of providing feedback. You will upload this checklist to the discussion board under the peer's name you were assigned to.

| YES | MAYBE | NO | **Organization/Structure** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | All elements of the project are present (title, abstract, introduction, research question(s), methods, data analysis, discussion, references) |
| | | | Transitions are appropriate and varied |
| | | | Elements are organized according to the template |
| YES | MAYBE | NO | **Observations/Field Notes** |
| | | | All observations (3) are clearly described |
| | | | Observations support the research focus |
| YES | MAYBE | NO | **Research** |
| | | | Primary sources (6) are well used and support the research focus |
| | | | Secondary sources (textbook, etc.) are well used and support the research focus |
| | | | Outside consultation is well used and supports the research focus |
| YES | MAYBE | NO | **Analysis** |
| | | | Evidence of clear analytical reflection of literature review, observations, interview, and course material is present |
| | | | Implications for future research are stated |
| | | | Limitations of research are stated |
| YES | MAYBE | NO | **Mechanics** |

| | | | The paper is free from all but an occasional grammatical error. |
| | | | All references are well cited in text and in the references using the current APA style. |
| Positive comments: | | | |
| Constructive comments: | | | |

Written comments were shared on uploaded assignments in Canvas or using comment features in Word or Google Docs. Through individual check-ins, students were able to meet and raise any concerns or questions online if needed. In addition, general feedback as it applied to the whole class was provided on each weekly announcement in Canvas. These observations concurred with the findings from a mixed-method study conducted by Rodriguez and Koubek (2019) that revealed the importance of constructive feedback on assignments as one of the essential components of student engagement and learning.

## Conclusion

The experience with pivoting to remote teaching and learning made me question the priorities I set forth for my students and course outcomes. Utilizing cognitive reframing (Morin, 2020) empowered my instructional choices and enacting change in how I approached teaching and learning amidst the pandemic. Establishing a sense of belonging and self-esteem took precedence over trying to cover each course's objective. To move forward, I had to meet students where they were, which meant (re)imagining activities and tasks that focused on asynchronous learning and abandoning some of the in-person activities I planned originally.

Students' social and emotional competence (CASEL, 2020) became an integral part of my teaching which manifested itself in first and foremost actively listening to my students in order to provide an equitable learning environment based on their specific needs and contexts. Capitalizing on cooperative learning and project-based learning in which students' personal and cultural experiences were incorporated promoted a sense of unity and interdependence among all of them. This in turn supported students' identities and needs and elevated their own agency through an inclusive classroom environment where students became co-constructors and partners of the educational process.

Relying more on the technological affordances and formative assessments, I focused on polling student opinions prior to (re)designing tasks and activities, (re)creating a safe learning community, providing self-management techniques and appropriate scaffolding, promoting active engagement, monitoring and checking for understanding, investing time and energy in each week preparation, and providing constructive and timely feedback. Although time-consuming and demanding, these techniques reaped dividends in the way students felt cared for, appreciated, and valued, and in turn were able to focus on high-impact practices, such collaborative projects and undergraduate research.

Educators' focus should be on their students first and their social and emotional learning as we continue to navigate through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Meeting the needs of students must be the primary objective at all educational levels. Without "Maslow before Bloom" being at the center of instructional practices, learning opportunities would be lost and student engagement would be a distant goal.

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## *Chapter 9*

## *Reflection*

## Caring During an Epidemic…So Much to Learn and So Little Time

Eleanor Wilson

*Hugs*
There are pictures of me
Hugging my cousins
But I haven't hugged them in so long
I haven't laughed with them
I haven't played with them
I can talk to them, yes
But you can't hug through a screen
-Hope, age 11

In *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, Nel Noddings (1984) identifies caring as the "the very bedrock of education." The changes in our lives as the world adjusts to living in a pandemic have led many of us to examine aspects of previously held beliefs and actions. Noddings explores the question of "what does it mean to care," a discussion that expands my personal beliefs about caring both in a positive sense and in a more critical sense: caring for students I teach, caring about family, friends, pets and students. This past March, caring became a driving concern for me with the abrupt cancellation of in person teaching to online teaching in response to the dangers posed by COVID-19. Several months after the end of the spring semester and preparing for the fall semester, I began to reflect on the differing, more subtle aspects of what caring meant as it was enacted in my private and public life. With distance and time, I have gained some perspective on the ways in which the pandemic has led to a reflection on beliefs about teaching and what caring means for my approach to teaching. Challenges to care encompassed varied aspects of my teaching and professional life:the transition to on-line classes, then my musical life, personal life, and family life.

I share many themes identified in Nodding's work related to coping with life in general and especially during this time. Reflecting on my reactions to the disruptions focused on caring about students, their learning, wellbeing and interactions with peers was uppermost on my agenda. Noddings suggests a framework of the dimension of caring, emphasizing reciprocity in relations. She argues that focus on achievement primarily in schools may contribute to feelings from children that adults, and especially teachers, do not care personally for them. She asks "How can we reconcile [these feelings] with standards-based education?"  This is the heart of

the matter in my mind is a central belief for effective teaching. I've taught in higher education for over 20 years, and prior to that twenty years as a public-school teacher in three different states. I like to think, perhaps overly smugly, that I can handle most things, but during the events beginning in March 2020 I was thrown off guard. With the passage of time and events in our country recently I find it a challenge to adequately express my feelings about living within a pandemic let alone address the racial stress, political stress and identifying "what really matters" amidst the horrific events of the past months. How best could I incorporate caring in a new format and yet ensure students were learning what I'd determined was essential?

The teaching drama began (at least for me) as I needed to quickly adapt to online teaching as well as move materials that I use from the school office to my home. I'm slow to figure out changes in technology applications and the panic I felt at addressing such new innovations was, to me at least, seemingly overwhelming. I am a strong believer in meeting challenges in the most positive way I can and teaching online was a challenge indeed. Admitting that I needed help, I found great support from my institution's technology team. They were so supportive, in fact, that they listened in to my first classes and gave me some much-needed pedagogical advice such as reminding me about "wait time," the need to slow down when I was talking and reminding me to be clear about directions, and, once I figured out how to send students to their "rooms" with topics related to the day's class, I found that I could breathe deeply for a few minutes.

As classes picked up, students were settled in their homes, and opening up my first Zoom classroom happened…falteringly, but happened, and believe it or not, my eyes filled up with tears as students came into class. Yes, I had missed them, but also, I was terrified about teaching in this environment and continuing the strong bonds established while in the classroom at the beginning of the semester. I was exhausted and anxious the first few weeks of class, and shared this with the students; they were amazingly patient with what I felt was my ineptitude. Our older daughter, also new to online teaching at another university, kept reminding me that Zoom is "counterintuitive," although I'm not sure exactly what this means. I've never been known for my patience. For me, the most important aspect of teaching is the connection the teacher makes with students and once that is underway it becomes a more effective climate for learning to take place. I was determined not to let students down, and focusing on where they were, both physically/geographically and in other ways, really helped engage them in ways that might not have happened otherwise. I explained my feelings to the students and asked for their input and ideas about how we could most effectively finish the semester; they responded eagerly, saying they were familiar with the class structure but wanted more time to talk, to engage, and to have more time to focus on final projects since they were away from the resources at the university. Final evaluations were very rewarding and students did report learning, and also were supportive of my faltering attempts to create an effective and caring environment online. And incidentally, when it came time to grade their final projects and final exam, I realized that their work was excellent and really stronger than in earlier years…perhaps indicating they were bored at home! I didn't want to question this, but they were really terrific…and they were reporting from South Africa to Panama and obviously all around the US.

During this time, I was so focused on teaching (four days a week and 150 students in four sections) I didn't really stop to reflect on the changes in my personal life. We were on lockdown and that made planning for meals and weekly needed supplies, including masses of hand sanitizers and the wearing of masks, interesting challenges. For the next two months I began to realize that wearing jeans every day was all right. For a while it seemed that every time my husband and I looked at our emails, something was cancelled. The changes in our commitments were huge and disappointing for us. As we both are used to having our "own

space" at times, learning to do things together was new. For the first several months of the pandemic, we'd look at each other from time to time and say rather mournfully that we should be somewhere else doing something else, and I truly understood the sense of loss he was experiencing.

I mentioned changes in my personal life…and there were several. Firstly, I love playing in orchestras and chamber groups (I'm a violinist with modest expertise) all of which were canceled. But early in the pandemic the orchestra put together a recording of a movement from Beethoven's 7th Symphony and magically I became a star on YouTube! Well, not exactly, but it was one of the wonders of technology. Then there were my two book groups. For one, I cheerfully passed myself off as an expert in Zoom and organized our Zoom room so we could continue our monthly meetings, and my friends thought I was amazing. Little did they know! Yet another Zoom group sprang up, one led by two energetic members of my college class. We met and talked about life, politics, and other issues of the day. We've collectively made new connections: it's been amazingly rewarding. Thinking about the use of technology, Zoom, FaceTime, Facebook, and other social media has certainly added an element of caring and a new dimension for communicating in my life.

I can't end without talking about our children and grandchildren who live at a distance. Because of the changes brought with life in quarantine, there's been extra time left to communicate and we talk to one or the other practically every day. And in May we attended several Zoom recitals…hmmm…isn't it nice to have a three-minute bit rather than sitting for hours! In a way the technology has led to closer communication and even, dare I say, family harmony…not at all a bad thing. As time went on and the holidays approached, it was tough to think of not being with them, to hug them and to play with them, take walks, and in so many ways enjoy seeing them grow up. They also, at an early age, are learning about life in ways that they never experienced; caring about others, friends, and family takes on new importance for them as well as for the adults in their lives.

In summary, the little things in life become much more manageable when one is dealing with the bigger ways to care, to communicate, to cope and to keep in touch. I find that caring in many ways is the bedrock of what one can strive for: caring for others in ways that make a difference in our lives and that of others. Living within a pandemic has been challenging in many ways and has stripped us of many things we thought we couldn't do without. I'm hoping to emerge from this life with a newer appreciation of what's important to our lives and how I can carry on making a difference in the lives of others in more ways than perhaps I have done. Thinking about my teaching has shown that by giving up a more didactical (insert controlling) approach to planning and organizing classes, much can be gained by stepping back a little and letting students have the lead first, then adjusting my expectations to include students' needs and expectations. Noddings (1992) identifies six centers of care, themes that became more applicable than ever in this crisis. Among them are caring for self, caring for others, and caring for ideas. Today I have reflected on the differing, more subtle aspects of caring mean as enacted in my private and public life. Constant coverage in the news media and the many disruptions in school schedules undeniably created an uncertainty about the future for many and especially those families impacted by financial stress. Noddings reminds the reader that "To care and be cared for are fundamental human needs." I began this essay with the short poem written by our oldest grandchild just a few weeks ago, poignant and to the point and illustrating what caring is like for children during these challenging times. It is safe to say that hugging through a screen is a challenge for all of us.

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# *Students*

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## *Chapter 10*

# Breaking Isolation While Social Distancing: The Impact of an Ongoing Teacher Educator Community of Practice on a Doctoral Student's Pandemic Pedagogy Development

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## Olivia Murphy

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At the onset of the COVID-19 shift to pandemic pedagogy and the overarching extenuating social, emotional, and political context associated with a global pandemic, my community of doctoral teacher educator peers—loosely formalized as a doctoral student-organized and -led teacher education seminar—proved infinitely more helpful than our University. I specifically use the term "pandemic pedagogy" instead of "online instruction" or "remote learning." These latter two descriptors of virtual teaching describe courses and pedagogical strategies that were intentionally curated for virtual spaces; our instructional shifts in spring 2020 were neither intentional nor curated given their abrupt existence.

On the same day that the official move to online instruction was announced, a doctoral friend voluntarily sent an email to our seminar group entitled "Teacher Ed Resources." The email featured a compilation of online teaching resources curated for teacher educators, and a note encouraging self-care. A second friend responded to that email asking if anyone had a survey for undergraduates regarding access to technology and anticipated support needs. I replied that I did not but would help her make one, at which time a third friend linked a pre-existing survey from another university for us to use as a guide, and a fourth friend responded that they wanted to borrow the finished product. Three days later, with two anxious student teacher candidates on my hands and still no official communication from our College of Education, I sent a note in the same email chain asking if anyone had any information. Within the hour, notes from a faculty planning meeting about how to handle The College's student teacher candidates were in my inbox from a doctoral peer who sat in on the meeting, along with a heads up about the expected timeline of further decisions. In this same week, most of what we received from our department and our university in the way of guidance, resources, or self-care reminders was radio silence.

**Our Teacher Education Seminar Group**

Our graduate teacher education group was initially conceived as a community of practice designed to both support novice doctoral teacher educators' development, and to close the gap that our College of Education - like many others - creates by assigning doctoral students to teach preservice teacher courses without providing the necessary preparation or support to do so. The brainchild of a few doctoral students in 2017, the seminar is entirely doctoral student-run and attended, and was in its fifth semester of existence in spring 2020. The supportive community that the seminar has created over time has tended to attract repeat takers, several of whom, like me, have been involved for all five semesters and counting.

From its inception, our seminar has aimed to support three different doctoral novice teacher educator roles: teaching assistants, instructors of record, and student teacher supervisors. We meet every two weeks during the fall and spring semesters in addition to frequently emailing, and each session is divided into two parts: discussing new and relevant scholarship about aspects of teacher education, and discussing what we call "problems of practice," where participants share their teaching challenges and questions and the group helps troubleshoot. We document the problems of practice and follow up on them throughout and sometimes across semesters. In spring 2019 we also added community conversations in which we hand select and invite faculty members to join our conversations for a day.

As COVID-19 abruptly shifted the reality of university life in March 2020, I, like many of my doctoral student peers, was wearing a variety of hats: I was supervising two senior undergraduate teacher candidates, leading our teacher education seminar, acting as a research assistant on an active project, working on a dissertation proposal that centered around K-12 schools. Then, within a couple weeks, all of those roles changed dramatically, and the first place I turned to was our seminar group. I sent an email asking if folks still wanted to keep our regularly scheduled seminar meeting even though the university had extended spring break a week. Despite the extended vacation our spring break Zoom meeting had 100% attendance.

The remainder of this chapter explores the role that this doctoral teacher educator seminar played for me and my doctoral teacher educator peers throughout the spring 2020 semester switch to pandemic pedagogy. I first briefly overview the communities of practice (CoP) literature in order to frame my understanding of how our CoP - the seminar - served its members throughout this semester. I then conclude with a brief discussion of the value of doctoral CoPs like ours, specifically in the face of extenuating, unprecedented circumstances.

**Teacher Educator Communities of Practice**

Lave and Wenger (1991) first described communities of practice as social groups formed around a common interest by people who have a desire to learn from and contribute to the knowledge of others about that interest. In these communities, learning happens through sharing experiences, participating, and reflecting with the group (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Several studies have focused on the beneficial role CoPs can have in doctoral student development; for example, Coffman et al. (2016) explored a COP's role in helping doctoral students develop their scholarly identities across responsibilities. At least one study - Kosnik et al., 2011- focuses specifically on the benefit of a CoP in helping doctoral students develop as teacher educators as I do in this chapter: as a supportive space to help us develop our teacher educator practice. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic pedagogy shift, this supportive space became more urgently needed than ever.

Hadar and Brody (2010) theorize about how communities of practice can aid specifically in the professional development of teacher educators, and unpack the mechanics behind how CoP participation translates into professional growth. The researchers found that the most

important function of a teacher educator CoP was the "breaking down of personal and professional isolation…(and) the creation of a safe environment in which sharing, daring, and support be(come) commonplace" (Hadar & Brody, 2010, p. 1649). After studying a teacher educator CoP for a year, they offered a layered theoretical model of professional development featuring three stages of development through which teacher educators progress via participation in a CoP: stage one is the aforementioned breaking of isolation. Stage two involves talking about student learning in ways that lead to improved teaching, and discussing and developing skills within the group. Finally, stage three is the achievement of professional development as measured by acquired or evolved dispositions towards thinking and a sense of efficacy and accomplishment surrounding one's ability as a teacher educator. I use the Hadar and Brody (2010) layered model to examine how our seminar CoP supported me as doctoral student novice teacher educator both before and after the onset of COVID-19, and how my professional development within the seminar fluctuated during that time.

**Seminar: Before and After**

Even the briefest examination of our Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 seminar notes reveals that doctoral student teacher educator needs during the shift to pandemic pedagogy were complex. Through the frame of Hadar and Brody's (2010) three-layer model of professional development, whereas most of the community's pre-shift problems of practice reflected a progression to stage three, "professional development," a majority of the community's post-shift problems of practice regressed back to between stages one and two, "breaking isolation," "talking about student learning," and "improving teaching" (see Table 1 for details). Additionally, more post-shift problems of practice were dynamically connected across other layers of the doctoral student identity; for example, balancing teacher education responsibilities with dissertation complications and social and emotional needs. Below, I use my own experiences in two of the key aspects of seminar--problems of practice and community conversations with faculty--as examples of the shifts that occurred as a result of the pandemic pedagogy adjustment, as well as the role of our seminar CoP in addressing those shifts.

**Table 1**
*Number and example of problems of practice at each Hadar and Brody (2010) level before and after the onset of COVID-19 pandemic pedagogy*

| Hadar & Brody (2010) Framework Level | Fall '19 PoPs* | Fall '19 PoP Example | Spring '20 Pre-COVID PoPs*** | Spring '20 Pre-COVID Example | Spring '20 Post-COVID PoPs*** | Spring '20 Post-COVID Example |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Level 1: Breaking isolation | 4 | What are mutual expectations agreements? Do I need to do them? | 1 | Giving number grades to people sucks…I feel like a butt when I do it… | 4 | I'm still trying to figure out how to run my class…help? I guess I just need to talk through my ideas so I |

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| | | | | | | can get feedback… |
| Level 2: Improvement of teaching | 17 | What are the best ways to scaffold full-class discussions? | 4 | One PST** regularly holds the class hostage with very specific questions about her placement and assignments…how do I stop this without crushing her spirit? | 8 | [How do we create] meaningful and deep equity and social justice conversations online; research says 'hey, you can't do this!' |
| Level 3: Professional development | 20 | How do we self-reflect and collaborate as teacher educators? | 6 | I am a 3$^{rd}$ year doc student and I haven't supervised or been in a K-12 classroom. Is this impacting my ability to be a teacher educator? Should I be diversifying my experiences? If so, how? | 1 | How are PSTs reflecting on COVID-19 illuminating inequities in the school system and classrooms? Is there anything we can do about this as teacher educators? |

*PoP(s) = Problems of Practice
**PST = Preservice Teacher
***Overall number of PoPs in spring 2020 is lower due to fewer seminar participants and length of post-COVID PoP conversations

### *Shifting Problems of Practice*

Prior to the pandemic, the problems of practice I posed in seminar consistently reflected the professional development (third) layer of the Hadar and Brody framework. For example, in February 2020 I posed a problem of practice to the group about one of my student teachers' classroom mentors. I asked how much and in what ways it felt appropriate to push back against mentors who are restricting their student teacher; I detailed how I handled a specific incident and then asked for other interpretations. The discussion around my problem included one supervisor agreeing that this has been a problem for her in the past, too, and offering a solution that worked for her: having the student teacher reflect-and-project by asking "how did this go and how might you do it differently in your own classroom?" and encouraging a conversation

with both parties about giving the student teacher enough autonomy as part of the university agreement.

This problem of practice and its response is indicative of my professional development in our seminar CoP. After five semesters participating in and leading the seminar, I have definitely come to feel supported, and less isolated in my teacher educator role. I know that seminar is the safest space for me to express questions about my practice (stage one). Isolation is further broken in this particular instance when a seminar participant commiserates with my experience. In reflecting on how the supervision conversation went and what I felt my student teacher was and was not learning, I was talking about student learning in a way that would improve my teaching (stage two). Finally, in posing the question and thinking about how to improve my supervision strategies, I was engaging in (stage three) professional development thinking, as were my peers who were reflecting on their own teacher education experiences in order to help me think through my own.

Post-pandemic pedagogy shift, my problems of practice trended noticeably backwards on the Hadar and Brody model from professional development to improvement of teaching (stage two). For example, my and another participant's limited experience with Zoom led to a 20- minute demonstration of Zoom teaching tools by a peer in March, and in April we had several "how to" questions about the logistics of supervising student teachers remotely that we thought through as a group. This return to skills-based problems of practice is a reflection of the unsureness that we were all experiencing given our newly changed roles, and indicate a regression away from the nuanced thinking and self-efficacy that are indicative of professional development thinking. It is also important to note, however, that neither myself nor anyone else reverted back to before stage one. The existence of the seminar as a safe space to seek support and work through problems did not change: isolation remained broken and the seminar continued to give us a safe space to navigate pandemic pedagogy hurdles together with others who were experiencing similar challenges in the same new reality.

### Community Conversations with Faculty

Our community conversations with faculty in April 2020 reflect the same backwards slide through the Hadar and Brody professional development framework as our problems of practice did. In the fall 2019 semester, the first wondering I brought to our faculty conversation was a complex one about how to better infuse social justice education practices into undergraduate methods courses. This wondering is a reflection of my perceived efficacy at the "basics" of teacher education, and a desire to think more deeply about my identity, and values as a teacher educator. Fast forward to the first spring 2020 community conversation, and my first wondering was about time management: with so much time needed to re-think and re-plan my teaching, I was struggling to keep up with my dissertation proposal writing, and quarantining at home was making me feel more frustrated than productive. I wanted to know if and how faculty were experiencing the same struggles. I was seeking to break isolation (stage one). The fact that several of them were also struggling was comforting and made me feel less alone, and several people--both tenured faculty and doctoral students alike--shared successes and failures at everything from time management to using breakout rooms in Zoom to supervising student teachers.

Again, this shift in thinking between pre- and post-pandemic reveals two noticings: on one hand, as an entire community of practice our thinking was moving away from the nuanced complexity of professional development as we were forced to spend more time trying to parse through the basics of pandemic pedagogy and improving our (new) methods of teaching. On the

other hand, however, the preexistence of our community of practice provided a space to do this parsing together. The space allowed us to create and share tools with each other, as well as find support and comfort in basic connections like the fact that even tenured, highly respected faculty members were struggling with their teaching and behind on due dates like us.

**Discussion**

The format of our seminar is an easily replicable model for any graduate program to follow. Each semester we send out an interest email to all doctoral student teacher educators explaining the seminar and its purpose, and inviting them to join. Then, we meet on a bi-weekly basis and follow a simple format: we first spend one hour reviewing and discussing teacher education research and scholarship surrounding a particular theme, such as formatting assessments, creating discussions, having social justice conversations, etc. We then spend a second hour on problems of practice following a specific protocol: we first go around the group and all members get a chance to share any problems of practice and these problems get recorded in a log; once all problems are recorded, we discuss and troubleshoot each in turn, taking notes on the conversation; finally, we check in on past problems to see if there are any updates and/or further discussion required. The seminar remains entirely doctoral student-run to remove any concerns about power dynamics, but we do invite selected faculty members to join our community once or twice a semester. The seminar is not required, but it is listed as a doctoral course and is worth one credit if students enroll; each semester about half of the participants take the course for credit, and half just show up to participate in the community of practice organically.

Academia can be emotionally isolating, especially for doctoral students who are juggling a multitude of roles, many of which are completely new. The space can be confusing, depressing, and draining, and often comes with little departmental guidance or support. Pandemics are literally isolating, and only serve to intensify preexisting emotional isolation.The role that my doctoral teacher education seminar CoP played for me and for others in the spring of 2020 is a testament to the benefit of CoPs in higher education, especially for novice teacher educators like doctoral students that receive little other guidance. Personally, ongoing participation in the seminar has been instrumental in my own development from feeling isolated and unsure at my institution, to improving my teaching, to fully identifying as a teacher educator and working to help others do the same. I can easily point to a dozen specific examples of how my teacher educator identity and practice have grown as a direct result of the seminar, and several of my peers have indicated the same. However, I have never appreciated or needed that community of practice as much as in Spring 2020: the semester that easily *could* have been the most isolating time to be a novice teacher educator, but was not because of our seminar and the support I gave and received therein.

There is quite a bit of literature surrounding the role of CoPs in education, but, unsurprisingly, nothing addressing the supportive potential of CoPs in times of crisis or abrupt change. As it turns out, however, times of crisis or abrupt change may be where communities of practice can do the most good. Research on teacher identity tells us that every teacher identity, including that of a teacher educator, is actually composed of a variety of sub-identities (Beijaard et al., 2004). As those sub-identities change and grow - or suddenly appear in response to a global pandemic - teacher educators' ability to teach and develop professionally ebbs and flows. Creating spaces that provide support and guidance through those undulations is an invaluable step for colleges of education to take. Communities of practice like our teacher education seminar are essential spaces to have in place to support doctoral students in all times, but

especially in times of exceptional circumstances like global-pandemic-induced shifts to fully remote learning.

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# *Chapter 11*

# *Reflection*

# When it Rains it Pours: Homesteading and Learning to Teach During a Pandemic

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John Deemy

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It was finals week during my second to last semester in the Master of Education program at Mary Washington. I had stayed up too late again, but the first month of coronavirus quarantine had not been kind to my routine or my sleep schedule. I listened to the rain drumming against my roof and breathed deeply. I was bone tired.

The days of substitute teaching for extra income were over, so most days now found me driving posts, stretching wire, and putting up deer fence at a local winery. I was grateful for the work and the fresh air, but the return to manual labor felt like a setback. I don't have anything against physical work. I breed goats, garden, and raise chickens. As a thirty-year-old career switcher with a resume full of hazardous gas delivery and warehouse work, I've learned a lot about myself and the world around me through labor, but I missed the classroom experience.

I don't think any single experience has been so educational as substitute teaching: hands-on access to and application of lesson plans written by experienced teachers, real-time classroom management issues with no safety net, and a million conversations with children that showed me how they thought, what they prioritized, and what they feared. I had been scheduled for some really great substitute assignments to finish out the year, too. Now it was back to trading pain for money and listening to podcasts like *Cult of Pedagogy* (Gonzalez, 2020) while I worked just to stop feeling like I was wasting the time.

It was well past midnight and I had lesson plans to write for one of my final projects before the end of the semester, so I dragged myself to bed. As I drifted off, I smiled to myself at the thought of early morning coffee, a tapping keyboard, and the beat of the rain. My addiction to the early morning quiet has served me well in teaching so far.

Two hours later I jolted awake at the pained screaming of one of my livestock-guardian dogs. Blood thumped through my skull and my stomach twisted into knots as I rushed to the front door. Panicked yelping mixed with snarls and loud, booming barks outside, drowning out even the rain. I threw open the door and saw my neighbor's dogs snarling and snapping at Argos, trying to get onto the porch.

Enkidu was lying on the porch behind his brother, covered in mud and blood, trying to stand but failing. The assault on my barely-awake senses was overwhelming, but I waded into the fight.

With a lot of kicking and shouting, I was able to run the neighbor's dogs off my property. Duck carcasses and feathers littered the ground, the rain poured relentlessly over me, and I wondered if I'd lost any goats. The kids were only a month old. I shuddered at the thought of checking the barn later, but picked Enkidu up and gently slid him into the passenger's seat of my truck. One thing at a time. He was bad off. I could see muscle through the torn flesh of his leg and he had blood on his head and neck. I slung gravel as I tore out of there on my way to the emergency vet in Richmond almost an hour away.

Calling the emergency vet on the way, I prayed that COVID-19 hadn't shut them down. They informed me that they were open, but I couldn't come inside with Enkidu. When I got there, I donned my mask and helped them strap him to a gurney to get him inside. They told me to wait in the parking lot and they'd call me with news. I slumped back into my seat and took an unsteady breath. "I can't do this anymore," I told no one. I stared at the sky as it started to turn from black to gray and thought about the sick (goat) kid I'd stayed up all night with last month, trying to get her body temperature up enough that she could take milk. I'd said it when she died. *I can't do this anymore*. It had become a mantra.

I thought about my classmates and mentor teachers and how I missed them. I had finally figured out how to network and felt like I soaked up their wisdom every second I was in their presence. The pandemic had sent us all home and we texted occasionally, but it wasn't the same. I wanted to substitute in my practicum teachers' schools and visit at the end of the day. I wanted to get to class early and talk to my classmates about what I learned from work that day to solidify the experience in my own mind. I had almost finished my practicum hours requirement for the semester when the schools closed, but I had to finish by watching videos. I appreciated the effort on the part of my professors, but I wanted to *be there. I can't do this anymore.*

Pondering the lists I had written of books that I saw students reading for fun, I realized I wouldn't set foot in another "practice classroom" before my first-year contract began in the fall. I missed people. When I was delivering gases on night shift, I often went days without seeing anyone. I had purposefully made a career change that threw me into the thick of humanity. All day every day, surrounded by the chaotic, broken, beautiful mess that is our species. I loved it. Even on days that started at the school at seven in the morning and ended at the university at ten at night, I had felt *alive*. I still saw some people working at the winery and I saw my classmates and professors on Zoom calls, but it wasn't close to the same. *I can't do this anymore.*

Pulling out a pen and a notebook, I wrote *closer to humanity* and circled it. It was a piece of a line from my literature circle book for my Teaching of English course. I had a few books and speeches in mind that I wanted to use to teach the oral communication standards as an excuse to arm kids with the tools to connect more deeply and meaningfully with each other. It was clearer to me now than ever how much we all needed that. I wondered how the students from my most recent practicum were coping. Many had been scared and uncertain when we left for spring break. I had the resilience of someone more than twice their age and even I was feeling it. What would they be like when they came back to school? *I can't do this anymore.*

I wrote "If the decision you've made has brought you closer to humanity, then you've done the right thing" (Mafi, 2019). It was my favorite quote from the book, one of those shut-the-book-and-marvel-for-a-moment quotes that I suspect all authors secretly hope they're writing. What could I do to bring kids closer to humanity? My brother and I had discussed the possibility of this pandemic getting really out of hand. What if they couldn't come back to the

building?  Would we teach virtually?  How could we connect?  My own experience as a student had suffered when we switched to virtual meetings. I was extremely impressed with my professors' creativity and determination, sending us to breakout rooms to work in small groups and assigning work we could do together virtually. But suddenly I had gone from outspoken and opinionated to shy. Feeling socially hamstrung by the lack of body language and social cues around me, I barely spoke at my first Zoom class meeting. When I did, I sounded stupid and was embarrassed enough to leave my mic turned off most classes after that. *I can't do this anymore.*

I wrote down *Concept outcomes? Better when we work together… effective communication can be used to empower ourselves/others and build relationships that are fulfilling and beneficial to both parties.* I thought about the friends I'd lost when I went back to school. I thought about the way hope for a meaningful future had clashed with fear and desperation as I enrolled in grad school. How many psychologists had talked on my favorite podcasts about how progress ultimately prunes friendships as people who resent your progress drop away? It was one thing to nod sagely when I heard it, but another thing entirely to experience it. And now the new friends I had made at school were far away, quarantined in their own worlds. I texted them to check in and sometimes they thanked me for it and we talked about how we were coping, what we were doing to further our learning, and as always, what we had learned about teaching since we last spoke. Why wasn't that enough?  How could I hang out for an hour on a Zoom call with my friends and still feel like I hadn't seen them?  Would my students feel this way as well?  How could I get them to learn if they lost the social aspect of school that I had been taught to utilize in all of my classes? *I can't do this anymore.*

I wrote down *Knowledge outcomes? Respect and authenticity as communication tools… tailoring speech/writing to the audience.* I thought about the elation I had felt when I delivered my first practicum lesson. I remembered my mentor teacher saying, "I have no doubt that you have found your calling."  It was a graffiti model lesson on Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Mountaintop speech. I had divided the speech into eight parts and posted them on giant posters around the library. The students moved from poster to poster in groups of three, discussing what their classmates had already pointed out and working hard to come up with fresh perspectives. Some even drew pictures to go with the speech. I still have one on my fridge. I had moved from group to group, questioning, encouraging, and prodding. It was everything I had wished my own high school experience had been: social, hands on, challenging. How would lessons like this look if the pandemic continued? *I can't do this anymore.*

I wrote some of my favorite lesson plans while in the parking lot of the emergency vet, sick with worry while they worked on one of my livestock guardians. Because the truth is, it was just another day homesteading. I've had a hundred like it. If I let a hard day at home stop me from doing my schoolwork, I'd have flunked out my first semester. I wrote some more of my very favorite lesson plans on the couch with Enkidu later. They gave him methadone and it took him a few days to find his feet again, so I wrote, I carried him outside to use the bathroom, I carried him back in, and I wrote some more. And all the while I thought, *I can't do this anymore.*

Much of the hours long wait was spent in that parking lot and the subsequent days caring for Enkidu reflecting on what had helped me build my own resilience (which was proving to be just barely enough) and how I could pass that on to my students, especially as it looked increasingly likely that my first-year teaching would at least be partially virtual. I wondered if I could distill the teachings of people like Carl Jung, Jocko Willink, Marcus Aurelius, and Mark Manson into something accessible for middle schoolers. I started to feel hopeful, productive. I abandoned my mantra.

Lessons on persuasive speech and debate that used speeches by passionate motivators like Eric Thomas and Inky Johnson (they don't swear, which is a bonus) alongside classics like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Charlie Chaplin were created. I decided I would use these speakers to demonstrate and discuss the frustratingly minimal oral communication standards like nonverbal communication, active listening, and tactful dissent. I hoped I could make time for the real lessons in their speeches: we're all a part of something bigger, there is reason to hope in dark times, the world is what we make it.

My professors pivoted mid-semester to teaching online with creativity and tenacity. They smoothly expanded lectures to fill gaps in discussion left by students like me who were feeling disoriented by learning on a Zoom call. I watched UMW put together a brilliant free course about the science, history, and cultural impacts of pandemics in a matter of weeks. This course would ultimately inspire me to put together virtual field trips to various museums to remind my students that they're a part of something.

In October, we went on a virtual tour of the Edgar Allen Poe Museum in Richmond, Virginia. I had students who had turned nothing in all semester suddenly glued to their screens and asking questions of their tour guide, who not only performed poetry for them, but gave them a quick lesson on how to memorize presentations when they asked how he did it. I'm currently organizing a virtual trip to the Dickens Museum in London and if it goes well, I intend to include it in my curriculum even after things return to normal.

Our virtual and then hybrid learning schedule didn't give us nearly as much time to teach as we would have in a normal year, so we have had to pare down many lessons to just the essentials. When it became apparent that oral communication was on the "if we have enough time" list, I started Wednesday Workshop to teach my "Closer to Humanity" lessons. Since our school is closed for sanitizing on Wednesdays, I offer extra credit to anyone who shows up in my virtual classroom to start their day analyzing motivational speeches. Most of them are meant to be taught through graffiti, jigsaw, fishbowl, and other hands-on, social methods, but it has still been a pretty big hit. I have students with perfect grades in my class showing up just to be a part of it. Better than that, there are students that I have been struggling to reach, who now show up and engage. One in particular never came to class for the entire first quarter until he wandered into a Wednesday Workshop out of curiosity (or boredom, I didn't ask) and he hasn't missed a class since.

My practicum mentor teacher sent me home with an armful of books and materials when the schools shut down and has checked in regularly since despite her own workload. When I was hired (via Zoom interview at a virtual job fair), she started gathering materials she had saved for my grade level so that I'd never run out of resources. In turn, she was so excited by the success of my virtual Poe field trip, she's organizing one herself.

I'm watching teachers old enough to be considered heightened risk choosing to return to their classrooms when they could just retire. Everywhere I look, educators are setting their jaws and thriving in the most uncertain circumstances any of us have faced, determined to serve their students and each other. I'm amazed at their instinct to support each other. I've worked a lot of jobs before I found this one, but never before have I seen this level of cohesion.

We can do this.

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# *What Comes Next*

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## *Chapter 12*

# Working Together: Facilitating Collaboration in Remote Learning Environments

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Lee Skallerup Bessette

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A study from Ithaka S+R on the student experience during the spring 2020 remote pivot revealed (among other things) that "Group projects and research laboratory exercises were the most challenging assignments for students to complete in the spring semester" (Blankstein *et al*, 2020, para. 30). "Group work," even in the best of conditions, is often dreaded by students, with visions of unequal work arrangements, differing views on quality and effort levels, as well as (often) one grade for the whole group. Couple that with the disruption of the pandemic, with students participating from different time zones, different levels of connectivity, different levels of responsibilities, etc, and you could understand why students did not enjoy the experience of still having to complete group projects and assignments.

However, we know from the literature that "collaborative assignments and projects" are considered a High-Impact Practice (HIP) in undergraduate education. Identified by Kuh (2008), these HIP have shaped our thinking on teaching, learning, and pedagogy. Succinctly, "Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one's own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences" (para. 7). So, while our students might resist them, collaborative learning is an important pedagogical experience for our students, regardless of the modality.

And, in fact, it is perhaps more important than ever that our students learn how to collaborate virtually, across time zones, as well as across cultures and countries. This is the current reality of how many of us are working under the pandemic with little indication that when we are able to return to work that we will be returning to business-as-usual (see Senz, 2020). That our students struggled with and generally disliked group work in a remote setting is not a reason to eliminate this proven HIP from our teaching. But we do need to create the conditions to ensure that our students can have a successful experience with collaborative assignments and projects. This chapter provides some strategies for helping students successfully collaborate in the remote classroom setting.

**Building Community**

The first step in successful collaborations in a remote environment takes place before the assignment is even introduced and the groups are formed; from the first day, the focus needs to be on creating community with and for the students. We know from the research that our students' engagement in our courses is crucial as it leads to behaviors and dispositions known to increase student learning. In particular, levels of engagement impact students' sense of belonging, levels of motivation and achievement, and levels of enjoyment (MacLeod, Yang, & Shi, 2019). Without this base, students will begin group work and collaborations already feeling disconnected from one another, while fostering a sense of community will set students up for successful collaborations.

Some strategies for fostering community:

- Icebreakers: Particularly early in the course, icebreakers are important tools for students to get to know each other, as well as for you to get to know them. Ensure, however, that the kinds of questions you ask do not require students to reveal parts of themselves that may be sensitive or compromising before the community has been formed. These can be done synchronously or asynchronously using a blog or discussion board.

- Temperature checks: Check in with your students regularly to see how they are doing. You can use anonymous polling software or other anonymous tools to capture how students are feeling/coping in the moment. This allows for them to know that you, as an instructor, care about their well-being, but they also see that their classmates are also having similar struggles or challenges.

- Breakout groups: One way that we create community in the physical classroom space is small group discussions. It is still possible to have those moments using breakout rooms, a feature that most video-conferencing software provides. Give the students clear directions and expectations, including the prompts, the expected deliverable, and the time when they will have their discussion.

- Shared documents: A shared document, like a Google Doc or some other cloud-based, shared document, can be used both synchronously or asynchronously for small group or class-wide activities. Students can make notes during breakout sessions, or a whole course could collaboratively take notes asynchronously on the weekly readings or lecture. This allows for students to share in the learning experience.

- Informal spaces: Encourage and create space for students to meet on their own, using the platform of their choice. You can have a sign-up sheet for them to figure out who is in a similar time zone or prefers a particular communication strategy, for example. In a virtual environment, our students won't be running into each other on campus, so we need to create spaces for them to get together more informally in order for there to be a class community.

For more on building community in the classroom, see Mascle, 2019, and Bali et al., 2020.

**Agency and Flexibility**

In her talk "Savor the Moment: Activism and Digital Pedagogy," Savonic (2020) posited the following:

> How can we inspire students to change the world? I realized that world changing desire is already there...now our task as educators is to nurture that desire and equip students with the knowledge and skills to keep going…

Students will be more engaged in the topic if they have agency and choice, as well as an investment in the project beyond the confines of the course (see Sample, 2012; Stanford Study of Writing). We want our students to take ownership of the project, to feel good about investing their time and energy in the work they are doing. A few strategies to help foster a sense of ownership, of agency for the students:

- Choice of topic: Allow students to choose the topic they will be working on. This could either be done once the groups have been formed, or the groups could be formed based on shared interests. Clearly lay out the parameters of the assignment, including the learning outcomes, so that students have some guidance as to the scope of the project.

- Choice of modality: Students can choose how they wish to communicate or share their project with you and their classmates. This may involve some give-and-take, where you require certain elements (a written component, a slide deck, etc), but the students can then make choices as to how else they will create their project given their skill-set, interest, audience, and purpose.

- Choice of tools: While your institution may have a number of supported, enterprise solutions for your students, allow them the flexibility to choose other tools that they are familiar with as well as comfortable using. This is also an opportunity to engage in a conversation around accessibility, privacy, digital safety and security, and data ownership, as well as longevity and sustainability. Allowing students to choose which tools they use also creates a more inclusive environment, communicating to students who may not have access to the infrastructure necessary to access or utilize certain tools that they can still meaningfully participate in their group's progress.

Ultimately, we want students to derive meaning from their work, and providing space for student choice can lead to more productive collaborations.

**Scaffolding and Feedback**

The previous section doesn't mean that we should allow our students complete free reign; our students would get lost and quickly overwhelmed, especially in a remote environment. We still need to provide clear assignment goals and outcomes, as well as additional scaffolding and feedback to ensure that they stay on schedule and make progress. Here are some additional suggestions:

- Clear milestones and deliverables: start from the due date and work backwards - what should each group have done at what date? Set up a timeline or schedule for the students to be able to follow, with clear deliverables for you to assess and give feedback on.

- Terms of service/group agreements: One of those milestones may be that each group creates a project charter or group agreement. These charters allow for students to set clear guidelines, roles, responsibilities, as well as strategies in case conflicts arise. Miriam Posner (2017) provides a model, as well as a template, for such a project charter.

- Multiple check-in points: Along with clear milestones and deliverables, make sure that you are checking in with the groups regularly - the work itself does not necessarily reflect the reality of how the group is progressing or collaborating. Consider checking in individually with students synchronously or asynchronously to gauge how a team is working together and intervene if necessary.

- Generative feedback and peer review: It is also important to be providing generative feedback on the milestones and interim deliverables; make it clear to students that this is an interactive process, where feedback and revising are an important part of the process. Students can and should be empowered to revisit and improve their work, which will allow for more creativity.

- Focus on process, not product: By focusing on the process, it allows the groups the space to work out any difficulties they are having without the pressure of failure or a poor grade. Have students provide individual written reflections on the process, as well as their contributions and effort levels, when the project is finished, to emphasize the process part of their work.

The book *Writer/Designer* by Ball, Sheppard, and Arola (2018), while primarily directed at students, is an invaluable guide for faculty as well to help students plan and execute a collaborative project.

As put by Linder and Hayes (2018) in their introduction to the book *High-Impact Practices in Online Education*, echoing Kuh (2008), there is a "cumulative effect" that comes from HIP as students "acquire fundamental and transferable skills, gain hands-on experience, synthesize their learning, [and] apply their knowledge in real-world applications" (p. 3). Particularly under pandemic conditions, it is more important than ever that we create conditions for students to connect with each other and the materials in meaningful ways. It is challenging, yes, but the level of engagement that the students will have with the course materials and their classmates is ultimately worth it.

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# *Chapter 13*

# Mask-making as Metaphor: A Vision for a New Research Praxis

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### Janine S. Davis

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In the spring and summer of 2020, I, like so many others, sat at my decades-old Singer and stitched hundreds of cloth masks to donate. There was even some question of how well they would work, and yet that didn't dampen our enthusiasm to make. Our local Craft Aid organization packed bags of fabric, thread, and elastic. I sewed the Deaconess mask, named for the Indiana health system that popularized the style, and it helped me feel useful and productive when everything else was falling apart. It was simple and repetitive, yet satisfying work. How fitting it was that I embraced the concept of masks, as my research has always centered on persona, a term that comes from "mask." Similarly, my life has been filled with crafting and art, and it felt wrong not to use my sewing skills for good. It is important to note that I had the privilege of time, funds, and a stable job to support myself and my family during this time.

While we sewed, sources shared on social media showed us that the research productivity of many academics, especially women, tanked dramatically (Gabster, van Daalen, Dhatt, & Barry, 2020). Colleges and K-12 schools across the country moved online in a matter of days. Many institutional review boards shut down all research with human participants. Suddenly, our children were home and we were attempting to support their efforts at virtual schooling while also teaching our college students remotely. It seemed as if we would never stop doing dishes. Service continued and, in some cases, intensified, but for me and many others, research felt like a long-ago dream.

My rigorous doctoral training at the University of Virginia led me to view research as a complex, challenging goal that involved several interrelated and systematic steps. We sweated over our IRB submissions and navigated the politics of oversaturated local research settings. Since that time, I have shifted to supporting my graduate and undergraduate students with their own research. Over the last nine years the students in the teacher education program where I teach have completed action research projects that both embrace this view of research and challenge it: while students must write IRB proposals, collect data, and receive several rounds of feedback on their proposals and final project, often the analysis is not as technical as one might find in a traditional research article. The ultimate goal is for these preservice teachers to think like researchers and analyze their practice, and, of course, we have found that it helps when students have had exposure to these practices in the past (Davis, Clayton, & Broome, 2017).

**The Pivot as Opportunity**

This year that we could never have imagined offers us the chance to re-envision our practices. What if we viewed research and writing through the same lens that sewists thought about mask making during and after this time? In both cases, we draw on the resources of our communities to produce things for others. The process benefits all involved for a plethora of reasons. Our masks offer several important lessons.

**Masks look different for different settings; we can innovate with what we have.**

In the beginning and in times of shortage, we reserved the most protective N95 masks for healthcare workers, while handmade fabric masks were suitable for the general public as they shopped for groceries. People repurposed stretchy fabric from T-shirts when they could not find elastic and cut up sheets and old clothes when they had no new fabric for their masks. Similarly, research looks different in different disciplines. Discussions with colleagues in other fields about research and review boards reveals just how complex the considerations are— centralized, permission-granting bodies like the IRB may not be valued or recognized in other cultures. My experience teaching journalism to secondary students and conducting oral history projects with college students and teachers shows that sometimes sharing a person's actual name or even their image alongside their words can be the most powerful option. We must consider all aspects of the situation and all resources at our disposal before determining the best approach, whether for maskmaking or research.

**Some masks are better than others, but something is better than nothing.**

I will freely and openly admit that my masks are not perfect. Social media reveals new innovations in nosepiece pockets, elastic substitutes, kinds of linings, see-through windows, and many varied shapes; still, it's all I can do to plug along at the Deaconess mask. Similarly, when our student researchers attempt to assemble large participant sample sizes or a flawless mixed-method design, they often lose sight of the real goal of the research: to learn more about a particular setting, and to learn from and build on the research that already exists. Learning from the process of conducting research is valuable to students in all content areas, even if the most intensive research processes are not possible.

**Masks, amazingly, are a kind of political statement**

In America in 2020 and beyond, wearing a mask in public symbolized, at least in some small way, a belief in the science of virus transmission. The same is true of research—when we conduct and share research, it means that we believe in learning from data. I work with teachers and preservice teachers; it is a field in which the battle between theory and practice is well documented. Lessons from history reveal that skepticism towards research is not unfounded, and certainly one can twist data for nefarious purposes, but when volunteer participants are protected and research designs are sound, research - action or otherwise - is crucial to the work of teachers and all academics.

**In the absence of masks provided by a centralized organization, we make them ourselves to protect each other.**

The push for open access publications has arrived on our college campus, along with many others. When we remove barriers to accessing and producing research, we are able to obtain a clearer picture of more contexts.

Those who did not have the time, skill, or resources to sew donated money or found other ways to help; a local woman ordered elastic directly from Taiwan in enormous spools, and distributed them in smaller batches to sewists who needed it. Some academics, including some whose work appears in this volume, felt frustration that their institutions did not offer the training, support, or interactions they felt were needed. And so, we connected online, in huge groups on social media, with hashtags on Twitter, and in spontaneous Zoom happy hours and text threads, to support each other through our challenges, whether they were personal or professional.

## Coda

Some say that we will never go back to the way things once were after this experience; that statement will likely be true for both personal and professional lives. Now and in the future, we must consider myriad questions: What counts as research, and why do we do it? How do we make the time for research when we are pulled in so many other directions? How do we share and promote our work? It is worth noting that blog posts or even Twitter threads approach the level of research and writing recommended here. Some moves that will help keep the general public informed of our work and that will suit our current times include the following:

- More networked blogs and podcasts where researchers can share their process and findings
- More support for open access publication, especially in the review of tenure files
- More use of blogs and open access texts for course readings and citations
- More high-quality open access texts and the time needed to produce them

Sewing, like research and teaching, is contemplative work. It has become so easy to lose track of the time that we need to think deeply about our work and the systems within which we operate. We must seize this opportunity to learn from our experiences and reshape our practices, interactions, and expectations for the future.

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# Chapter 14

# Lessons from the Pivot to Social Media

# for Academics

Margaret Thornton
Shannon Holder

Restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic hit us hard. As travel, conferences, and even casual coffee hours were cancelled, many educational researchers turned to social media as a way to interact with each other and practitioners during the pandemic. In the before times, we would gather at academic conferences to hear speakers, participate in panels, and network with fellow academics. For the two of us, two graduate students working on our dissertations, Twitter provided an important outlet for sharing our own research and hearing about the research of others. We offer our story along with some important caveats of how to responsibly use social media, in particular Twitter, to share and consume academic ideas.

## Benefits of Sharing Research on Twitter: Maggie

I am an incredibly social person. One of my New Year's resolutions is, year after year, to schedule one day of the week without a social event. Every year, I do not succeed at this. So, the lockdowns that began in early March 2020 were hard for me as I lost my social outlets and activities. Harder still, I most enjoy learning by speaking with and listening to others. I felt professionally adrift with only my dog and my non-academic spouse for company. I turned to Twitter to share ideas with others in the educational inequality space and to learn from their work, too.

Early in the pandemic, my first journal article was released (Thornton, et al., 2020). I was first author on a paper examining how collaboration among school principal preparation programs lead to increases in diversity of principal candidates. Twitter provided me with a ready opportunity to share not just this good news but also our findings about working with school and district leaders to identify potential leaders of color, particularly Black and Latinx leaders of color. Although social media clearly existed as a vehicle for sharing information like this long before the pandemic began, because I had pivoted to Twitter as a larger source of personal and professional development, I had greater engagement when sharing my findings.

I also noticed a greater engagement in general on Twitter than pre-March 2020. This increase made sense when one considers how many folks are now working from home and using Twitter and other forms of social media to engage with others when in-person engagement is not safe. With these increases, I was able to connect with more and more

graduate students, professors, and practitioners. With Twitter, a user chooses whom to follow. Those people's tweets then show up in what is called a timeline. Every time a user logs in to Twitter, one can choose to view the top tweets, which will show the most engaged tweets from those whom one follows, or latest tweets, which shows the newest tweets from those whom one follows.

Twitter also played a useful role in connecting with other researchers as conferences were cancelled or moved online. Twitter became a venue to share online conference sessions and get feedback from other presenters. I hope to keep this particular way of connecting in the future, even as in-person conferences, which can often feel unwieldy and overwhelming, resume.

### Benefits of Reading Research on Twitter: Shannon

Once we knew the severity and longevity of the current pandemic, I quickly realized that I needed to make a plan for staying up to speed on current research. First, I used Twitter to make sure I was following professors and educators who were closely aligned to my areas of research. I did this because I noticed an increase in free webinars that were being produced and I did not want to miss any opportunities to hear these people speak. I also did not want to miss any current articles that they were producing.

When it was announced that American Educational Research Association (AERA) was cancelled, I needed a way to discover current research about my research topic of detracking. I used my dissertation proposal reference list to see if people I cited were on Twitter and then I followed them. Due to the complexity of detracking, often researchers and practitioners use multiple synonyms when describing their changes to their school tracking system. I started using the search bar on Twitter to search keywords like detracking, destreaming, untracking, and heterogeneous grouping to make sure I did not miss any articles or discussions about my dissertation topic.

Additionally, after the death of George Floyd and the subsequent protests around the country, I frequently discovered new education practitioners and community organizers who were doing anti-racist and equity work around the country and Twitter was the main way I learned about them and what they were doing in their school districts to address what was happening. For example, I learned about the ways they were handling hybrid instruction and facilitating discussions about the racial justice protests. Overall, my Twitter usage has increased due to the pandemic because often it is the only place that I can communicate with people I have made connections with through graduate student groups and conferences. In the past, I would use conferences to reconnect in person, but with those either cancelled or online, Twitter emerged as a new way to stay in touch. Lastly, it is often an opportunity to commiserate with fellow graduate students about the stresses of life and writing my dissertation.

### Some Concerns

Twitter, like any human gathering place, has imperfections. These imperfections of course relate to sharing and consuming research there. Across social media platforms, the ways in which character limitations compress or even erase nuance are particular threats to sharing and consuming research. We both found great support in this regard in using Twitter threads to convey complex information. Even with this tool, however, nuance can be lost. Grace and sincere follow-up questions are important. Social media has also gained a reputation as a

place where people often share their highlights but not their low points. When struggling to complete our dissertations during a pandemic, we often found it difficult to see the professional highlights of others. As the pandemic continues, however, we have also found many of our academic heroes sharing their own struggles and solutions on Twitter. We have been particularly heartened by hearing other women in academia struggling with isolation, Zoom school, renegotiating chores with partners and so on. These moments of honesty have revealed solutions and solidarity in both our academic and personal struggles.

Even with these caveats, Twitter has offered us both a place to make connections with other researchers and practitioners in our field. Additionally, Twitter increases our opportunity to promote and interact regarding our published work during the pandemic. Due to the lack of opportunities to engage with people in person, our Twitter usage has increased in surprising and interesting ways. We remain mindful of the potential hazards of relying on Twitter to create an academic community and the fact that one can never learn everything there is to know about another person or an academic problem in the 280 characters that Twitter allows. Most of all, we look forward to the day when we can gather together in person again safely. We might just be checking Twitter while we are there.

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