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Teachers are regularly tasked with planning for long-term academic and formative goals for entire classes and individual students. This planning involves designing and developing effective routines, creating detailed lesson plans, and tracking authentic assessment of students. Skilled teachers are accustomed to predictable expectations and outcomes in the familiar contexts of classrooms; yet, COVID-19 undermined the ability of teachers to plan. Using a case study and narrative analysis approach, this paper examines how 32 urban Catholic school teachers experienced the transition to remote instruction. Data analysis produced a template broadly aligned with Rush et al's (2014) framework for effective, emergency, online school professional development curriculum during an emergency. A key aim of this paper is to provide some concrete recommendations for school level crisis preparation planning, implementing online learning platforms, matching needs and resources, communicating with parents, and using social media during this pandemic.

Teachers are regularly tasked with planning for long-term academic and formative goals for entire classes and individual students. This planning involves designing and developing effective routines, creating detailed lesson plans, and tracking authentic assessment of students. Skilled teachers are accustomed to predictable expectations and outcomes in the familiar contexts of classrooms; yet, COVID-19 undermined the ability of teachers to plan. The chaos, uncertainty, and quarantine, transformed the familiar to strange and demanded unprecedented adaptation of practice to fit a generally foreign context: remote online teaching and learning.

Catholic school educators by nature are skilled planners and educators as they must be prepared for obstacles such as shortage or no resources, school closings, and severe budget cuts. As these school educators are most immediately and ultimately responsible for the "new normal" of remote teaching and learning they are charged with designing, instructing, and assessing student learning and formation in this constantly evolving context. Thus, their per-

spective is not only crucial when developing and implementing emergency protocols which are the schools' approaches to emergency operations[1] , but also imperative when assessing the effectiveness of remote and hybrid learning.

The assessment and evaluation of remote learning is especially critical for students whose access to teaching and learning was abruptly changed or curtailed. Although responses to the demands of new remote learning varied, the overall need for emergency protocols was evident. While there is exhaustive literature on emergency preparedness or responses to crises of all types, our goal in this paper is limited in scope to presenting the experiences of a group of urban Catholic school educators in order to help plan, build, sustain and improve other educators' capabilities to prepare for the upcoming academic year within the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic. This paper seeks to synthesize current literature around the need for an emergency protocol that became evident through COVID-19; then, in-service teacher responses are framed around a pre-established emergency protocol, ultimately addressing the following inquiries:

- When examining remote learning, what themes emerge from a sample of teacher reflections?
- What takeaways can be applied to future emergency protocols?

Literature Review

Today, across the globe, 180 countries' educational systems have been closed, resulting in 85% of the world's children adapting to a new learning context (World Bank, 2020). Historically, traditional and unplanned school breaks have been associated with academic decline, so remote learning poses a serious concern about students' academic progress given the abrupt transition and especially the current lack of remote assessments (World Bank, 2020). Kuhfeld and Tarasawa (2020) predict that students returning in the fall will have only reached 70% of typical reading growth and 50% of typical math learning. Compounding this heightened sense of vulnerability is a severe economic disparity in impact on educational quality caused by this pandemic (World Bank, 2020). Thus, teaching across these varied settings must address the particulars of each educational context with the goal of equity in mind. "While the field of online teaching has made important strides in reducing financial burdens on students, improving accessibility of content, and differentiating instruction to address student learning preferences, current research suggests that these approaches are no panacea for addressing issues

of educational inequity; in some cases, online approaches can even magnify or exacerbate such inequities" (Aguliera & Lee, 2020, p. 472). This disparity leads to serious outcomes: economically disadvantaged students are at higher risk for dropping out as they often do not possess the technological resources to be academically successful, while tuition-dependent private schools are at a higher risk for closing as families move towards free public schools (World Bank, 2020). Fortunately, Catholic schools are well-positioned to be innovative leaders in this context of remote learning.

Catholic schools typically have a higher level of curricular and instructional autonomy due to the Catholic principle of subsidiarity (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993). Subsidiarity advantages Catholic schools in general and Catholic classrooms in particular to both experiment with new ideas and quickly adapt their practices in order to best meet the needs of students and families (Uhl, 2020). At the same time, best practices for remote learning have been vaguely defined since this global pandemic was unprecedented (Hundred, 2020). A Hanover Research study found that 75% of surveyed educators had not experienced online learning more than a few times per year prior to the pandemic. Additionally, Catholic schools proactively supplied the most devices to their students (Wodon, 2020). Furthermore, since Catholic educators' responses are not restricted by unionization, their capacity for providing immediate instruction was unfettered by teachers' unions. This confluence of factors positions Catholic schools to take a leadership role in both distance and hybrid learning. Catholic schools have the opportunity to encourage innovation from their educators (World Bank, 2020). Their ability to innovate can support the development and implementation of high-quality effective distance and hybrid learning strategies to meet the needs of their individual communities and students.

On a more individual level, Catholic schools foster a unique community that promotes faith-based values, such as resilience and belonging, which may prevent or lessen potential mental health concerns (as cited in Wodon, 2020). Furthermore, there is a mission-driven expectation that school educates the whole child--*cura personalis*--which requires strong relationships with families (Dickel & Ishii-Jordan, 2008). Catholic school educators' comprehensive understanding promotes specific consideration of factors that impact access to remote content: students' internal motivations, external supports, and attention span (Hundred, 2020).

Catholic schools must look towards the future educational context, leveraging their advantages and executing clearly defined plans (James, 2020; Uhl, 2020). The success of these plans is dependent on individual school leaders,

as Catholic education is grounded in subsidiarity (Uhl, 2020). Thus, there is an urgency to equip leaders with effective strategies and critiques of remote learning implementations. James (2020) highlights the potential of adaptive leadership as a response to COVID-19, specifically the utilization of intellectual resources to adjust strategies and solve ill-defined problems. As part of this adaptive leadership process, there is emphasis on comprehensive understanding of not only governmental education policy makers' but also teachers' positions on these concerns, paying specific attention to at-risk dropouts, health precautions, and rapid recovery from learning losses (World Bank, 2020). To decrease long-term disadvantages, learning gaps must be addressed through "more focused pedagogies and curriculum, to allow teaching at the right post-closures level, (and) blended use of teaching and technology. These efforts will need clear system-level guidance and materials, as well as focused, practical training for principals and teachers" (World Bank, 2020, p. 7).

The most effective e-learning framework has 8 dimensions which consider "1) institutional, 2) pedagogical, (3) technological, (4) interface design, (5) evaluation, (6) management, (7) resource support, and (8) ethic[al]" elements (Khan, 2005, p. 45-46). Of course, such a complex framework presumes careful and prior planning. Rush et al. (2016) proposes a five-step process to ensure effective emergency online learning for times of unprecedented crisis. Steps include "1) appraisal of school; 2) key considerations for development and implementation which include establishment, active and maintenance phases; 3) garnering resources and supports; 4) outreach; and 5) execution, maintenance, and reintegration" (p. 195). This rapid process leans heavily on teacher reflections and appraisal of past implementations' success, with specific considerations of foundational knowledge areas, such as: rationale for remote learning, online learning platforms, standards of practice, social media, technological resources, and supporting organizations (Rush et al., 2014). In any event, parents, teachers, students, and institutions must confront a plethora of obstacles when abruptly transitioning to and "accommodating and embracing" remote learning in time of crisis (Afuneh, Salha, & Khalif, 2020, p. 135). This paper examines practicing urban Catholic school teachers' remote learning reflections, accommodations, and experiences through the lens of this framework (Rush, et al., 2014) to suggest recommendations for Catholic schools moving forward.

Methods
Utilizing a case study approach this research investigates how a specific

group of participants, specifically Catholic school educators enrolled in the Urban Catholic Teacher Corps (UCTC), responded to the abrupt transition from face-to-face instruction to remote instruction. Case study is the most appropriate methodology as this research inquires into the contemporary phenomenon of remote instruction in the real-life context of urban Catholic schools during the COVID-19 pandemic (Yin, 1994). As the boundaries between remote instruction and the urban context are blurred, case study is an effective approach to investigate our research questions.

Participants

The participants of this study were teachers in the Urban Catholic Teacher Corps (UCTC) of Boston College. UCTC is part of the University Consortium for Catholic Education, a partnership of Catholic colleges and universities with the (arch)diocese, Catholic schools, donors, and Catholic educators and students with the shared mission to both educate and form Catholic school teachers while meeting current schools' needs for teachers. UCTC is a two-year program in which licensed educators concurrently complete graduate-level coursework in curriculum and instruction and the praxis component at a partnering urban Catholic school. UCTC teachers have the same responsibilities as peer teachers in their schools in addition to programmatic responsibilities and intensive mentoring and coaching.

Thirty-two UCTC teachers participated in this research. Participants included 27 females and 5 males whose ages ranged from 21 to 26 years. Twenty-nine identified as Catholic and one as Christian (non-Catholic) and one respondent did not disclose religious identity. Years of experience teaching ranged from 1 to 3 years.

Procedures

Transitioning to remote instruction revealed numerous challenges and concerns for participating Catholic schools. Identifying and understanding the impact on teaching and learning was of immediate import in providing effective support for teachers as they navigated this challenge in their urban classrooms. Thus, UCTC programmatic staff, faculty, researchers, and graduate research assistants developed a questionnaire and narrative prompts to identify instructional resources developed or needed, individual school's responses and processes to facilitate transition, and obstacles and opportunities that emerged during this transition. This questionnaire included weekly online journaling and data was collected using Qualtrics with text entry set

at essay level to enable responses of greater length. Although prompts addressed other aspects of the transition, responses for this research addressed only those that explicitly addressed remote instruction. Questions include: (a) How has your school transitioned to online instruction?; (b)What training would have been helpful prior to this transition? (c) How have you been communicating with parents and families during this time?; (d) If you had to prepare an online school protocol in response to an emergency, what essential components would you include? Data were collated into a "transcript" for each participant and uploaded into NVivo (QSR, version 12) for qualitative analysis.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using qualitative narrative analysis (Creswell et al, 2007) as it attributes ownership of the event and license to share the event to the person experiencing the event (Shuman, 2007). Narrative analysis is then "well-suited to addressing the complexities and subtleties of human experience in teaching and learning" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 2). In these journal entries, urban Catholic teachers shared challenges and successes in teaching and learning remotely, and narrative analysis exposed narrative meaning, lending to constructing an understanding of this specific human experience (Kim, 2016; Polkinghorne, 1988).

As narrative analysis involves a level of interpretation that clearly raises some issues of objectivity in drawing conclusions, several researchers analyzed the data presented in this study. To construct a taxonomy of narrative patterns, analysis was divided into three stages: (a) pre-analysis-read each narrative as it was collected on a weekly basis to understand the core lived experiences of UCTC members as they were emerging; (b) vertical analysis-identified basic components of the narratives for each participant and coding scheme was designed; and, (c) horizontal analysis-grouped narratives according to their common codes, themes and patterns and grouped into categories. The constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) produced a template broadly aligned with Rush et al's (2014) framework for effective, emergency, online school professional development curriculum during an emergency.

Findings

School Level Crisis Preparation Planning

James (2020) describes Catholic school educators as "adaptive leaders" that take "prophetic action" to respond to the educational, spiritual, and health needs of their students and families. To continue this trajectory, Catholic school educators must simultaneously reflect on all lessons learned from the pandemic response from March through June 2020 and remain focused on the challenges ahead. To this end, we present the initial crisis response of this group of Catholic schools from the perspective of teacher participants, followed by their recommendations for the upcoming academic year.

There were varying degrees of preparation and response plans to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some schools initially instructed teachers to prepare "blizzard bags" with work for their students to take home. These bags contained materials that would take approximately two weeks to complete. As one participant explained, "It was a short-term plan. We made paper packets for the first two weeks and were not planning beyond that." Given similar instructions, other educators were given full autonomy over choice of methods and materials: "My school originally transitioned to online instruction for what believed to be a 2-week period. We were told that we could use whatever methods we would like to teach." Another elementary school UCTC teacher explained the absence of guidance left her with school-supported resources in only two of the subject areas for which she was responsible:

> My school's transition to online instruction has been on more of a case by case basis. We have a few resources that were given to us by the school...Past this though, we were pretty much left to our own devices for how online instruction was supposed to look. And while we were only given resources for Math and ELA, we were told multiple times that we were expected to deliver the same content as if we were in school. As an elementary teacher, that means I am responsible for teaching 5 subjects, while only having online resources for 2 of those subjects.

Another participant echoed the same experience of having to transition her students to online learning independently: "a lot of my transition has been self-led. We have been advised and encouraged to use resources that were shared with us by the principal."

While others, quickly organized webinars on how to use online learning platforms and websites with class-specific information for their students,

with the mindset that their instruction would be remote for many months to come. As one participant explained, "Other teachers at my school created a website to host all of their information in one place. I thought that was a great idea and made my own after hearing that." For some there was a very short amount of time to transition to online instruction and there were challenges that were unforeseen.

> Our school is very technologically savvy. Every student has an iPad and every teacher has a Mac. Now some students are struggling with connection at their house because of everyone working from home, but it has not become a major issue. We were told on a Wednesday that online learning could be possible and they gave us the following Monday off as a dry run for the students to work through the technical side of online learning. But it happened on that Friday, we were cancelled full time. That school day I was able to work with the students to show them how things were set up.

Additional participants lamented extremely limited time to plan online instruction, "We had the weekend to prep for starting online learning on Monday." Others, because they had school administrators who forecasted school closures, had one-two weeks to elaborate a plan. The whole staff (It's a small school so there are only nine of us.) met to come up with an online learning strategy about a week before the shutdown." The principle established a Zoom schedule, and teachers agreed to use G-Suite for assignments and brainstormed a list of tools and resources. "Assessment was the biggest challenge, and we didn't really figure out what tools to use for that until after online learning had been going on for a couple weeks."

One high school teacher stated that his school had "created a long-term plan and [we] were well prepared." However, this was not the case for all participating schools. Some schools' lack of a long-term blueprint for providing remote instruction caused confusion among teachers, students, and parents, resulting in lost time due to changes in practices and platforms after the initiation of remote instruction.

> ...I wish that my school had come up with a plan prior to 2 weeks into distance learning when we had to change everything we were doing. I wish I had more time to prepare and maybe hear from people who have experience with this what best practices are.

In several cases, this led to a sense of overwhelm as once teachers selected resources, they tended to disregard new resources: I'd take a look at them, but soon became overwhelmed at the idea of sending new logins and passwords to families who don't necessarily have the resources themselves to make this transition." Many participants felt overwhelmed not only by different resources from disparate sources, but also having to align resource content to realize essential educational goals.

> I think that one of the most challenging, but also fortunate, parts of this was that so many resources were thrown my way all at once from a plethora of different organizations and people. Taking the time to sift through all of the ideas and online resources was a lot. I feel lucky that I really didn't have to reach out because I am still receiving emails and texts with resources that people recommend and have found helpful.

Recommendations for Crisis Planning at the School Level

Rush et al (2014) suggest that having a professional development curriculum that supports educators in devising a crisis preparation plan--one that takes into consideration the specific needs and characteristics of each school community--is vital. As some of the participants noted, "evidence-based" or best practices in the area of online instruction during crises would have been invaluable. Participants offered recommendations regarding planning for continuous or eventual return to online instruction. These included hosting an "orientation day" suggesting that if the 2020-21 school year commences in-person, schools should host an "open house" to familiarize parents with and/ or create accounts for various platforms, in preparation for a smoother transition to remote instruction should the need arise. In addition, schools could develop a website or handbook that outlines instructional platforms and their requirements (internet speed, computer, etc.), tutorials on using programs/ platforms, clear grading policy, and appropriate scheduling (time/subject/ day). For faculty, a compendium of resources organized by subject matter, grade level, best practices, and user critiques would be most useful. As one participant explained,

> Luckily, there are many teachers in my school who were willing to share the resources they found, and that has helped me to round out my online instruction. By using the websites they have provided me,

or by researching on my own and finding free trials due to the current pandemic, I have been able to give all of my students instruction in all of the subject areas.

Schools could create committees to oversee long-term planning. One school established a steering committee early on in the crisis to organize their response and continued to meet during the summer months to plan for post-crisis or ongoing crisis scenarios. This approach could continue through the upcoming school year.

Implementing Online Learning Platforms

Capitalizing on all available, digital learning platforms and resources for student assessments is a formidable task even for the technologically savvy in online pedagogy. Participants shared personal perspectives and experiences, as well as those of parents, students, and schools. Many participants simultaneously noted the advantages and disadvantages of technology use in their remote instruction:

> There are lots of sites and resources but I feel like it is overwhelming for parents/students to have so many logins and sites for different content areas. It's been challenging to give any real assessments too. Some parents have requested only work that can be printed out and others want work that is only online so it is challenging to maintain that balance too. Zoom has been great to actually interact with students, but it has its own challenges too and sometimes we spend a good amount of the 40 minute time slot troubleshooting technology issues so everyone can participate.

Teachers characterized some of the students' challenges with online platforms as having too many different sites to navigate for various subjects, with each site requiring different log-in information and website structures that varied in user friendliness. One participant advocated for:

> Having one online learning platform for all subjects would be really helpful. I think it's getting confusing for students to navigate to one website for one subject and then to another for another subject. Had I had more time/knowledge, I definitely would have focused on finding one platform that was best for all content areas or at least ELA/Math.

Another participant figured out how to deal with her students' challenges in navigating certain platforms,

> They struggled with uploading assignments to Google Classroom in the beginning, so I decided to provide a template (using the "Make a copy for each student" feature) in the assignment as a work-around. I use a small set of familiar apps, (relying very heavily on G-Suite, which the students already had at least a passing familiarity) so the students have learned to navigate them pretty quickly.

Several participants elaborated on their own experiences with the learning platforms. One lamented that she wished she "had instruction in each of the learning platforms we are using as a school. The more time I spend on the platforms, the more I am learning about their functions" noting that such functions would have been truly helpful from the start "especially with assessments" as many platforms assessed and recorded data, alleviating extra work for the teacher. Another teacher had already been integrating digital tools into her instruction. This familiarity as well as the school's foresight in sending out "instructions to the kids on using google calendar and google meet" aided her instruction since "By the time of our first class all the students knew how to use the technology." Similarly, a science teacher had implemented "virtual demonstrations of different virtual lab software by sharing [her] screen over google meet" because she often did not have essential lab equipment or time to carry out in-class labs or because her "students needed more practice on certain topics." Thus, her students were already familiar with these platforms. Two participants expressed concern over their own and students' privacy using certain online instructional techniques. For instance, one teacher did not want any video instructions she provided to be publicly accessible to everyone, but only to her students and school community. With technical assistance, she was able to find an alternative platform.

Recommendations for Establishing and Implementing Online Platforms

Rush et al (2014) emphasize the need for teacher training around online learning platforms, as well as training on standards for teaching with technology. Participants echoed the need for instruction and guidance towards

best practices for technology use. Thus, training on the specific platforms that the school is using would be helpful to teachers, students, and parents. As one participant noted, "I wish I knew more about research-based best practices for online instruction." This desire included pedagogy around technology-based assessment and around project-based learning: "Familiarity with project-based learning is/would be helpful, because projects are a much better assessment tool than tests for online instruction." After selecting effective online learning platforms, schools could create instructional videos or meet virtually for staff to model students' use and ask questions. To promote student and family use, schools could create instructional videos for logging onto platforms and utilizing corresponding resources as well as consider using platforms that function well for users that have lower bandwidth. This would also ameliorate challenges around student access and/or scheduling and reduce obstacles for participation.

The school community is the most effective place to begin communication and family training about online platforms. The school should select a platform that allows students easy interactions with teachers and classmates. As most internet users have email (as cited in Rush et al, 2014), training around email usage would require lower cognitive demand and improve teacher--student--parent contact. The following participant's statement reinforces the benefits of training families with an online learning platform that promotes communication:

> I am using Peardeck.com. They enter a joint code that I present during the google meet and follow along with the presentation. This did not take much teaching time at all, maybe 2 minutes. They also don't have to have an account or anything, it is just like joining a kahoot game which they are all extremely familiar with. But it allows students to respond to questions and problems anonymously during the lecture.

All of these considerations are even more crucial when considering younger students, or students whose parents are not fluent in English:

> There were resources that my coworkers and I researched for it. I use ClassDojo for assignments and a UCTC member suggested Screencastify for recording lessons. I've been looking into other online methods for communication particularly to facilitate conversation between families and me where English is not the families' first language.

An important aspect of any online communication between teachers and students should also include guidelines regarding online (both for written and video) etiquette. Many participants observed that a sense of informality was fostered by the increased use of certain modalities of communication such as texting, video conferencing, or emailing. To have a discussion with students regarding this issue, teachers needed to rely on the usage of the communication platform in question.   Ideally, school administrators could provide a code of online etiquette/behavior for the entire school community.

Matching Needs and Resources

Rush et al (2014) call for a thorough assessment of available resources and supports that schools can access in case of emergency online schooling to be able to gauge and address gaps. These resources include available expertise, access to technology, funds, and anything related to particular characteristics of the school and community. Participants described their success conducting informal needs assessments with the students and families they serve:

> While it has taken a long time to transition into this new reality, I have also found myself more and more comfortable with what is expected of me. I have sent out a parent survey to see what is working for them and what they need from me, and the feedback has been extremely useful in designing my online instruction. I have been able to determine what is helpful and what is simply a hassle for these families. I have examined how I present information to make it as user-friendly as possible.

Despite teachers' knowledge of families' needs and the fact that Catholic schools were most proactive in distributing devices (Wodon, 2020), several schools struggled to meet the demand for device distribution. As one participant explains, although informal needs assessments highlighted a clear demand for devices, the administration was unable to fulfill this need for all families:

> I sent a survey out to parents and have heard from most families. If families have no technology then I gave them our principal's email to reach out to because [name of school] was lending out Chromebooks. However, we are now out of loaner Chromebooks so some families are left without technology. They are trying to get more, but it is a chal-

lenge right now for many families. A huge challenge that a lot of my students with technology also face is that they have one device and multiple kids trying to access their online learning each day along with parents using it to work from home. In an attempt to help, I provided PDF documents of online learning too so that it could be printed out and a device wasn't needed. However, printing is a challenge for some families too.

Although the majority of participants discussed schools' capacity to fulfill students' essential and technological needs to support learning, many also explored broader needs and resources. For instance, one participant emphasized the complexities of access, including quantity of devices and quality of connection:

Many of my students have access to the internet and a device on which they can access it. However, the story is more complicated than that. Many families share one device with multiple children, or have to share their internet connection/speed/reliability with neighbors or others, so it is more than simply checking a box with regards to access. One of my students reached out to me, and I was able to send her to the school to pick up a Chromebook to use, which her mother is very grateful about.

Several educators were instrumental in connecting parents with their town's available resources for free Internet service and online books. Still others connected parents with food banks, programs assisting with rent payments, and access to healthcare services. In addition to instructional sessions, participants provided other services to students: "We have had a full teaching schedule, held nightly events for students, and have office hours to check in with students. We also have weekly staff meetings." The collaboration between staff around family needs was common among participants. As one explained, "The school lent out their Chromebooks to families who needed them. I have been reaching out regularly to families who I have not heard from and the school counselor has been making calls as well." Another teacher noted the importance of establishing these collaborations early on: "My school did a great job. Early on, we were in communication to talk about what our day would look like, workload, etc. Our librarian and administrative team, as well as our computer teacher, have been instrumental in doing this." In this instance, the collaboration was across roles, rather than within teacher

groups, which broadens and enhances knowledge of students and resources, while building and supporting community.

Recommendations for Matching Needs and Resources

Many participants conducted informal needs-assessments of the families and students they serve, either by phone or online. In some schools, a school administrator performed this function. Having a designated person or group of school representatives that families trust to gather such information is critical to assess and address the needs of the school community. Families know best what challenges they face, especially with regards to remote learning. Participants mentioned their students confronted a range of barriers to successful participation in online instruction. Scheduling difficulties, unreliable access to internet service, shared computer for multiple children in one household, and new more pressing responsibilities such as taking care of younger siblings, caring for sick family member, working due to parents' layoffs, or being responsible for securing food or medicine denote the complexity and difficulty COVID-19 wreaked on families. It is therefore imperative that schools should prepare a list of resources not only available in the school community but also regionally and state-wide to address these basic but essential needs. This approach will facilitate each school's ability to appropriately and effectively identify, allocate, and prioritize resources and assure the well-being of students and families.

Communication with Parents

Rush et al. (2016) notes several types of communication that are usually available to the school community: email, cell phones, course management systems, video calls. Regardless of type, establishing reliable methods of communication is imperative. During remote learning, participants described a variety of experiences from increased, to decreased, to no change in communication. Communication was dependent on a variety of factors including the grade-level of students, school administration's instructions regarding communication with parents, language(s) spoken, and student and family schedules.

As some participants indicated, there was an increase in the communication with parents. One participant stated "I have communicated significantly more with parents during this time." Another participant reiterated this communication as a benefit: "I feel like there has been more communication which has been nice." Yet, this increase was contingent on families knowing

how to leverage technology for communication, such as email:

> Most of my communication with parents before was in person at dismissal or drop-off. Parents could come right up and ask questions and talk. Now most of this communication is through email which I think is more challenging. However, I do communicate more with parents that I previously had limited contact with.

Successful collaborations between families and teachers were acknowledged as reciprocal; families valued teachers' work, and teachers valued the family's impact on students' success:

> I feel like my relationships with families have grown significantly stronger over this time. Both sides realize that we could not do this without the other person. I have planned the lessons, and the families help to implement the plans at home. When we work together and there is clear communication, the students really seem to thrive with online learning.

Some participants explained this mutual respect as a consequence of families assuming a more direct role in their child's education and the empathy that comes from that experience:

> I personally have gotten closer with a few of the adults in families. I think that they have been a lot more vulnerable and just need someone to talk to about how difficult it is to educate little kids all day.

Beyond emotional connection, there were increased opportunities for participants to discuss students' academic progress with families. The collaboration between teachers and families became more active as families witnessed their students' learning and progress. This enabled more specificity in teacher feedback.

> I think my relationships with families have become much stronger. Many parents actually see what the students are working on for the first time and become much more invested. This is great because they help the students be more accountable and I get to talk one on one with parents and can be specific to how their student is performing.

Modified hours of the typical school day required to successfully reach all students via remote instruction necessitated more conversations that may not have existed prior to the pandemic. Participants described detailed knowledge of their students and families' schedules, and therefore, gained a more comprehensive and informed understanding of each family's circumstances. As one teacher shared:

> I feel that families have let me in more in terms of sharing information. For example, families discuss their schedules with me. I have a student whose parent has cancer, so we work class times, discreetly, around that family's schedule because they have to bring their parent for daily treatments.

Increased communication was structured in a variety of ways across schools with some establishing "somewhat of a communication train - first between teachers in the middle school, then other grade teachers" to parent and teacher communication directly shared with principals:

> Because I have been so available, many families have been able to reach out to me when they are in need of support. I have been able to pass along families in need of support to our school counselor, who checks in and gives them resources. I have also made my principal aware of all students and families that I believe might need support, and she has been working to find ways to connect families with support in different areas.

Educators in larger schools, documented their communication with parents in order to provide any necessary assistance:

> We have a Student/Family tracking sheet in Excel that faculty access. Teachers note any concerns or areas that a family might need support with. This is also communicated to the guidance counselor that works with the teacher and then reaches out to the family to provide the appropriate supports.

For other participants, school closure and transition to online instruction negatively impacted communication with parents both in frequency and

quality: "I don't get to talk to them as frequently." Although one participant noted that communication was "more limited, less face time, [with her but] more (communication) through admin." Some indicated that prior to COVID-19, families would communicate with teachers during pick-up and drop-off; removal of these opportunities reduced communication. Furthermore, communication now relied on an understanding of technology, specifically email, which also diminished collaboration.

> There has been much less communication between myself and parents. At school, many of the parents would be around before or after school to talk with if needed which was a frequent channel of communication. However, now that it is mostly email based communication it has been more difficult and less frequent.

Another participant reiterated this dilemma. "It is harder to stay in contact oddly enough. It is hard to get responses from parents and they often are more removed from their child's learning." When communication did occur, it often related to logistical reasons. One participant noted that "I have much less communication with 6 and 7th grade parents, but a lot with 8th grade since I am planning graduation." Only two participants observed no change in the communication with parents:

> There hasn't been much of a change in the relationships I have had with my students and their families. Most concerns, similarly to when we were present in school, have to do with school work and submitting assignments. Parents occasionally confide in us with family occurrences and we do our best to stay open in supporting them.

Overall the majority of teachers experienced more focused communication as the crisis offered unparalleled opportunities for cooperation, creative solutions, and willingness to learn from others and try new tools (Doucet, Netolicky, Timmers, & Tuscano, 2020) because educators, parents, and students are sharing similar experiences all at the same time. Being able to establish good communication and create community was equally important as the quality of the curricula or instruction offered since the socioemotional needs of students during this crisis cannot be overlooked.

Recommendations Regarding Communication with Parents

Fostering communication between parents, teachers, and schools is important in providing the stability, engagement, and community connection necessary to support students during this time or in any time of crisis. While there was variation in how administration organized communication with parents at school community level, participants' general recommendation was to establish a consistent, continual, effective, and reliable channel of communication between parents and teachers. Participants described the need for flexibility and creativity in finding multiple ways of communicating with parents based on individual access, needs, and language proficiency. Furthermore, frequency of communication must be adjusted to the specific context. Despite prevailing stressors that families experienced, participants did not recount any parents reacting to increased communication as a nuisance; and, having an open, fluid approach for communication was helpful to everyone including teachers, students, and parents.

Use of Social Media

Rush et al. (2014) discuss social media's ability to disseminate information. There were some schools that did not utilize social media to communicate with families or faculty. For three schools, the participants responded they were not aware if the school had any social media presence, with one confirming that the school had not used social media to communicate with their families during the pandemic. However, approximately half of the schools extensively used social media to communicate with families regarding community resources, school updates, promoting school spirit, and community building. As one participant explained, social media was a forum that provided increased opportunities to share messages with families: "The school has been better about posting things on social media for everyone to see to make sure that important messages reach as many families in the school community as possible." By doing so, schools were promoting and uniting their school community: "The school has been using social media to promote school spirit and communication." Merchant and Lurie (2020) note that social media have the capacity to disseminate critical information during emergencies, and can direct viewers to appropriate resources.

Another participant shared this sentiment, noting that their school had "an active social media presence, and we still are posting events!" While still another highlighted the opportunity for schools to share valuable resources within the community as her "school has an Instagram and they post helpful links to food banks, services, and school announcements." Rush et al. (2014) emphasized social media's ability to communicate information, and partici-

pants noted the relevance of this within their own practice.

In addition, teachers leveraged social media through individual accounts that were accounts that were then reposted by school accounts. The features of Instagram-video allowed for posts to be longer, and was viewed as very beneficial:

> Social media is a huge asset to our school right now. Almost all teachers post to Instagram on our public teacher accounts that are then shared to the school Instagram. I have been utilizing IGTV to post longer videos for my scholars to view. Most of my families follow me.

Recommendations Regarding the Use of Social Media

Although the quantity and quality of social media varied, several factors seemed to optimize use of social media, specifically in order to increase family communication. The ability for schools to re-share teacher posts allowed for a wider audience; thus, a helpful policy would be for teachers to tag school accounts routinely. As one participant noted, a family's accessibility to this information was dependent on previous exposure to social media: "Social media has impacted my practice. The families and guardians I work with tend to be on the younger side, so they are very in touch with social media. Many families found out about our school closing through platforms like Facebook." In efforts to support all students, schools could conduct surveys to determine each family's overall social media exposure, including commonly used platforms. To help fill potential gaps, families could host technology nights, during which social media skills are taught that enhance access to school accounts; such practices also build community. Additionally, schools could provide social media account information in their welcome packets and track family participation.

> Our school is active in keeping our community connected through social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.). Our technology specialist also sends out updates of resources that teachers and families can use for remote learning every few weeks.

Another teacher commented that the virus had encouraged her school to be "better about posting things on social media for everyone to see to make sure that important messages reach as many families in the school commu-

nity as possible. Of course, schools must ensure that communications reach all families, specifically those without access. A recent Pew Research Center study found that the digital divide and the digital "homework gap" did and will likely continue to impact students coming from lower income households with approximately 40% of students having to use cell phones or public WI-FI to complete homework, or unable to complete homework because they do not have a computer (Vogels et al, 2020). Participants asserted that their schools were able to provide Chromebooks for their students and local resources to secure free access to the internet; however, some participants were not certain if their school had been able to do this for all students.

Federal data note that about 14% of students do not have Internet access (Noonoo, 2020). This is particularly true in urban areas. While schools worked diligently to provide devices and work with providers to establish hot spots, such efforts could not reach all students. The Center for School Networking suggests using television series such as NOVA, text-based services like Remind, and even phone trees. Preparing and distributing materials to students and assuring that they are returned is another effective but certainly time-intensive option.

Discussion

Without clear precedent for addressing a pandemic of this magnitude, participants in this study responded quickly and effectively given the context. Their experiences pose several clear recommendations. Having a comprehensive and workable plan that is widely disseminated via various methods to students, parents, faculty, staff, and key community partners is vital. Constant revision and updating of input as conditions change by school leaders, parents and other stakeholders will contribute to its viability. Following participants' suggestions, schools should "rehearse" the plan (Rush et al, 2014; Brock et al, 2009). Allow faculty time to plan for digital repositories of curricula, assessments, and resources for future disruption in face-to-face schooling, folding it into the established approach once schools are fully re-established to normal operations. Participants indicated they had been able to learn about different platforms, resources, and instructional techniques from peers. The feasibility to execute some of the recommendations in this paper may be linked to school budgets, resources, and community characteristics. For instance, smaller schools may have smaller operating budgets and fewer faculty or staff to implement some of the recommendations.

Participants explained that they had not received training in digital instructional design during their graduate studies as this was an unforeseen phenomenon, leaving them to search for best-practices in digital instruction and assessment on their own. Specialized teacher training in online pedagogy may be an important component that needs to be added to teacher preparation programs and professional development courses for already licensed/ practicing teachers. The reality is that online or hybrid learning is potentially essential not only during crises but also for student athletes, students with certain disabilities or special health care needs, students living in rural or remote areas, those that are incarcerated or international students.

Now, possibly more than ever before, researchers need to respond nimbly to all of the education challenges and opportunities that the pandemic has imposed. While many participants discussed some of the advances their students made in the area of technology-related knowledge, all of them were concerned about regression and large gaps in their students' learning and potential behavioral issues upon reentry to a typical classroom and adherence to a school schedule.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. Administrators from these schools were not interviewed so the data presented is strictly from teachers' self-report. At the time of data collection, participants had only been teaching remotely for two to three months and as time has elapsed and more plans for re-opening all different types of schools across the country have emerged there are more data/knowledge regarding these issues in both scholarly and popular literature. The recommendations garnered from this inquiry reflect the specific context of Catholic schools in one state. Undoubtedly, crisis plans, communication, learning platforms, and use of social media must be in line with the ecology of the school culture, community, and the impact of COVID-19 on the local area. Further, the focus of this paper has been on recommendations to address some of the basic needs to continue instruction; however, at Catholic schools, careful planning about consistent teaching of the core values of Catholic school curricula through remote instruction, must be foremost as it has in higher education and distance (Dickel & Ishii-Jordan, 2008).

Conclusion

Given the disruption and devastation (or distress) caused by this pandemic, it is important that Catholic schools' response guidelines are empiri-

cally supported and beneficial to restoring social and behavioral functioning. In their review of intervention practices and programs, Hobfoil et al, (2007) identify five principles that should guide intervention strategies: a) a sense of safety; b) sense of calm; c) sense of self- and community efficacy; d) connectedness; and e) hope. Catholic schools are in a unique position to implement these principles, as they strongly align with Catholic social teachings, the foundational beliefs of Catholic education. Catholic school educators are charged with respecting and supporting the welfare and dignity of the human person, especially the disenfranchised and vulnerable. This requires enacting the call to community, not only the school community, but also the family and neighborhood communities. This consistent and continual connection is critical especially in time of crisis, and has and continues to contribute to the Catholic School Advantage. For decades, Catholic schools have been lauded for the Catholic School Advantage as they have demonstrated educational equity (high levels of achievement, fairness, and rich learning opportunities) especially for poor, low-income, and minority students (Rodriguez & Briscoe, 2019). Historically, Catholic education has worked to achieve educational equity and "to integrate the curriculum, to unify faith and culture, and to bring together the different pieces of the school programme into a higher synthesis that influences the social and spiritual formation of pupils" (Lane, 1991, p. 12). In solidarity with students and families, these educators thoughtfully consider the unique contexts of the students they serve, assuring that social, academic, and spiritual needs are effectively met, which is essential for sustaining hope in times of crisis.

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