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LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Exploring School Community During the COVID-19 Emergency School Closure:

A Case Study of a Los Angeles County Middle School

by

Sydney D. Minckler

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

Loyola Marymount University,

in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

2021

Exploring School Community During the COVID-19 Emergency School Closure:

A Case Study of a Los Angeles County Middle School

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By

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This dissertation written by Sydney Minckler, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

23 May 2021

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DEDICATIONS

I dedicate my work to two amazing women lost during this challenging time of loss. Jennifer (Jenni) Dunn Whitcomb Leonard (July 3, 1974–April 9, 2021) was my friend, but more importantly, she became my daughter's second mother. From the age of 4 weeks, Jenni cared for my daughter every day. Together, Jenni and I grew up, learning about parenting and how to "adult." She loved my daughter with all her heart and became "My Jenni." After having two daughters of her own, she returned to school and earned her bachelor's in early childhood education. Jenni dedicated her professional life to supporting, educating, and guiding the young children and families of B'nai Simcha. She was a determined, passionate, and one-of-a-kind woman who battled breast cancer with fierce determination.

My grandmother, Carleen (Squeek) Gleaux Stumpf Minckler (September 8, 1923–September 11, 2020), inspired many through her actions. She was a First Lieutenant Army nurse serving in the 121st Station Hospital in European Command as director of the Warbrides Project. She met, fell in love with, and married my grandfather while stationed in post-World War II Germany. Marriage ended her military career, but not my grandfather's. She traveled with him to posts around the world and across the United States. She raised my aunt and father while performing all the duties of an officer's wife. At the age of 54, she returned to school, earned her master's, and became a director of nursing at a convalescent center introducing innovative practices in elder care. For me, the most heroic action she took was embracing my sister and me after my parents' divorce. She included us in family activities and celebrations. She attended my plays, speech competitions, and all graduation. My heart breaks that she will not physically attend my doctoral graduation, but I know that she will be watching, as always, with pride.

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ABSTRACT

Exploring School Community During the COVID-19 Emergency School Closure:

Case Study of a Los Angeles County Middle School

by

Sydney D. Minckler

In the spring of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic mandated closures of thousands of schools across the United States. Students dependent upon the support, guidance, and community of their schools became disconnected from these resources while encountering the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. This case study represents a time capsule of the school community of one Los Angeles County public middle school from March 16 to May 28, 2020. Semi-structured interviews of school staff and parents grounded the study's analysis. Public documents and participant researcher protocol responses collaborated the participants' narratives. Results provide a snapshot of the school community before emergency mandated COVID-19 closure, participants' recollections of the school community during the closure, and their reflections and reactions to the closures. Data analysis utilized a conceptual framework developed to capture e-school community access and engagement. Outcomes from this study illustrate the need for additional supports for student mental health, investment in universal access to reliable internet service, and the importance of physical school outreach during times of crisis.

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

As the world celebrated the winter holiday season of December 2019, a mysterious disease incubated and spread through Wuhan, China (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2020a). On January 19, 2020, a thirty-five-year-old man sought care for a cough and fever at a Washington State urgent care facility. The gentleman had returned from Wuhan, China, just days earlier. He "had seen a health alert from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) about the novel coronavirus outbreak in China and, because of his symptoms and recent travel, decided to see a health care provider" (Holshue et al., 2020). United States President Donald Trump banned travel of non-U.S. residents from mainland China on January 31, 2020 (Braun & Dearen, 2020).

In conjunction with the Chinese government, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched a joint mission to understand the new disease better. The WHO identified the virus by February 11, 2021, naming it "coronavirus disease 2019, abbreviated as COVID-19" (CDC, 2020c). The joint mission held a press conference in Beijing on February 24, 2020 and expanded upon what their investigation revealed. Dr. Liang Wannian cautioned, "Since the coronavirus is a new pathogen, people of all ages do not have special immunity to it, and it can be inferred that all the populations are susceptible to this new coronavirus" (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020a p. 4).

America reported the first COVID-19 death on February 29, 2020, in Washington State. With COVID-19 cases also in California and Oregon, CDC cautioned, "Preliminary information

raises the level of concern about the immediate threat for COVID-19 for certain communities in the United States" (CDC, 2020a, p. 1). On March 11, 2020, President Trump invoked a thirty-day travel ban on foreign nationals traveling from "the Schengen region, which consists of 26 countries in Europe with open border agreements, in the last 14 days" (Allyn & Romo, 2020, p. 1). Over one hundred twenty-five thousand people worldwide had tested positive, with over a thousand cases in the United States (Allyn & Romo, 2020).

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) issued a COVID-19 update on March 13, 2020, reporting "a total of 247 total positive cases and five deaths in California" (California Department of Public Health [CDPH], 2020, p. 1). Later that same day, the superintendent of the Local Educational Agency (LEA), which included Coleman Arts Magnet Academy, issued the following announcement: "In an abundance of caution and in response to widening concerns about COVID-19, all district students will be dismissed from attending school on Monday, March 16, 2020," (Superintendent, district email, March 13, 2020). California State Public Health Officer and Director of the Department of Public Health issued a state-wide stay-at-home order on March 19 (CDPH, 2020). By April 13, 2020, over 33 million public school students were no longer attending their physical schools and the United States was under national shelter-in-place orders (Education Week, 2020).

Distance teaching is a not new phenomenon. Newspapers began to run ads for correspondence courses as early as 1728 (Osborne, 2012). Distance education utilized the postal service to communicate distance learning in the 1840s when a professor taught shorthand using postcards. As technology advanced, so did distance teaching—radio broadcast educational content for universities and colleges in the 1920s. In 1966, of the television channels on air,

"one-third were licensed to state and local educational systems, another third to colleges and universities" (Kentnor, 2015, p. 9). With the dawn of the internet, distance teaching transitioned to the digital realm. The CyberSchool Project opened in Eugene, Oregon, in 1995, offering online classes to high school students (Greenway & Vanourek, 2006). For the 2017-2018 school year, "501 full-time virtual schools enrolled 297,712 students" and "enrollments in virtual schools increased by more than 2,000 students between 2016-17 and 2017-18" (Molnar et al., 2019, p. 2).

Even with advances in distance education and increases in charter schools, in 2019, over forty-five million American school-age children attended local public schools (Bustamante, 2019). When emergency closures of school began, these students and their families did not choose to relocate their educational experiences online because there was no choice. Emergency distance teaching embarked on a path of unknowns with minimal warning, planning, or community preparation.

On April 8, 2020, Common Sense Media, in conjunction with Survey Monkey, surveyed 849 teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17. Students reported that they were lonely, disconnected from their friends, and worried about schoolwork and family finances. Less than a quarter had contacted their teachers, and 41% had not yet attended an online class (Common Sense Media, 2020).

After twenty years in public middle school education, I have encountered and overcome many challenges. I found myself, my co-workers, and the LEA woefully unprepared for the consequences of the mandatory emergency school closures. In the fall of 2019, I had transitioned from classroom teacher to Coleman's Response-to-Intervention (RTI) coach. The expectations

for this position were to train teachers to better manage student behavior in their classrooms, reduce student altercations and suspensions, increase student attendance in classes, and support student academic achievement. Unlike teaching, where most student-adult interactions occurred in the classroom, most of my student interactions happened when they were not in class. I met students every morning at the garden gate for meet-n-greet, supervised nutrition and lunch breaks, and walked the hallways searching for students who had left or were asked to leave classes. When in my classroom/office, I facilitated student conflict resolution, parent-student-teacher conferences, and one-on-one behavioral and academic tutoring. Due to the mandatory emergency closure, the classrooms, hallways, athletic fields, cafeteria, and quad were deserted. The day-to-day interactions upon which my job relied ended. The jarring reality of the sudden shift to online teaching was that contact with students now required a cell phone, Chromebook, or other digital devices. There were no more casual encounters to build trust and relationships gradually; all contact was deliberate and with a purpose. I was no longer privileged to be a casual part of their daily lives. Parents, students, faculty, staff, and others navigated their places within this new online school community; I felt a desire to chart and record our collective journey.

Terms of Importance

For this study, online educational experiences are referred to as emergency distance teaching (Hodges et al., 2020). This shift was not a well-planned transition from offline to online education but rather was a reaction to a worldwide pandemic. Distance teaching and distance learning utilize similar technologies, but they do not provide an identical educational impact due to their implementation. Distance learning implies using a planned online learning curriculum, while distance teaching acknowledges the swift transition and absences of systematic planning

(Hodges et al., 2020). I used the term e-school community when referring to the school community created during the mandatory emergency COVID-19 closures of March 2020. The e-prefix connects the root word to electronic (Merriam-Webster, “e-,” n.d.).); therefore, an e-school community can be formed online, in emails, video meetings, and cell phones.

Statement of the Problem

Over 16,000 students, their families, faculty, and other school staff embarked on distance teaching on March 16, 2020 (Superintendent, district email, March 13, 2020). Research suggested that a shift to distance teaching altered the school community founded on interpersonal relationships (Osterman, 2000). School-based relationships are fundamental to young adolescents’ development of an academic and social self-image during the middle school years (Juvonen, 2007). This alteration amplifies possible difficulties in forging these vital relationships, especially for already marginalized students.

Impacted by the loss of interpersonal relationships, students, faculty, and other school staff experienced an upheaval of their community of practice. Proposed by Etienne Wenger (1998), communities of practice emphasize the social aspects of learning. Wenger posited that the creation of meaning requires the active participation of those within the community. Wenger stated that any space could host a community of practice; the e-school community embodies this potential when all participants have avenues of access (Wenger, 1998). How community members were able to and chose to participate in the newly formed e-school community anchored this study.

Research Questions

This study investigated the phenomenon of a mandatory emergency COVID-19 transition to distance teaching and an alteration of the established school community. Research indicated that school communities formed through the participants' day-to-day interactions (Osterman, 2000; Wenger, 1998). The closure of physical schools forced all interactions into the digital space of the unfamiliar e-school community. This study utilized a conceptual framework to answer the following research question:

> How did a mandatory school closure and a rapid shift to emergency distance teaching transform the school community at a Los Angeles County public middle school?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the nature of the school community impacted by a mandatory school closure due to COVID -19 and the rapid transition to distance teaching. As the school community members interacted with one another within the e-school community, an evolution occurred in response to the novel circumstances. Insights provided by the study's participants suggested possibilities for other school communities to embrace all students, their families, the faculty, and other school staff within the digital boundaries of the e-school community.

Significance of the Study

COVID-19 pandemic shuttered American schools—moving instruction online, affecting millions of students and their families, as well as teachers, administrators, and other site and district personnel (Education Week, 2020). Students were no longer attending their physical schools where they once could have a sense of community. In combination with the issues

inherent during a pandemic, this loss of physical community created a situation where students were increasingly worried, stressed, and struggling. In these conditions, the formation of an e-school community to provide an environment for personal, academic, and social-emotional growth was vital.

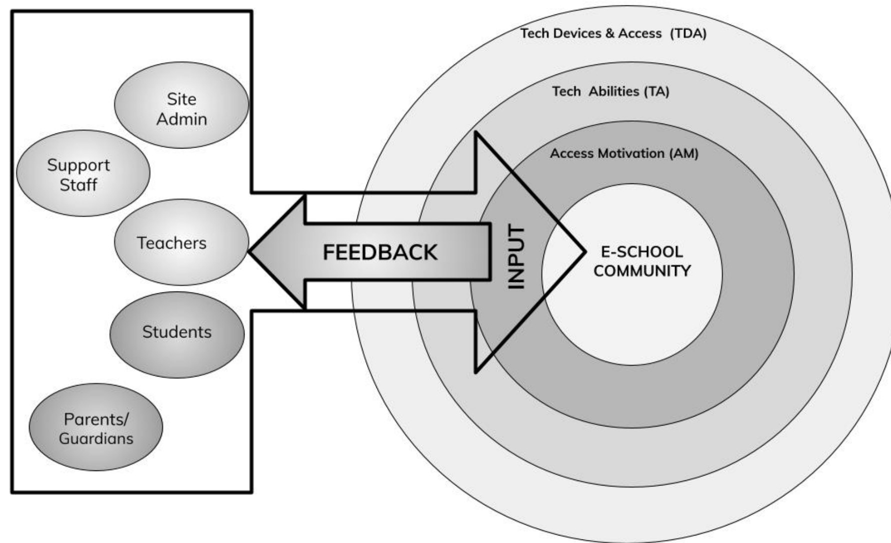
This study uncovered how students' former classroom teachers fostered e-learning communities in the Spring of 2020. At the same time, school administrators cultivated welcoming, engaging e-school communities, which provided supports to students and parents during this crisis. Teacher respondents recounted their acquisition of educational technology skills; their experiences illustrated the impact of technology on teacher pedagogy and illuminated gaps in their technical abilities.

Conceptual Framework

To capture the unique circumstances of the mandatory emergency COVID-19 school closures, the framework utilized for this study was a compilation of two existing frameworks. The literature review describes the foundational frameworks in detail.

Figure 1

E-School Community Access and Engagement Conceptual Framework



Note: Conceptual framework adapted from *A Framework for Building Virtual Communities for Education*, 2006, by I. Varlamis and I. Apostolakis, *Proceedings of the EC-TEL06 Workshops, Crete, Greece,* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/221549657_A_Framework_for_Building_Virtual_Communities_for_Education; copyright 2006 by I. Varlamis. Used in combination the Shannon-Weaver Model of Communication by CommunicationTheory.org, 2010*;* copyright 2010 by Communication Theory.

The framework consisted of three main sections. The first area represents the school community, including students, families, faculty, and other school staff, as seen in Figure 1. The input/feedback pathway portrays the transmission of communications of the school community. The center circle surrounds the digital e-school community. Communication might be distorted or halted by one of the three levels of "noise" located along the pathway. Level 1 "Noise" — Technical Devices and Access (TDA)—considers the availability of internet-equipped devices and internet access. Level 2 "noise" —Technical Abilities (TA)—accounts for familiarity with the necessary technology and online platforms. Level 3 "noise" —Access Motivation (AM)—

illuminates framework-guided analysis of data to clarify supports and obstacles of forming an e-school community during a crisis.

Research Design and Methodology

This study was qualitative and used case study methodology. Mills and Gay's (2019) guidance prompted this choice of study as they explained that a case study is appropriate when answering how or why something happened. Case studies analyze a single event bound by space and time (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). Researchers choose case studies when their research questions seek to understand how and why something occurred, they have no control over the event, and the event is contemporary. The purpose of a case study is to understand the inner workings of the subject—how it works and interacts with the rest of the contextual environment (Yin, 2018). The subject for this case study was a suburban middle school, grades 6 through 8, serving approximately 500 students.

Data collection began with participant interviews. Those interviewed included eight parents, five teachers, and three other school staff members. I recovered district and site level documentation of updates, personal emails, and other communications to corroborate participant recollection and reflection. As a participant researcher, I wrote responses from my perspective utilizing the teacher and instructional coach interview protocols. Using *in vivo* coding and the conceptual framework described above, themes about community developed. These themes provided a comparison method between the school community before the closure, during the transition, and throughout the spring 2020 semester.

Limitations

Since the current study focused on events in a single middle school site, the results are not generalizable to all schools or areas affected during the COVID-19 pandemic school closures. The selection of only specific teachers and the parents whose students participated in their classes represented only their experiences during this time frame; thus, it excluded the remainder of the school's population.

Delimitations

I chose to study a school site where I worked during this case study in order to access schoolwide documents. I have built relationships with parents, teachers, and other staff members. The relationships of trust built over the past five years provided avenues for contacting possible participants. Furthermore, my longevity with the school site's LEA provided access to district updates and other communications.

Assumptions

This study assumed that all participants were parents, teachers, or other site-level employees during the COVID-19 pandemic school closure. Additionally, this study assumed that a sudden transition from a physical school community to one exclusively online created an altered experience for the community members.

Definitions of Terms

- **Community—**a group of interdependent people who, due to their needs, interests, values, and/or beliefs, engage with one another. They utilize agreed-upon norms and routines to pursue common interests and/or goals collectively. Through this pursuit, these independent people shape and are shaped by the group's actions, negotiations,

conflicts, and the hierarchy of control along with the reactions of others outside the group (Sergiovanni, 1994; Wenger, 1998).

- **Communication Pathway—**the conduit between potential members of an e-school community and the community itself. The members must overcome levels of "noise" within the pathway in order to provide input to the community or receive feedback from the community.
- **"Distance" as an adjective—** "Taking place via electronic media linking instructors and students who are not together in a classroom" (Merriam-Webster, "distance," n.d.).
- **Emergency Remote Teaching—** "A temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternative delivery mode due to crisis or circumstances; involves the use of fully remote teaching solutions for instruction or education that would otherwise be delivered face-to-face . . . and that will return to that format once the crisis or emergency has abated" (Hodges et al., 2020, p. 6).
- **"Noise"—**interferences along the Communication Feedback Pathway which might alter, distort, or terminate communication of the e-school community (Ma, 2015).
- **The prefix e—**electronic (Merriam-Webster, "e-," n.d.).

Organization of Dissertation

Now that I have outlined the fundamental problem, essential terms, and general methodology for this study, I will turn to a more in-depth exploration of the literature regarding the following: the study's framework, communities in schools and online, adolescent social development, and the mental health impact of the mandatory school closures. This

comprehensive literature review will provide the groundwork for this study. The design for this study is outlined and discussed in Chapter 3. In contrast, the final two chapters will detail the research results, interpretations of the results, conclusions, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2:

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In America, as of March 17, 2021, COVID-19 claimed over 530,00 lives and infected more than 29 million people (CDC, 2021). "The total cost is estimated at more than $16 trillion, or roughly 90% of annual GDP of the United States" (Cutler & Summers, 2020, p. 2). The reverberation of the COVID-19 pandemic permeated all aspects of our daily life, including our children's schooling. This literature review begins with a baseline description of school communities prior to the disruption of COVID-19 to help the reader appreciate the magnitude of the impact of the emergency mandatory COVID-19 school closures on school communities and their children (Byiers et al., 2012). The following section considers past emergency school interruptions and their impacts in order to place the current pandemic in a historical context. One significant consequence of the closures has been the movement to online instruction; over 90% of American households with school-aged children have relied or continue to rely on distance learning and online resources (McElrath, 2020). The subsequent section explores the history of online education and develops a current description of online education while examining how this mode of instruction can disrupt the school community. Finally, this literature review concludes with an inspection of the conceptual framework developed to analyze this phenomenon.

In-Person School Communities

Humans seek one another to form social bonds for health and survival (Cook, 2013). Historically, to satisfy this desire, humans have formed communities modeled on the demands of their time. Specialized communities organized and separated as humans became more

specialized (Greenfield et al., 2003). School communities arose as the educational system became formalized; they continued to respond to societal expectations of their time (Zeyer & Roth, 2009). Before the 2020 emergency mandatory COVID-19 school closures, research provided insight into these specialized communities' unique qualities. These insights formed baseline descriptions necessary for comparison with the online school communities after the emergency mandatory COVID-19 closures.

American compulsory education requires most children to be in an educational setting until age 16 (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2021). Over 50 million children attend a public school in America (NCES, 2021); the goal of their academic and social development forms the "set of shared ideas and ideals" (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. 218) as the basis of the school community. Membership in the school community "consists primarily of students and teachers" (Osterman, 2000, p. 324) but also encompasses the families (Uslu & Gizir, 2017) and those within the students' home environments (Cohen et al., 2009; Foster et al., 2017).

Interactions between these members create the school climate. School climate "is a group phenomenon that is larger than one person's experience" (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 181). Based on the school community members' perceptions, the climate includes expectations, attitudes, behaviors, impressions, and beliefs (Caldarella et al., 2011; Cohen et al., 2009; Gruenert, 2008; Homana et al., 2006). Through the school climate, members build a sense of belonging to a learning community that encourages everyone to reflect on their shared goals and deepen their social connections. Communities of practice emphasize the importance of belonging, the influence of each member in the community, and the need for channels of communion to provide engagement (Wenger, 1998).

Student Relationships Within the School Community

With her *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education.*, Nel Noddings (2013) embraced caring in the school community's relationships. Beginning with a student-centered focus, Noddings saw that schools “can be deliberately designed to support caring and caring individuals” (p. 182). Relationships provide a foundation for students to create their sense of belonging to the school community (Foster et al., 2017; Osterman, 2000; Uslu & Gizir, 2017).

Students observe how school personnel interact with them, and this fosters an environment of care and respect, where students build extended family relationships with adults that can transfer to highly effective school environments (Tosolt, 2010). When teachers engage in caring behaviors towards students, a student’s sense of school belonging increases (Ma, 2003). These interactions provide signals as to what the expectations are within the school community. Students notice others’ respect for differences in race, ethnicity, ability, and gender (Cohen et al., 2009). When these relationships adapt and meet the students' psychological needs, they are more likely to become active participants within the community accepting the community’s norms, values, and goals due to their sense of belonging (Ellerbrock et al., 2014; Schaps, 2003).

A majority of the research has found that when a student has at least one caring connection to an adult, on-campus academic and socio-emotional growth increases (Blum, 2005; Frazier et al., 2015; Hawkins et al., 2001; Osterman, 2000; Ryan & Patrick, 2001; Schaps, 2005). When teachers have formed relationships with their students, they respond to students’ emotional, psychological, and academic needs (Ellerbrock et al., 2014). Students with a sense of belonging to their school and classroom communities demonstrate a heightened sense of intrinsic academic motivation, allowing them to be more independent learners (McNeely et al., 2002;

Ryan & Patrick, 2001; Schaps, 2005; Solomon et al., 2000). Students participating in a supportive learning community display more confidence in their learning abilities and devote cognitive resources to academic endeavors (Ryan & Patrick, 2001).

Building and maintaining relationships with on-campus adults can provide the external guidance needed for better choice-making (Cohen et al., 2009; Osterman, 2000). Students with supportive relationships within the community are less likely to 1. display disruptive behaviors in school and 2. to experience dismissal from class, suspension, or expulsion (Blum, 2005; Hawkins et al., 2001; Osterman, 2000; Ryan & Patrick, 2001). Additionally, students are more likely to use conflict resolution strategies (Solomon et al., 1996; Solomon et al., 2000), are less inclined to begin using or abusing substances, demonstrate reduced sexual activities (Hawkins et al., 2001; Osterman, 2000), and are more likely to attend regularly (Blum, 2005; Frazier et al., 2015; Osterman, 2000). Finally, caring relationships with on-campus adults provide early detection of mental health issues, providing warning signs of suicidal ideation (Frazier et al., 2015; Levitt et al., 2007). "Teachers ought to know and believe that relationships with their students matter and will make a significant difference to society" (Uslu & Gizir, 2017, p. 75).

Acknowledging the advantages for students when they have gained a sense of community at their schools helps us understand that a disruption in that community can pose serious consequences. To better understand the impacts of the current emergency mandated COVID-19 school closures, the following section explores the history of school closures through the lens of the 1918 flu pandemic and other emergency closures in California.

Emergency Educational Interruptions

Even without a global pandemic, public experience closure due to other emergencies, such as wildfires, extreme weather occurrences, student safety, and infrastructure (Elew et al., 2019). The 1918 flu pandemic was the last worldwide infectious disease emergency, but how schools confronted this challenge differed vastly from the current school responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In March 1918, the first wave of what would become a flu pandemic spread through parts of the United States with a higher than standard infection rate, but not mortality rate. The second wave in September 1918 brought an increased death rate (Taubenberger & Morens, 2006). Even though the federal government could not mandate school closures, Rupert Blue, U. S. Surgeon General, issued a recommendation for schools to close. State and local governments infrequently mandated school closures. When there was finally a mandate to close schools, the average closure lasted 36 days, though neither New York City nor Chicago closed their schools. Although many parents chose to keep their students at home, lowering the overall attendance rates, analysis of 1940 census data illustrated a small effect in years of educational attainment and labor market outcome for those children of the 1918 flu pandemic (Ager et al., 2020).

Between 2018 and 2019, school closures had an impact on over a million California students, with the Camp Fire as the top reason (Elew et al., 2019). California school closures due to wildfires can be incredibly disruptive to areas; some schools have closed five times in the past four years. The length of wildfire school closures has increased recently; California has recorded closures of ten or more days "hundreds of times since 2015" (Elew et al., 2019, p. 4). With the amount of instructional time linked to student academic growth (Marcotte & Hansen, 2009),

California utilized a distance learning option for some students after the Paradise Fire (Lambert & Washburn, 2018). Thus, distance schooling is not new to California or uniquely a consequence of the pandemic.

Online Education and Communities

Environmental and other emergencies will continue to require school closures even after the COVID- 19 pandemic recedes. Digital communities have been in existence since 1977 with the Electronic Information Exchange System. Through the 1980s and early 1990s, digital communities were mainly confined to universities and scientific research centers. With the advent of dial-up technology and for-fee online platforms such as America Online (AOL), users outside academia began to form communities based on interests and familiar situations (Kentnor, 2015). Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 emerged from this point, providing an opportunity for the emergence of an online e-school community (Wenger et al., 2009).

Learning Management Systems and Instructional Delivery Options

Most of these e-school communities received support from a learning management system (LMS). The LMS provides an online learning platform for administration, documentation, delivery, tracking, and reporting activities (Singh & Thurman, 2019). Through LMS, students can upload assignments, complete them, and receive assessment. Teachers can provide instruction in two main formats: asynchronous and synchronous. Asynchronous learning exchanges happen whenever the students and the instructor choose; one does not depend upon the other. Examples of this might be videos from the curriculum, the web, or teacher or student-created, teacher-written instructions, and open discussion boards. Synchronous learning occurs when members of an e-school community participate in real-time with one another, usually via

some type of videoconferencing tools (Pickett, 2019). A basic understanding of the format and types of communication available to the e-school community forms how the participants create an e-school community.

Building Relationships in E-school Communities

While communities form at the physical school site, the teacher is responsible for building an in-depth understanding of her students as individual people and learners (Asim et al., 2020). To begin to build the e-school community, a teacher must provide opportunities for her students to practice interpersonal skills. Spaces devoted to collaboration, reflection, exploration, and critical thinking with peer and teacher input offer avenues for interpersonal growth (Asim et al., 2020; Banas & Wartalski, 2019; Palloff et al., 2007). The establishment of these spaces can contribute to the "social presence" or the perception of someone being real within the e-school community participants (Palloff et al., 2007; Tu & Corry, 2003). These spaces' social presence can enhance learner outcomes through increased engagement and reduced isolation (Asim et al., 2020; Palloff et al., 2007). When the e-school community is in the service of middle school students, the need for engagement and social presence is even more significant since this can be a time of lost focus, where students may fall behind their peers, creating or exacerbating a skills gap (Williams et al., 2010). The formation of a responsive and interactive e-school community also allows for more significant differentiation of instruction for the teachers and demonstrating understanding by the students (Asim et al., 2020).

Unique COVID-19 Online Educational Opportunities

In the days and weeks after the mandated school closures, teachers, administrators, and others began publishing articles on these closures' goals and challenges. One article coined the

phrase “emergency remote learning,” defined as “a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternative delivery model due to crisis,” which will return to face-to-face format after the crisis has ended (Hodges et al., 2020, p. 5). The authors used this phrase to delineate the differences between a well-planned, prepared development of an online course and the rapid shift required by the mandated closures.

Within this transition to emergency remote teaching, many stressed the considerable learning curve placed on educators and students (Craig, 2020; Fielding, 2020; Hiro, 2020; Tucker, 2020). Part of the requirement for teachers is to learn how to interface with their district’s learning management system, best use video conference, and organize their students’ time expectations, as well as develop a modular approach to learning. (Tucker, 2020). This learning curve was even more significant for students who had difficulties with digital equipment, internet access, and technical experience coupled with the implicit need for parental support through the learning process (Melia et al., 2020). This stress, stemming from student lack of access and teacher frustrations, became so pronounced that some districts chose to end the school year weeks early (Hobbs, 2020).

For those schools and districts that chose to forge onward, experts and teachers expressed what they considered best practices for this time of emergency. Highlighting connections to others in the form of building communities of learners and communities of teachers, communications with students and parents, and an awareness of the crisis’s impact on all involved (Craig, 2020; Fielding, 2020; Hiro, 2020; Tucker, 2020). As Brooke Soles, a faculty member from Cal State San Marcos’ School of Education, stated, “It remains critical to stay

human and connected" (Hiro, 2020, p. 2). The developments of early adolescence amplify the obligation to the formation of these connections.

COVID-19 Impacts and Trauma

COVID-19 impacted not only school systems but also many aspects of American society. On June 5, 2020, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) released unemployment numbers for May 2020. The unemployment rate for May 2020 was 13.3 % compared with a rate of 3.4 in May 2019 and resulting in the labelling of 2.3 million workers "permanent job losers" (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). This loss of income set off a wave of food insecurity throughout the country (Bauer, 2020). In a poll conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation in early April 2020, 45% of adults surveyed said that COVID-19 and the stress of the situation negatively affected their mental health (Panchal et al., 2020). The mandated closures of schools increasingly impacted student mental health. For many students coping with mental health issues, school and the routines therein anchored them in reality. For those with depression, no longer having regular schedules and expectations of physically arriving at the school building opened the possibility for staying in their rooms, in bed, and disconnected from others (Lee, 2020). Additionally, many students were provided mental health services while attending school, with 35% of those receiving services exclusively at the school site (Golberstein et al., 2020). Student and parental mental health coupled with extreme unemployment led to other domestic issues as well.

During the mandated closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an increase in situations that place children in harm's way, but these situations were difficult to detect due to the closure. After all, if children are not in school, mandated reporters (such as teachers and other school personnel) do not see abuse and, therefore, such abuse may go unreported. (Morse, 2020).

Considering that substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) saw a nearly 900 percent increase in calls, compared to the same time the previous year, to the disaster distress helpline (Parshley, 2020), this indicates a greater risk to children at home (and not in school). The COVID-19 closures placed abused spouses in situations where escape was all but impossible (Li & Schwartzapfel, 2020). Eventually, the mandated closures will end, and unemployment will drop as the country opens up. Although it may be different, life in America will resume, but the trauma children endured during this time of crisis may have long-lasting effects.

In the 1990s, Kaiser Permanente supported a study that investigated the connections between adverse childhood experiences (ACE) and long-term health outcomes. The study focused on traumatic childhood events: abuse, household challenges, and neglect. The study of 19,000 participants discovered more ACE events experienced. The participant was more likely to have health problems; addiction issues; chronic diseases; social problems; and social, emotional, and cognitive impairments (Felitti et al., 1998). Home setting risk factors, such as social isolation, family stress, separation or divorce, violence, and parenting stress, are of course exacerbated when schools close, "shelter in place" mandates get issued, and record unemployment occur together. Preventive measures need to be in place for students coping with the traumas of COVID-19, including "caring adults outside the family who can serve as role models or mentors" (CDC, 2020b, p. 2).

Conceptual Framework

The methodology and data analysis grounded the procedure of choosing a conceptual framework (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In the novel situation of the emergency mandated

COVID-19 closures, the framework chosen must allow participants to construct meaning from their experiences before and during closures (Leavy, 2017). Finding no existing framework that incorporated the unique aspects of this study, one was developed through two existing foundational frameworks.

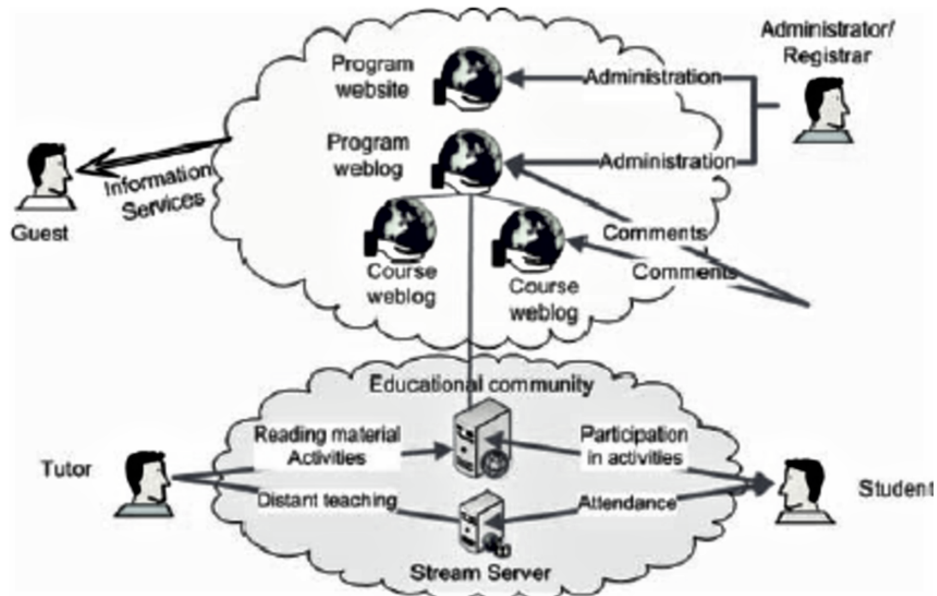
Foundational Frameworks

This study used a framework created from two existing frameworks: A Framework for Building Virtual Communities for Education (Varlamis & Apostolakis, 2006) and The Shannon-Weaver Model of Communication (Ma, 2015). The inherent limitations within each framework and the uniqueness of the current study necessitated this combination.

During the First European Technology Conference held in 2006 in Crete, Greece, Iraklis Varlamis and Ioannis Apostolaski introduced their framework for building virtual learning communities. The framework as illustrated in Figure 2 was intended to address the concept of open online or virtual classroom communities for professional learning that was novel at the time. The fundamental concepts of the framework defined the virtual learning community as a group of people who share an interest in education, meet regularly, and use the internet and technological infrastructures as their platform of communication. The framework identified those participating in the virtual learning community as students and educators. The success of this digital community was member participation and collaboration (Varlamis & Apostolakis, 2006). The framework assumed that all community members have equal access, computing knowledge, and motivation to access.

Figure 2

A Framework for Building Virtual Communities for Education

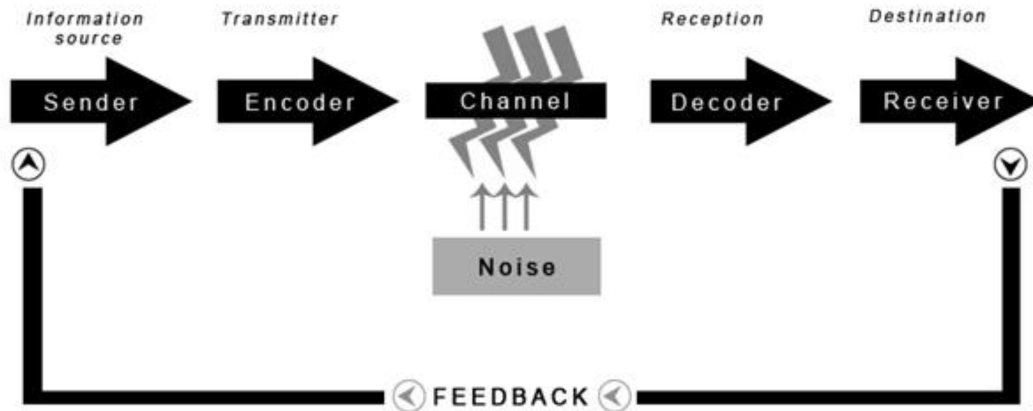


Note: Image from *A Framework for Building Virtual Communities for Education*, 2006, by I. Varlamis, and I. Apostolakis, Proceedings of the EC-TEL06 Workshops, Crete, Greece. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/221549657_A_Framework_for_Building_Virtual_Communities_for_Education. Copyright 2006 by I. Varlamis. Used with permission.

The Shannon-Weaver Model of Communication (Elwood, et al., 1949) framework sought to analyze the communication complications that might arise when machines communicate with one another. The framework, as illustrated in Figure 3, was a linear five-step process. The process included: the source of information, the encoding of the information, the channel by which the information was sent, the decoding of the information, and the information receiver. The unique addition in their model was the concept of noise within the communication process. In explaining the importance of this addition of noise, Ma indicated, “Noise causes information distortion” (Ma, 2015, p. 23).

Figure 3

Shannon-Weaver Model of Communication

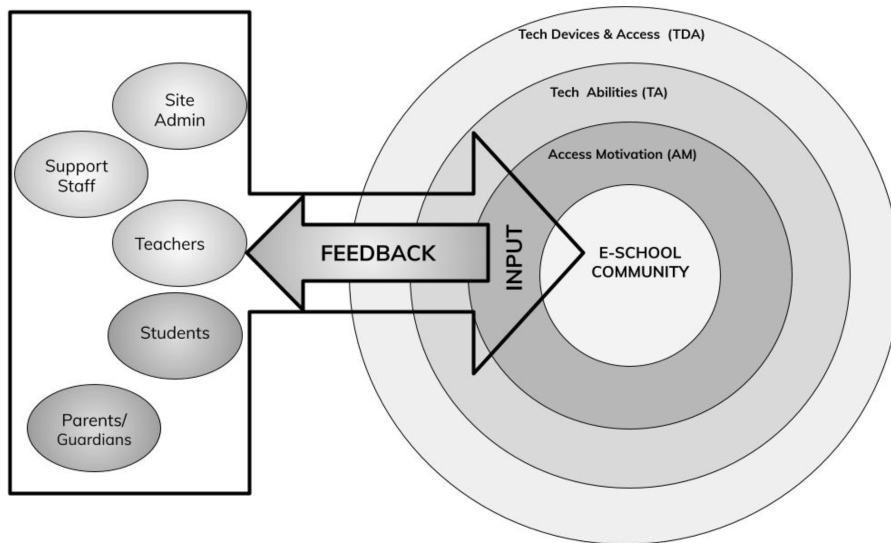


Note: Image from Shannon and Weaver Model of Communication, 2010, *Communication Theory*. https://www.communicationtheory.org/shannon-and-weaver-model-of-communication/. Copyright 2010 Communication Theory.

Investigations of the "noise" that distorts the virtual learning community addressed the limitations of the initial framework. Originally intended for communication between machines, the model has also been applied to the study of human-to-human communications through a technical lens. Although limitations arose when investigating human communications due to its lack of feedback within its unidirectional flow of information, the current study mitigated this limitation by including a feedback loop. These frameworks provided the necessary components to develop a framework able to capture the subject of the current study—a sudden transition from an in-person educational experience to an all-digital platform.

Figure 4

E-School Community Access and Engagement Conceptual Framework



Note: Conceptual framework adapted from *A Framework for Building Virtual Communities for Education*, 2006, by I. Varlamis and I. Apostolakis, *Proceedings of the EC-TEL06 Workshops, Crete, Greece,* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/221549657_A_Framework_for_Building_Virtual_Communities_for_Education; copyright 2006 by I. Varlamis. Used in combination the Shannon-Weaver Model of Communication by CommunicationTheory.org, 2010*;* copyright 2010 by Communication Theory.

E-School Community Framework

Combining the two frameworks resulted in the conceptual framework for the study. As seen in Figure 4, the framework illustrated the levels necessary to construct a community with its own culture and climate within the confines of a digital platform. The framework also addressed how some potential members might not fully engage in and contribute to the community. The developed conceptual framework accommodated learners of any age. This framework combined the students and teachers from Varlamis and Apostolakis (2006) with parents, school administrators, and other school staff. Since all students were under eighteen, parents and guardians were directly involved with their students' e-school community. Instead of the Shannon-Weaver Model's linear movement of information, each participant provided input into

the school community and received feedback from the community. These messages traveled along the communication feedback pathway through three possible barriers before delivery. Each level represents a type of "noise" that can distort or cancel participant communication.

Defining the Levels of Noise

In 2019, Melissa Bond and Svenja Bedenlier sought to create a conceptual framework of student engagement through educational technology. Utilizing the bioecological model of external influences developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, they investigated the microsystem of the classroom and the influence of educational technology in student engagement. Their resulting conceptual framework demonstrated the components required to facilitate student engagement through educational technology (Bond & Svenja, 2019). The conceptual framework developed for this study incorporated the necessary components within at least one level of noise.

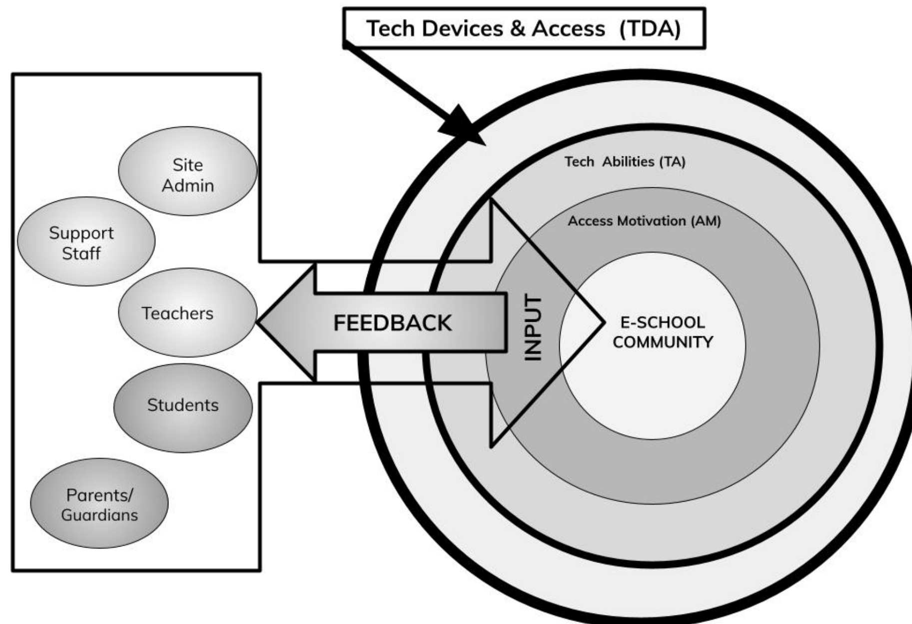
An additional contributing source for each noise level's development was higher education online readiness assessments. Developed for students to self-assess their readiness to be successful online learners, the assessments have students consider their understanding and comfort with technology, motivation for learning, and communication self-efficacy. Researchers investigating the impacts of online readiness developed a conceptual model to illustrate the interaction of e-learning factors and readiness factors in e-learning outcomes (Keramati & Masoud, 2011). Factors from this conceptual model were incorporated as well into the conceptual framework for this study.

Technological Devices and Access (TDA). Figure 5 shows the first barrier to the e-school community is equipment and the internet. Members must have access to a digital

device—smartphone, Chromebook, tablet, desktop, or laptop. The device needs to have internet capabilities and a reliable connection.

Figure 5

Technological Devices and Access Highlight



Note: Conceptual framework adapted from *A Framework for Building Virtual Communities for Education*, 2006, by I. Varlamis and I. Apostolakis, *Proceedings of the EC-TEL06 Workshops, Crete, Greece,* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/221549657_A_Framework_for_Building_Virtual_Communities_for_Education; copyright 2006 by I. Varlamis. Used in combination the Shannon-Weaver Model of Communication by CommunicationTheory.org, 2010*;* copyright 2010 by Communication Theory.

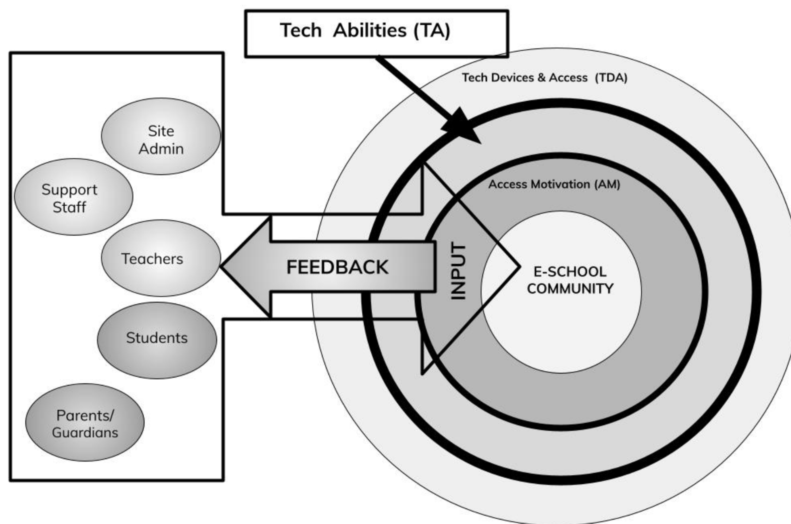
In 2017, 40% of school districts reported a one-to-one ratio of students to a computing device, with another 43% planning to reach that same ratio within three years (Cavanagh, 2018). If schools cannot provide devices, the responsibility transfers to the students' homes and their families. In February 2019, 54% of households with an annual income less than $30,000 owned a desktop or laptop computer compared to 94% of households earning $100,000 or more annually (Anderson & Kumar, 2019). Even with devices available, broadband access may present challenges for some households depending on income and location. While 94% of households

earning $100,000 or more had broadband access, only 56% of those earning less than $30,000 did (Anderson & Kumar, 2019). In suburban households, 79% had broadband compared to 75% in urban areas and 63% in rural homes (Vogels, 2021). As these statistics illustrate, the first level of noise may alienate those living in poverty or America's rural areas.

Technological Ability (TA). The second impediment, shown in Figure 6, to the e-school community is knowledge and comfort with the school's LMS. When students log into the platform, they need to be savvy enough to navigate the site, access their live video classes, and submit their assignments. Parents must track their children's academic progress and communicate with the teachers and other school staff. Teachers are obligated to create interactive lessons, host synchronous video lessons, and communicate effectively with students, parents, and other school staff.

Figure 6

Technological Ability Highlight



Note: Conceptual framework adapted from *A Framework for Building Virtual Communities for Education*, 2006, by I. Varlamis and I. Apostolakis, *Proceedings of the EC-TEL06 Workshops, Crete, Greece,* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/221549657_A_Framework_for_Building_Virtual_Communities_for_Education; copyright 2006 by I. Varlamis. Used in combination the Shannon-Weaver Model of Communication by CommunicationTheory.org, 2010*;* copyright 2010 by Communication Theory.

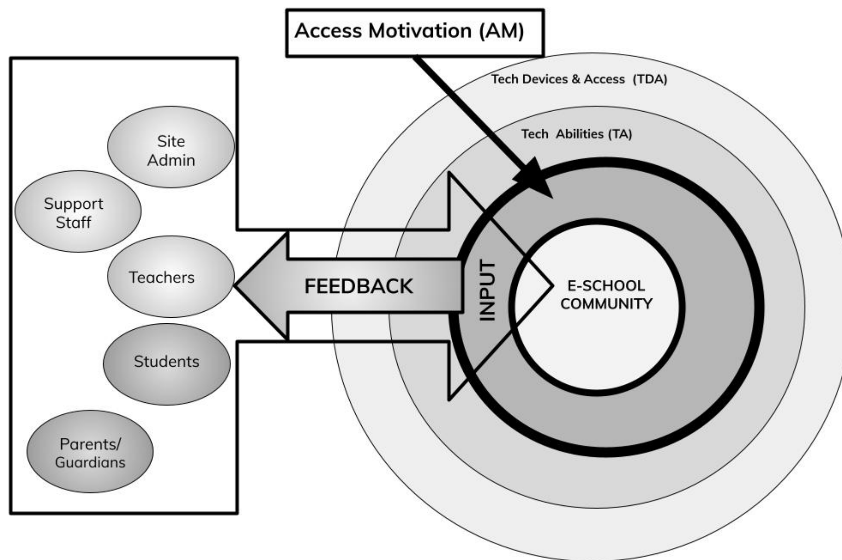
When LEA leaders decided what educational technology to purchase, the priority for 64% of respondents to the 2017 Consortium for School Networking survey was up-front cost, followed by 62% stating that sustainability mattered “a lot.” Student accessibility was third in consideration with 54%. The vendor’s level of technical support impacted 30% of leaders’ purchasing decisions “a lot,” 40% “some,” and 20% “a little” (Maylahn, 2017). When price and substantiality are of greater importance than student accessibility and technical supports, difficulties may be discovered at this level.

Access Motivation (AM). Unlike in-person compulsory education, students in an e-school community can choose whether or not to log on to the LMS. Figure 7 highlights this

section of the conceptual framework. Students choose to turn on their cameras, comment in class, or actively engage in the lesson in synchronous video lessons.

Figure 7

Access Motivation Highlight



Note: Conceptual framework adapted from *A Framework for Building Virtual Communities for Education*, 2006, by I. Varlamis and I. Apostolakis, *Proceedings of the EC-TEL06 Workshops, Crete, Greece,* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/221549657_A_Framework_for_Building_Virtual_Communities_for_Education; copyright 2006 by I. Varlamis. Used in combination the Shannon-Weaver Model of Communication by CommunicationTheory.org, 2010*;* copyright 2010 by Communication Theory.

As mentioned earlier, *The Student Engagement Framework* created by Bond and Svenja (2019) cited three indicators of student engagement—cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Students display cognitive engagement through learning from peers, critical thinking, focus, and reflection. For effective engagement, students have enthusiasm, be curious, possess a sense of wellbeing, and connect to the school and within the classroom. When students develop a sense of agency, are confident, assume responsibility, support their peers, and access course materials, they display behavioral engagement (Bond & Svenja, 2019). When examining motivation to

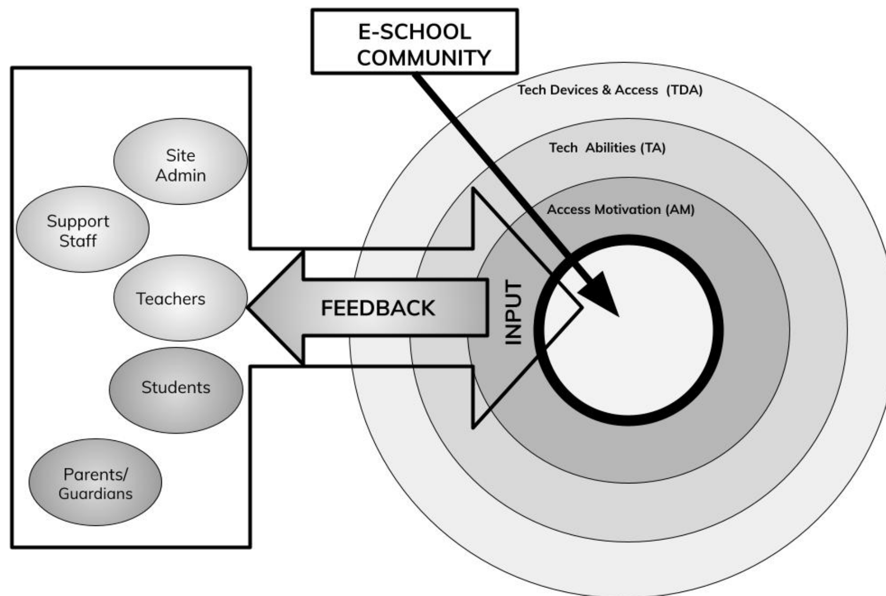
access, student engagement provides signals as to whether students are motivated to access the e-school community.

E-School Community

Based upon the definition provided by Varlamis and Apostolakis's (2006) framework for building virtual communities for education, an e-school community is a culture, climate, and relationship formed within the virtual space of the online school. This space, delineated in Figure 8, is not one in the physical world due to its virtual aspect with its actions and communications taking place within the digital realm. As Varlamis and Apostolakis's (2006) framework mentioned, this community's success depends on the engagement and collaboration of those involved. Since the community members create the e-school community, each virtual learning community can be unique to those who create it. Wenger (1998) emphasized that "communities of practice sprout everywhere" (p. 6), a community defines itself through engagement.

Figure 8

E-School Community Highlight



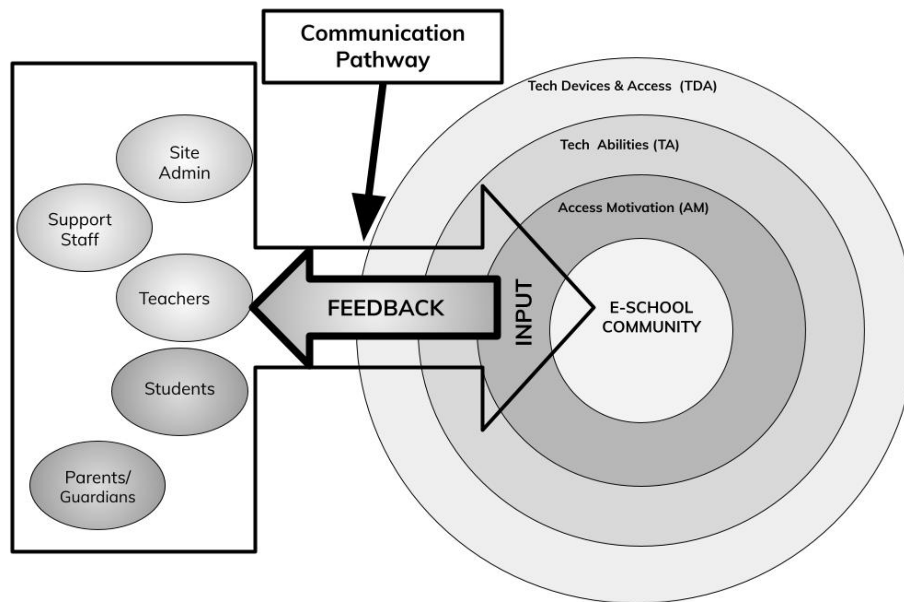
Note: Conceptual framework adapted from *A Framework for Building Virtual Communities for Education*, 2006, by I. Varlamis and I. Apostolakis, *Proceedings of the EC-TEL06 Workshops, Crete, Greece,* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/221549657_A_Framework_for_Building_Virtual_Communities_for_Education; copyright 2006 by I. Varlamis. Used in combination the Shannon-Weaver Model of Communication by CommunicationTheory.org, 2010*;* copyright 2010 by Communication Theory.

Communication Pathway

The communication pathway, Figure 9, charts the communication in and out of the e-school community. These communications must overcome the levels of noise to be able to interact with those in the e-school community. Feedback from the e-school community also travels to the members of the community via the communication pathway.

Figure 9

Communication Pathway Highlight



Note: Conceptual framework adapted from *A Framework for Building Virtual Communities for Education*, 2006, by I. Varlamis and I. Apostolakis, *Proceedings of the EC-TEL06 Workshops, Crete, Greece,* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/221549657_A_Framework_for_Building_Virtual_Communities_for_Education; copyright 2006 by I. Varlamis. Used in combination the Shannon-Weaver Model of Communication by CommunicationTheory.org, 2010*;* copyright 2010 by Communication Theory.

Conclusion

The literature has described the vital importance of community in the lives of students. It has included how that community can be fostered and the benefits to students when they experience a sense of community. This chapter investigated the evolution of distance teaching and online learning. Additionally, there was a discussion of the 1918 Flu Pandemic and ongoing emergency closures of California schools. The impacts of childhood trauma and its link to the current COVID-19 pandemic were explored. Finally, the conceptual framework unpinning this study was defined and explained. The consequent chapter will detail this study's design and methods.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

A clear, descriptive map guides one's journey; so too, a study's methodology. The following provides the rationale for and characteristics of a qualitative case study to investigate the impacts of mandatory emergency COVID-19 closure on the school community of a Los Angeles middle school. A description of the research plan introduces the site selected and participants from the site, followed by data collection and analysis choices. Finally, a discussion of the trustworthiness of this study concludes the chapter.

Research Question

This study sought to explore answers to the following research question:

How did mandatory school closure and the resulting rapid shift to emergency distance learning transform the school community at a Title 1 middle school?

Qualitative Methodology

A qualitative research design is an appropriate choice when encountering a novel phenomenon and seeking to form a deeper understanding of this phenomenon (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). Based on an individual or a community's unique experiences, qualitative research aims to understand how participants interpret these experiences, how the experiences impact their lives, and what meanings arise from their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research is usually interpretive in that it assumes the social construction of reality through multiple perspectives. This variety in points-of-view constructs a collective, subjective meaning of an event, experience, or phenomenon.

Each encounter between participants within their natural settings can provide data for the researcher (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Mills & Gay, 2019). As the primary source of data collection, the researcher utilizing a qualitative design gathers data by administering interviews, reviewing documents, conducting observations, and participating directly. Finally, qualitative research uses inductive reasoning to construct themes or theories based on the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Mills & Gay, 2019).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the nature of the school community impacted by a mandatory emergency COVID-19 closure, an event that has no precursor in modern memory. This study sought to reveal how participants formed and experienced community before and during the emergency mandated COVID-19 school closure. Because this research relied on data mainly collected through interviews, it required interpretation by the researcher to take these subjective views and construct them into an understanding of the reality of the experience. Due to the scope and purpose of this study, a qualitative research design was the most appropriate choice.

The broad field of qualitative research designs necessitated a further specification of choices. Narrative design's focus, on one or just a few experiences, furnished too narrow a scope for this study's intent. COVID-19 restrictions of social distancing created barriers to performing an ethnographic field study. To best serve this study's aim of capturing a moment in time as experienced by several participants, a qualitative case study design contained the necessary characteristics (Mills & Gay, 2019).

Case Study Methodology

As defined by Yin (2018), "Case study is an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within its real-world context" (p. 15). A case study is appropriate when "the researcher is interested in studying process" (Mills & Gay, 2019, p. 405). The case study requires the choice of a closed event or phenomenon, the "case." To be closed, the case must be bound by a specific space and time (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Mills & Gay, 2019; Yin, 2018). The subject of this study was defined as a case since it was bound to a specific location—a single middle school—and by time—March 13, 2020, to May 29, 2020, the dates of the emergency mandatory COVID-19 closure of schools. The case, or unit of analysis, makes the case study unique as the variables in the phenomenon cannot be separated from their context without a loss of meaning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Mills & Gay, 2019; Yin, 2018). This case study contained particular variables from the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic with the focal point of the community during this crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic allowed respondents to construct contextualized meanings of a community before and throughout the mandatory emergency school closures crisis. Due to the bound nature of place and time, the phenomenon's unique variables and the participant construction of meaning provided the necessary case study components.

Site Selection

The site chosen for this case study was a Los Angeles County middle school serving approximately 500 students, grades six through eight. I employed the pseudonym Coleman Arts Magnet Academy to preserve the specific school site and the participants' anonymity. The term Local Educational Agency (LEA) replaced the particular name of the school district.

School Dynamics

By the Numbers

Coleman Junior High School (pseudonym), according to the plaque located at its entrance, opened in 1931. In 2013, the local school district petitioned for and won a 7.9-million-dollar magnet grant; Coleman Middle School was reborn as Coleman Arts Magnet School (U.S. Department of Education, 2021a). According to the California Department of Education 2019-2020 School Accountability Report Card, the school enrolled 503 students in grades six, seven, and eight. In the student population, 19.7% identified as African American, 64% as Hispanic/ Latino, and 9.5% as Caucasian. Socioeconomically disadvantaged students comprised 76.5% of the school's population. Within this population, 11.3% enrolled as English Language Learners, and 20.9% qualified for special education services. Foster youth represented 4.8% of the population. Another 4.8% of students were classified as homeless. Of the 25 teachers at Coleman, all but one was fully credentialed. At the time of the study, one faculty position was vacant. The school had passed its annual Williams Review with a grade of "good," meaning facilities and educational materials were sufficient. Although canceled for the 2019-2020 school year, for the 2018-2019 state assessments, 24% of the students tested proficient in English Language Arts and 14% in mathematics. Although no students were expelled from the school during the 2019-2020 school year, 17.1% of the students were suspended at least once (California Department of Education, 2020).

School Community and Communication Practices

As Coleman's Response to Intervention (RTI) coach, I had firsthand experience with the school community and its communication practices. Before the mandated closures, the school

site provided during- and after-school opportunities for involvement to teachers, students, and parents. Student and parent referral services were made available on the campus. Several outside agencies engaged in providing other art experiences for students. The school administration provided staff with weekly bulletins and sent parents a weekly update through email and phone messages. The school's Student Information System, Aeries, offered parents and teachers many ways to communicate student progress.

Researcher Site Connections

The LEA has employed me for 23 years, with the past five years at Coleman. During my tenure at Coleman, I have been the assistant principal, a classroom teacher, and the Response to Intervention behavioral coach. My position at Coleman and within the LEA provided me with access to district and site COVID-19 communications. Additionally, I had access to teachers, administration, other staff, and parents. The next section will address data accessed at the site.

Data

Driven by respondent interviews, data collection also included district and site documents and my responses to the interview protocol. The following sections more fully describe the data collected.

Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews to understand the effects of the COVID-19 emergency mandated school closure on the school community. Semi-structured interviews are preferred for this type of study because they enable the participants to address specific topics and give the researcher leeway to respond to the participants' information and delve deeper into their responses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Interview protocols followed a template of three specific topic areas:

1. Historical Perspective—What were the participant's experiences with communication and the school community before the mandated closure?
2. Details of the lived experience—What was the participant's understanding of communication and community during the mandated closure?
3. Reflection on Expectations—Looking back at what was before and what occurred during the mandated closure, what were the participant's reactions, reflections, and takeaways?

Seidman's (2019) three-interview format inspired the creation of a three-sectioned interview protocol. Time constraints influenced the decision to utilize a more concise interview format. Interview protocols allowed each respondent to disclose similar information and gave a structure to the interview procedure. This study's conceptual framework informed the choice of questions included. Table 1 delineates the areas of the conceptual framework addressed by each question from the interview protocols. For reference, please locate protocols in Appendixes A through E.

Table 1

Framework and Protocol Through Line

	"Noise" Levels			
Protocols	Tech Access	Tech Ability	Motivation & Mental Health	School Community
Teachers	H 1 L 1, 2, 6, 8 R 1, 2, 4, 8	H 1 L1, 2, 5, 6, 8 R 1, 2, 4, 7, 8	H 4, 5, 6 L 5, 6, 7, 8 R 2, 4, 6, 7, 8	H 2, 3, 4, 5 L 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 R 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
Parents	H 5 L 1, 2, 6, 7 R 1, 3, 5	H 5 L 1, 2, 6, 7 R 1, 3, 5	H 6 L 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 R 2, 3, 4, 5	H 1, 2, 3, 4 L 4, 5, 6 R 2, 5
Site Admin	H 3 L 1. 4, 5 R 1, 2, 3, 8	H 3 L 1, 4, 5 R 1, 2, 3, 8	H 6 L 1, 5, 6 R 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8	H 1, 2, 4, 5 L 2, 3 R 1, 5, 8
Site Tech	H 3, 4, 5 L 1, 4, 5, 6 R 1, 2, 3, 7	H 3, 4, 5 L 1, 4, 5, 6 R 1, 2, 3, 7	H 6 L 4, 5, 7 R 3, 6, 7	H 1, 2, 3 L 2, 3, 6 R 4, 5, 7
School Psych	H 4 L 1, 5 R 1, 2, 3, 8	H 4 L 1, 5 R 1, 2, 3, 8	H 5, 6 L 6, 7 R 3, 4, 6, 7	H 1, 2, 3 L 2, 3 R 5, 8

Note:
H = *Historical Perspective*—before the closure
L = *Lived Experience*—during the closure
R = *Reflections and Expectations*—on closure experience and the future

To better understand the changes during the case study, all interview question protocols began with a historical section, creating a baseline against which to compare any alterations to the school community caused by the emergency COVID-19 school closures. Next, protocols explored participants' lived experiences in Spring 2020; i.e., the timeframe of the emergency distance learning due to school closure. I categorized these experiences into three levels: "noise," the community experience, and academic-social impact. Third, participants reflected on their experiences during and after COVID-19 school closures. Finally, participants commented on their views about the pandemic's possible impacts on the future of education and schooling.

Due to the interviews' semi-structured nature, the protocols collected sufficient data for analysis. All participants responded to the protocols' foundational questions, while some furnished data not explicitly requested by the protocols.

Participants received, reviewed, and signed a consent form before their interviews. I provided the opportunity for questions and clarification of the consent form with each participant at the beginning of their interview to ensure understanding. I reminded each person that participation was voluntary. They could skip any question and end the interview at any time without explanation. Due to social distancing in effect, I held interviews via video conferencing. All participants were informed that the video conference sessions were recorded for purposes of transcription, and then stored securely on the Zoom platform and erased to be erased at the conclusion of the study. I emailed participants a ten-dollar Starbucks gift card after conducting their interviews.

All participants were assigned with a pseudonym. In compliance with the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA) (1988; U.S. Department of Education, 2021b) information linking data to a specific student has been altered. When interviewing the school psychologist, both the guidelines of FERPA and the *Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act* (HIPAA) (1996; CDC, 2018) were followed. Before coding the responses, I provided participants with copies of their transcripts. Participants had the opportunity to retract, clarify, or elaborate on specific comments made during the interview, decide they no longer wanted to be included in the study, or approve the transcript. If necessary, any transcript adjustments were reviewed and approved by the participants. All participants were over eighteen years old and included five teachers, eight parents (referred by the teacher participants), the

school psychologist, site instructional coach, and school principal. This process was captured in a track chart. This chart can be viewed as Appendix F.

Teachers

Teachers who participated in the study worked at Coleman during the period of the case study. I emailed Coleman's faculty and received positive responses from ten teachers. Of those ten, five agreed to participate and had time available to do so. Table 2 provides identifying information for each teacher. I have not identified the specific subjects taught but, instead, have classified their subjects as core, special education, or elective to increase anonymity. Core subjects included mathematics, English language arts, science, and history.

Table 2

Teacher Participant Information

Pseudonym	Grade Taught	Subject	Years at Coleman	Years Teaching
Johnathan	8th	Core	22	20+ years
Dianne	6th	Core	2	2
Renee	6th,7th, & 8th	Elective	4	5+
Jenny	6th,7th, & 8th	Special Education	4	10+
Gabriella	7th	Core	1	15+

I held teacher interviews between July 20, 2020, and July 31, 2020. Each interview lasted between ninety minutes and two hours. After each interview, I requested the teachers provide the names of parents who might participate in my study. On October 9, 2020, I emailed individual transcripts to each teacher participant for corrections, clarifications, or questions. They were asked to respond to the transcripts before October 26, 2020. No teacher participants altered their transcription.

Parents

Parent interviews focused on their experiences and those of their children before, during, and after the emergency COVID-19 school closures. Once identified through a teacher interview, I emailed an interview request to the parent. Of the twelve parents I emailed, ten interviews were scheduled but only eight were conducted due to outside circumstances. One of the prospective parents ended communication, and the other decided not to participate. I conducted parent interviews from July 25 to August 3, 2020. Parent interviews lasted forty-five to ninety minutes and included time for a post-interview debrief. On October 9, 2020, I emailed parent participants their transcripts for review, correction, or deletion. Valencia responded to the email to correct one phrase; no other parents responded.

Table 3 identifies the parent participants by their assigned pseudonym and by their child or children's grade level or levels. Additionally, I have included a child's participation in special programs such as special education or English Language Development.

Table 3

Parent Participant Information

Pseudonym	Number of students enrolled	Grade Level(s)	Special Programs
Gwen	2 – twins	6th	504 Plan; Honors
Sage	1	7th	Honors
Petrona	1	7th	Honors
Tasha	2	7th & 8th	Special Education, Honors
Felipa	1	8th	Honors
Valencia	1	7th	Special Education, English Language Development
Trini	1	7th	Honors
Belinda	2	6th & 7th	Special Education

School Psychologist

Understanding the mental health concerns and services at Coleman was vital to the scope of my study. I emailed Coleman's full-time psychologist on July 19, 2020, with my request for an interview. Herminia (a pseudonym) worked for the LEA for more than twenty years. She worked at both high school and middle school in her career and transferred to Coleman seven years ago. She provided mental health services and conducted special education evaluations for the site and district. I interviewed her on July 24, 2020, and her interview lasted over two hours. I provided her with the transcript of her interview on November 30, 2020. She did not have any corrections or alterations to the transcript.

Site Instructional Coach/Technology Leader

Since the emergency mandated COVID-19 closure of public schools, most school community communication required technology. As schools moved to distance teaching, teachers learned how to construct lessons and experiences through online platforms. Since the instructional coach at Coleman is also one of the technology leaders on campus, I emailed her on July 19, 2020, to request an interview. On July 21, 2020, I interviewed Shaunna (a pseudonym) for over two hours. She received her transcripts on August 10, 2020. She did not have any corrections.

Site Administrator

As the site leader for the past five years, the principal's perspective was critical for understanding Coleman's transition to emergency distance teaching. Principal Middleton was unavailable until August 2020. I held Principal Middleton's interview on August 4, 2020, and we

talked for over two hours. On October 10, 2020, I emailed her transcripts. In an email on October 25, 2020, she conveyed her satisfaction with her transcript.

Documents

To confirm participants' recollections of the period of this case, I sought documents distributed by Coleman and its LEA. These documents included district-wide updates and news releases, school site updates, and other communication. Due to the timing of my requests, online teacher classrooms were no longer active, but I was able to view several lesson plans created during Spring 2020. As a participant researcher, I participated in the staff chat referenced by some of the school site participants. I also reviewed more informal emails sent and received during this time.

Researcher Protocol Responses

As a participant at Coleman during the case study period, this study included my perspective as the third aspect of triangulation. I answered the teacher, and the coach interview protocols. Chapter 4 contains data from my responses to the protocols. The addition of my voice allowed me to examine my contributions to the culture studied and provided an autobiographical lens to the data (Merriam & Tisedell, 2016; Mills & Gay, 2019).

Data Management

The method for the data analysis followed the six-step process outlined by Merriam and Tisedell (2016), as paraphrased here:

1. Focus on the purpose of the study.
2. View the data through the lens of the study's framework.
3. Read data searching for "patterns and insights" (p. 208).

4. Search for themes from the patterns.
5. Reread the data for theme confirmation.
6. Combine and streamline categories.

Leavy (2017) agreed with beginning in this manner, explaining, “Your approach to coding should be linked to your research purpose and research question” (p. 151). When preparing my interview protocols, I connected each question to one or more conceptual framework areas. The participants’ responses created a guided pathway to investigate the data.

My positionality required particular attention within all phases of the coding process. For the coding process to be heuristic, I embraced the data with an open mind, exploring the phenomenon through others’ perspectives. This inquiry process was data-driven, following a step-by-step cyclical process (Kuckartz, 2019). The following sections will describe the coding procedures I followed to understand the phenomenon better and answer my research question.

Preliminary Data Analysis

The first stage of this process required intimate knowledge and understanding of the data collected. Using the transcription machine created by the Zoom platform necessitated careful examination to guard against misquoting participants. This process allowed me to become more familiar with participants’ responses and to create analytical memos (Saldaña, 2016). The second read of the data used *in vivo* coding, which involved coding responses by using “a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 105). Figure 10 illustrates the analytical steps taken to interpret the collected data.

Figure 10

Analytical Procedure

Discovery of Themes

Before I began to sort most of the interview data, I constructed a community definition formulated by participants' words. Within their definition, three themes emerged: caring support, continuous communication, and active engagement. Merriam and Tisedell (2016) proposed a four-part criterion for theme construction. The criteria included expansive enough themes to capture the relevant data, exclusive enough to capture specific units of data, sensitive to the data, and "at the same level of abstraction" (p. 213). The themes generated by the participant definition of a community met all criteria.

Coding by Themes

Using these themes, I created a chronological outline beginning with the community before the school closures. I then coded data particular to the transition to online teaching. The final section explored participant experience during the emergency COVID-19 school closures in Spring 2020. Each theme illuminated aspects of the conceptual framework.

Trustworthiness

Human lives and interactions are constantly in flux; therefore, it would be difficult to draw upon universal laws or understandings when analyzing data produced during a qualitative case study (Seidman, 2019). I addressed concerns of trustworthiness through numerous strategies detailed in Shenton's framework (2004).

Credibility

I adopted a case study for this research project due to the phenomenon's bounded nature (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Mills & Gay, 2019; Yin, 2018). The perimeters provided by using a case study bracketed the specific time frame of the COVID-19 closures, focusing a worldwide pandemic on one public middle school's particular actions and reactions. This school site's choice provided me with a more in-depth familiarity with the participants and the culture before and during the closures. The relationships formed between the participants and the researcher is believed to have contributed to a level of honest exchange perhaps not available to a researcher less familiar with the community. I incorporated semi-structured interview protocols to provide structure and allow participants to elaborate on their answers.

The triangulation of data provided another aspect of credibility to my study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated, "Triangulation remains a principal strategy to ensure validity and reliability" (p. 246). I used the triangulation of different data collection methods and various informants (Shenton, 2004). This case study collected data from interviews, documents, and my responses to the protocols. Document collection was from several sources to support data triangulation (Leavy, 2017). I interviewed participants representing many perspectives of the

phenomenon, allowing for connection, comparison, and corroboration (Seidman, 2019; Shenton, 2004).

Because of my enrollment in a doctoral program at Loyola Marymount University (LMU), my chair and cohort peers assisted in reading, analyzing, and disseminating my work. The other members of my committee supported me, as did professors and LMU staff. This broad spectrum of individuals contributed to debrief sessions and peer review of my work in all stages of the writing process (Shenton, 2004). My educational experiences at LMU, in conjunction with my completion of Ethics and Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training, gave me the skills needed to complete this study.

My responses to the interview protocols provided a transparent declaration of my positionality towards the phenomenon and my progression through the process of investigation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Disclosing my positionality as a participant researcher signals awareness of biases that might influence data analysis.

Participants received a copy of their interview transcript for clarifications and corrections, providing respondent validation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Shenton, 2004). Shenton (2004) stated that this process offered informants the opportunity to ensure "their words match what they actually intended" and to propose "reasons for particular patterns observed by the researcher" (p. 68).

Transferability

Although qualitative studies investigate data specific to the environments and participants involved (Shenton, 2004), this study embraced a worldwide phenomenon. This study's time frame incorporated March 16, 2020, when COVID-19 shuttered schools, to May 28, 2020, when

the 2019-2020 school year ended. The setting for the case study occurred in one public middle school located in northern Los Angeles County. Los Angeles County hosts over twenty school districts in the northern part of the county, many of which have two or more middle schools (Los Angeles County, Office of Education, 2021). The study had a fixed number of participants, each chosen to illuminate the roles they held during this time. These were positions found in most public schools—principal, teacher, school psychologist, and parent. This study would be considered transferable due to selecting participants, location, and the study's time frame (Shenton, 2004).

Dependability

Techniques used in the investigation of a case study were followed throughout this study and delineated in this chapter. I have detailed my choices of participants, the site, and documents. The interview protocols, although semi-structured, followed Seidman's (2019) three-part protocol incorporating history before the phenomenon, actions during the phenomenon, and reactions towards the phenomenon. Data analysis proceeded through levels of narrowing cycles. Each cycle of analysis depended upon the finding discovered through prior scrutiny of the data set.

Confirmability

Some of my actions described in the prior sections led to confirmability. My selection of respondents and documents ensured the triangulation of data. Throughout this study, I explicitly described my positionality. To provide additional confirmability, I created a case study database to organize and track my data usage (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Shenton, 2004).

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the world to unchartered territory. To capture its impact upon the community of one middle school, I utilized a qualitative case study to guide the inquiry. Representatives of the community engaged in semi-structured interviews about their experiences, supportive documentations were collected, and the researcher's recollections were included. Proceedings followed standards to ensure the trustworthiness of me and my actions. The following chapter reveals the results discovered along this journey.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of my study was to compare the participants' descriptions of the school community before COVID-19 emergency school closures to their stories and reflections afterward. I composed snapshots of the school culture before closures, the actions that built the culture, and how the closures transformed the culture. To explore this phenomenon, I employed the following research question:

> How did a mandatory school closure and a rapid shift to emergency distance teaching transform the school community at a Los Angeles County public middle school?

For this study, I interviewed 16 participants in July 2020. Due to COVID-19 precautions, I conducted all interviews over the Internet using the Zoom (www.zoom.us) platform. Zoom transcripts were generated during the interviews. Participants then inspected for correctness. The average time of an interview varied depending on the type of participant. For example, parent interviews lasted approximately one hour. Teacher and other staff interviews were typically 90 to 120 minutes long. I interviewed eight parents who represented 11 students enrolled during Spring 2020. Teachers included one from each grade level, one special education teacher, and an elective teacher. Other school staff participants included the school's psychologist, instructional coach, and principal. Additionally, as a participant researcher, I utilized the interview protocols to shape my contributions to the data collection process.

Thematically organized, this chapter includes themes that emerged through participant interviews centered on emergency COVID-19 school closures. I explored participants'

experiences of the Coleman school community before, during, and after COVID-19 closures to construct a collective response to my research question.

Participant Definition of Community

All participant interviews began by asking what characteristics make a community. Responses reflected three themes of community: caring support, continuous communication, and active engagement. When describing *caring support*, participants used descriptors such as love, family, help, care for each other, friendship, and benefit for all. Participants expressed that having a connection and sharing ideas with others through *continuous communication* was valuable in their community. Participants described working with others towards a common goal as *active engagement*. These themes guided my organization and analysis of collected data.

Community Characteristics Before COVID-19 Emergency Closures

A thematic organization of interview data revealed participants' definitions of a community including three themes: caring support, communication, engagement. These three themes guided the analysis of the data. The following section utilizes these themes to investigate the school community before the COVID-19 emergency closure.

Theme 1: Caring Support

All participants stated that care was a critical descriptor of a community in general, and that this topic surfaced in their description of Coleman's community. One parent, Belinda, stated, "I think that Coleman has done an outstanding job of going out of their way to make sure that everyone feels included, has a space, feels comfortable, and that's what I really appreciate about the staff." Jennifer, a special education teacher, echoed this sentiment by saying, "It was . . . it was structured. It was a safe place." Valencia, another parent, described the school community as

“very friendly. I felt comfortable talking to people.” Trini, parent to a seventh grader, explained, “It’s been very proactive; it’s always looking for the best for the students and for the parents and for everyone.” This comfort and care extended to how Gwen, a parent of sixth-grade twins, described her view of the school community and family: “Mentorship for me. I mean, I had people that had my back there, as I tried to parent” (Gwen). Sage, parent to a seventh-grade student, had similar opinions. She expressed, “I would describe our school community as close-knit. . . . A supportive environment. A family-like atmosphere” (Sage). Principal Middleton chose “loving” and “caring” as two of three words to describe her school’s community.

Not all participants shared that care extended to all parts of the school community. The school psychologist, Herminia, reported that some parts of the school community were “stagnated” and “the communication at E is weak. I think there are sectors of the community that have a specific agenda, and there are other sections that are not invested in the main goal, which is children.” Drama and ELD teacher, Renee, described the school community as “fractured,” which was supported by the instructional coach, Shauna, the instructional coach, explained, “There were communities within the community.” Shauna added that most students might find a community on campus, but “because we have a transient population because of group homes and living situations we have, some students never form that community.” Felipa was the only parent to voice this concern as she discussed the division of parents within the community. Those who could not donate time on campus felt disconnected from the care community. Filipa drew these conclusions as a parent and from her past employment at the school.

Peer Supports Within Teaching Staff

In my teaching experiences at Coleman and at another school site, I found that teaching in a middle school setting can be very siloed due to the segregation of subjects and grades. At Coleman, all teachers experienced some level of support from their peers. Depending on their support needs, teachers knew how to direct their requests. Gabriella, a core 7th grade teacher, enjoyed communicating with many other teachers about student engagement, instruction, and any other concerns. “I was able to communicate with a lot of them and share information and ideas to help each other feel supported” (Gabriella). Johnathan, an 8th grade teacher, felt that teachers had an “open policy,” which allowed him to feel secure when asking for assistance. “I know I can go into your classroom and ask for something, and you won’t snarl at me or say no… We’re friendly people” (Johnathan).

Dianne acknowledged that although she would not reach out to all staff, “I know that if I need support with my content, with behavior, with classroom management, whatever it is, I know who to go to.” Jenny appreciated the support she received from teachers who attended her students’ IEP meetings as most did not teach her students. Jenny worked to ensure the sessions were relevant to general education teachers by providing snacks and ensuring well-utilized time. The school psychologist focused her peer relationships on professionalism, stating, “My personal relationships with each person, I think, is based on respect and communication and is basically professional. . . . I have good boundaries.” The instructional coach, Shaunna, provided a safe space for teachers,

> I think a lot of the teachers felt that they could come to me with problems that they couldn't go to administration with because I'm in their union . . . if they were having an instructional issue or an issue with a student, we could talk about it and brainstorm.

Although Renee felt supported by some of her fellow teachers when they participated in school productions, she still viewed the staff as "very divided" due to a reluctance to deal with conflict. She provided an example of a staff meeting discussion on students wearing the hoods of their sweatshirts during class. The staff, divided on how to resolve this issue, left the meeting without a clear direction. The lack of unity further fractured the staff. Renee stated, "you get people making statements like 'Well, you, I'm not such and such teacher, and they do things very differently in their class,' but it's said in a way that's divisive, not like respectful." Students and parents reported comments made by others on the staff. She felt "like we're not unified at all" (Renee). Jenny also felt "There are a lot of people that are in burnout." Like Renee, Jenny noticed that all staff do "not embrace the trauma-informed care philosophy" promoted by the school. She concluded, "Not everybody's going to care" (Jenny). Johnathan remarked that although he assisted newer teachers, he also believed that they should "figure it out" themselves. The staff was not always supportive or harmonious, but teachers-built support within their chosen peer groups.

Administrative Supports for Staff

Administration guided the rest of the school staff and set school priorities. As the direct supervisor to teachers and other staff, administrative support shaped much of the adult community at the school site. Principal Middleton began her tenure at Coleman Arts in February 2015 as the interim principal. The year prior, she served as LEA's magnet coordinator, assisting

Coleman's transition to an arts magnet school. Principal Middleton was "able to observe the disconnect and mistrust that existed on the school site." These observations set her course. She stated, "I knew that one of the first things that needed to be established was a sense of trust" because staff, teachers, office, and custodial workers had experienced "incomplete and sometimes abusive" leadership that produced "a lot of trauma" (Middleton). She wanted the staff to know that she was reliable and that she "was someone who was going to care about them and hear them. Listen to them" (Middleton). Five years later, when answering the questions for this study, the staff responses on administrative support demonstrated that she built successful professional and personal relationships with staff.

Teachers experienced varying levels of support from the administration. Gabriella worked at Coleman for 1 year but, "I felt like I had been there for a long time. So, yes, very supported." Johnathan indicated that he "had all the support I needed." Jenny credited the community at Coleman to the leadership and the leadership team, stating, "The community at Coleman is, it starts with the leadership," following with, "I felt 100% support in all areas." She then described support in her IEP meetings, conversations with parents, and negotiations with the LEA to secure necessary interventions for her students. Dianne felt secure that if she needed something, "I know who the go-tos are if I need help." Renee believed, "there are some key players on the Coleman campus that are supportive." She also voiced, "Overall, I don't feel like the teachers feel very supported at Coleman, and I have felt very unsupported many times in my career there" (Renee). In her follow-up example, she described the annual goal-setting procedure at Coleman; she and an administrator set goals for the year. Once set, she asked, "How much follow-up or support throughout the year to make sure you're actually working towards this to

get the support you need to achieve them? There's none. That's the sad truth, like none, zero" (Renee). She believed that this lack of follow-through "brings the morale down among staff and then when staff doesn't want to be there, they start not showing up, they get sick" (Renee). The majority of teachers experienced administrative support at Coleman before the closure.

The school psychologist and the instructional coach felt supported due to the administration's trust that they were well qualified for their position. Herminia, the school psychologist, stated, "I feel very supported by Coleman. I think it's based on mutual respect and also the fact that I do my job." She was relieved that the school provided a permanent therapeutic space when she arrived at Coleman. "I created my own space. I painted it. I decorated it because I spent a lot of time there" (Herminia). At her former school site, she had to continually "fight for space" (Herminia). Seemingly simple materials that she needed to do her job demonstrated administrative support to Herminia. When she compared her situation to those of other school psychologists, she said "I hear other stories of other psychologists that even for a piece of paper and stuff, they have to beg, or they are denied" (Herminia). Her past experiences informed her concept of administrative support.

Shaunna, the instructional coach, reported inconsistent administrative support. She stated, "I felt supported in the sense that I was trusted to do my job. So, for the most part, I wasn't micromanaged by the admin," but she added, "I didn't feel supported because we couldn't put policies and procedures in place. So, for a lot of the things I was doing, it was extra work" (Shaunna). These extra duties diminished the time and energy she devoted to teacher professional development training, data chats, and other ongoing support projects for the staff. Without the structures in place, teachers would plan to be in training but there would be no class

coverage. Shaunna believed that “teachers were angry because they had done sub plans and all this stuff and then didn’t get to do it . . . the next time I asked them, they were a little more reluctant.” Shaunna felt entrusted by administration to complete her job responsibilities successfully but was hampered because of the absences of school-wide structures.

As the RTI coach, many of my frustrations mirrored those of Shaunna. I attempted to enact procedures for students and teachers to improve student engagement, attendance, and achievement, but discovered that the scattered focus of administrators made follow-through challenging. Like most schools, issues arose during the school day that could derail the administrative team, delaying or canceling scheduled activities. When teachers were absent and substitute teachers could not be secured, I spent my day in the auditorium showing movies to students. These extra duties affected my ability to attend to other students’ needs and diminished the intervention program’s success.

Principal Middleton’s fundamental support process was listening to her staff. She explained, “I would say that school staff felt supported on campus, at least the sense where they could present whatever it is that they were having an issue with” (Middleton). She felt that the staff’s level of comfort expressing their concerns increased during her tenure. She admitted that not every situation had a solution or one that she could implement, “but at least they knew that they felt safe in expressing whatever the issue was at hand” (Middleton).

During the study’s interviews, most teachers and staff reported that they felt somewhat to highly supported by the administration at Coleman. Principal Middleton’s goal was to shepherd the staff towards healing and recovery from past administrative experiences by implementing an open-door policy coupled with extensive availability. Not all staff felt that this was sufficient

support, especially in terms of organization and school-wide procedural systems. Principal Middleton extended a similar open-door policy to parents at Coleman.

Administrative Perspective of Site Supports for Parents

Even with the LEA's declining enrollment from 2015 to 2019, Coleman's enrollment increased by over 10% during Principal Middleton's tenure. She attributed this growth to arts integration and parental involvement. Previously, "The parent community was near nonexistent. The school historically has been a school people ran from . . . a last choice" (Middleton). At this time, I was a new assistant principal at Coleman. I conducted parent meetings, and the parents arrived expecting their voices to be discounted as they were by the previous administrative team." Instead, investing in the few loyal parents, Principal Middleton listened to their concerns, opinions, and ideas. This core group of empowered parents "would bring other parents along" (Middleton). She sees herself as a contagious leader who desires to spread her "personal joy and love of school and students, and the school community and school spirit" (Middleton). Parents' reporting of feelings of school support illustrated their responses to Principal Middleton's leadership style.

Parent Perspective of Site Supports for Parents

Parents unanimously expressed the support they felt at Coleman and their universal comfort with administration and staff. Valencia reported, "I feel very supported by the school because I felt comfortable if I, if she needed help . . . I can email the teachers." Petrosa answered briefly, "Yes, we do feel supported." Gwen responded, "I felt like I was 110% supported," expressing her appreciation for the size of the student body and the needs of other families. Belinda felt the school personnel's support and the relationships provided through school

activities provided opportunities “to be able to interact with other people at school who I would have never spoken to.” Principal Middleton’s swift actions made Sage feel supported; she described a situation that occurred in her daughter’s science classroom:

> I brought it up to the principal, [and] the principal right away set up a meeting between me, the science teacher, and herself, and we talked it out, and I felt very supported. The principal was never defensive, listened, was really caring, and I felt really heard.

Principal Middleton’s objective of being an active and responsive listener reassured Sage that her issue was serious and would receive the necessary attention. Felipa acknowledged that if the school did not support her family, “I’d be knocking on somebody’s door,” and that she believes “many of our parents still need more supports than we are able to give.” Parent participants felt heard and valued by the staff them at Coleman.

Site Supports for Students

When I arrived at Coleman, I quickly became aware of an adversarial relationship between students and teachers. Principal Middleton summarized this relationship by stating “there was such a lack of love and care for children on the campus.” On one of her first tours of classrooms, Principal Middleton found “every single door locked. Not just locked, but every single window into the classroom was boarded up.” In an email, she inquired as to why teachers protected their classrooms in this manner. “A staff member replied and said, ‘It’s because we don’t feel safe at this school’” (Middleton). Teachers were assaulted, trash cans lit on fire, and serious injuries occurred during physical altercations between students. Principal Middleton ensured that all support staff was available during unstructured times and increased security on campus to expand availability to the students. Discipline issues continued to plague the campus,

but students and parents expected fair, consistent, treatment and felt that Principal Middleton valued their concerns.

Most importantly, the administrative team lead by example after following Principal Middleton's lead "treating the children like children, and children make mistakes" (Middleton). She presented mistakes as lessons, not as a judgment of a student's character. Students began to feel that Principal Middleton was "a safe place where they could go, and I was a safe person to talk to, and they knew they would be heard" (Middleton). This baseline of care contributed to the success of the other student supports in academics and mental health.

Academic site supports for students. Due to many factors, Coleman students tested below the LEA and state averages for many years. The LEA and school site implemented several initiatives. From 2015 to 2019, test scores improved minimally (California Department of Education, 2021). Due to the study's focus, I focused on how community building affected classroom achievement and the success of academic supports provided outside of the regular school day.

Classroom supports for students. Teacher participants viewed the establishment and reinforcement of classroom communities as vital for student academic success. They mentioned peer-to-peer support when evaluating the impact of their classroom communities. "They (students) help each other. They learn to support each other," reflected grade seven ELA teacher, Gabriella. She witnessed students choosing editing partners "that they know are going to appreciate their errors and accept them and turn them into something positive" (Gabriella). In Renee's ELD classes, the small classes focused on creating "warrior scholars" (Renee) and provided the safe space necessary for students to work together on their reading and writing.

Johnathan found in his eighth-grade history classes that “community builds a strength in that they are able to play off each other’s ideas.” This was most evident when students completed cooperative projects in which “there is that sense of community. That we are all in this together and also academically, but they have to share that responsibility with others in their cooperative groupings” (Johnathan). In Dianne’s sixth-grade classes, the year began with setting agreed-upon expectations to establish classroom community building. These expectations, much like Renee’s warrior scholars, provided the students with a way to achieve peer-to-peer behavior redirection and academic support.

Jenny experienced tremendous academic growth in her classroom of special education students. She described how her classroom community affected the development of transfer student Ayden. “Ayden came to the classroom very angry. Angry at his former school. Angry at what happened there. Angry at the fact that he was teased all the time” (Jenny). As Ayden began to realize that Jenny would not tolerate bullying in her classroom community, “he started to respond to the love but what happened with him was he needed to break down and cry” (Jenny). Once those tears were shed, “then we didn’t spend so much time redirecting for the behavior,” and Ayden was able to focus on his academic achievement (Jenny). Several students came to her class with behavioral problems that impeded their ability to succeed academically. They met most behavior modification goals within the first year in her classroom and students were more academically prepared to proceed to high school.

As the RTI coach, I experienced the academic effects of a strong classroom community. When a teacher spends time and effort to build strong relationships with students, students attended and stayed in class. If a middle school student believed that the teacher did not care,

they did not care either. When students miss class for misbehaving or because of a lack of desire, they do not access the curriculum. In the RTI room, I spent many class periods working with students on their academics to prepare them to return to the classroom environment. My goal was always to return the student to class before the end of the period, ready to learn and possessing more coping skills. The ways in which the classroom community welcomed that student back usually determined whether they would remain academically engaged.

After hours academic supports for students. All participants cited two academic supports provided after school: the LEARNS program and tutoring. Local community college teachers provided tutoring in math, whereas Gabriella tutored second language learners in all subjects and focused on English development. Dianne commented that "a lot of my students did that," referring to the community college math tutoring. Gabriella spoke about the community formed in her after-school tutoring sessions where students felt safe to express their frustration with lessons. LEARNS, a state-funded after-school program, offered homework assistance in all subjects with a dedicated time directly after afternoon snack time. Students in this program could also visit their teachers' classrooms to receive additional assistance if teachers made themselves available. At Coleman, if a student could stay after school, there were opportunities for that student receive academic support from either the LEARNS program or individual teacher tutoring.

Mental health site supports for students. With research uncovering the increasing mental health needs of early adolescent children, faculty, and staff at Coleman focused efforts to support students in various manners. For the 2019-2020 school year, Coleman employed a full-time school psychologist, an RTI behavioral coach, and partnered with two mental health

agencies. Participants referred to other staff and community members as mental health supports as well. "Admin, I see admin that way, as part of their job also. And just the teachers and staff in general" (Dianne). Johnathan expressed, "we have many students that are being treated and being helped. There's nobody left out." He added, "we're on the ball . . . kids are found and helped" (Johnathan). Renee echoed Johnathan's sentiment, "Coleman actually does a pretty good job with mental health referrals if teachers do their diligence and refer kids." Jenny reported that she works with the school psychologist to connect students and their families to mental health resources, including family counseling and other wrap-around social services. Gabriella was more likely to refer a student to the RTI coach before taking additional actions; she considered the coach as a "key component for those students to receive emotional support." Teachers appreciated and understood the value of providing students with avenues of support and guidance for their social and emotional growth and favorable mental health outcomes.

Of the parent participants, Tasha and Belinda spoke most about mental health. Belinda viewed student mental health as one of her main priorities and stated that "Coleman has gone above and beyond to make sure that both of my children's mental health comes first before the pressure of studying and deadlines come into focus." Tasha's focus was on the RTI room as a place to "kind of calm down a bit." Tasha had difficulties with the school psychologist. Based on her older daughter's special education evaluation experiences, Tasha felt that "the school psychologist is doing a huge disservice to all the kiddos because I felt like her main aim was to exit kids from services." Tasha was the only parent to express these concerns. Other parents stated that they knew services were available but had not found reasons to avail their children of those services.

Herminia, the school psychologist, expressed her frustrations with teachers and one of the mental health agencies working with Coleman. Herminia felt that some teachers struggled to address the social-emotional needs of students. She explained, “I think that a lot of our teachers say, ‘I wanted to be a teacher. I didn’t want to be a counselor or psychologist,’ and so they feel uncomfortable asking those questions” (Herminia). When discussing the counseling agencies serving Coleman, she had a positive relationship with one of the agencies. Herminia explained, “they respond quickly . . . if I say, please don’t close the case. Let me try to figure it out; they listen to me.” Her relationship with the other agency “was never successful. I don’t know for what reason, but I don’t refer to them” (Herminia). Despite access to two outside agencies, Herminia believed Coleman needed more mental health support options. Students needed to have Medicare to qualify for school counseling services; Herminia envisioned “an open space, a safe space, where they can talk about whatever is happening; it would be great.” Unlike teacher and parent participants, Herminia noticed that Coleman could increase support to students for their mental health.

Principal Middleton viewed mental health support as a whole school responsibility. “Social-emotional support . . . could be accessed, at any given time, by any given staff member, depending on what the issue was” (Middleton). She listed the RTI coach, the school counselor, and the teachers as available supports for students and parents. “There were certain people that parents or students gravitated toward, and they knew that was going to be a safe place for them to go to discuss whatever their issue was” (Middleton). Principal Middleton acknowledged that for students to invest in their mental health needs, they would require safe spaces with a trusted adult.

Site supports for foster youth. The school LEA's Child Welfare, Attendance, and Safety department provided a foster youth coordinator to oversee all middle schools and an on-site foster youth liaison. As the RTI coach, I was also the foster youth liaison. In this position, I welcomed new foster youth to our school, ensured they knew at least three other students in their classes, and had all the materials necessary to start classes. If I identified a student as requiring special education services, I would review their IEP and coordinate with the school counselor to enroll the student in appropriate courses. When on-site therapy was required, I worked with our school district mental health partners to schedule students' sessions in conjunction with their schedules. Much of this work happened before the foster youth arrived at school for his/her first day of classes, reducing the student's anxiety and fear of starting at a new school.

Site Technological Supports for Faculty and Students

According to the LEA (2018) website, the LEA "started the 1:1 Tech Equity Take Home Program which afforded middle and high school students the opportunity to check out a Chromebook to use both at home and at school". The program expanded the former LEA Technology Plan (2014) in which "the LEA purchased and deployed over 3,700 Chromebook mobile computers on carts for use with students in Grades 3-12 LEA-wide". In January 2014, California transitioned from the California Standards Test (CST) to the Smarter Balanced Assessment System (SBAC) (California Department of Education [CDE], 2021). This move signaled the end of the paper-pencil assessment and the beginning of computer assessments. A goal in the technology plan was written to address the move to computer-based assessments.

> Students' use of Chromebooks and mobile devices via wireless networks will be expanded as the LEA implements instruction in the Common Core State Standards,

prepares students to take the upcoming SBAC online assessments, and moves toward the use of web-based and cloud-computing applications.

The expansion of the use of Chromebooks required training and other support systems. By 2020, the on-site instructional coach and LEA service technologists at Coleman supported parents, students, teachers, and other staff.

The school site provided parents with technological support and parents expressed confidence in the staff to resolve any technical issues. Petrona purchased the LEA-provided Chromebook insurance and knew, “if we need support, we can take it to the office.” Belinda represented the feelings of many parents when she stated, “I know that the instructional coach is very fundamental in keeping the Chromebooks afloat, so to speak if we had some issue.” One of Gwen’s daughters “dropped her Chromebook, and the instructional coach handled it.” In her role as the instructional coach, parents and students knew Shauna was their first point of contact for any Chromebook issue.

Teachers and staff reported school-wide confidence in instructional coach Shaunna, but also relied on different methods for solving technical issues in their classrooms. Teachers turned to students before seeking outside assistance. Gabriella’s desire to use every minute of class time for instruction led her to ask her classes, “Does anybody know how to do this?” Dianne stated that she “learned with my sixth-graders that there’s usually a couple of experts in the room.” Instead of using student assistance, Jenny’s classroom aide was able to assist with technological problems. “Miss Pierre could figure things out technically before we would have to go down the hallway to Shaunna,” Jenny explained. If teachers encountered an issue too complicated for their classroom helpers, all felt comfortable reaching out to Shaunna.

As an instructional coach, Shaunna was also the technology lead at Coleman. Once a problem came to her attention, she "wanted to get it in my office and get them a loaner and get them back as fast as I could. Typically, about 50% of the time, I could fix their computer without sending it out" (Shaunna). She implemented "a procedure that was very clear" with the LEA service technologists, stating "I'm very lucky that our techs are just nice people, and if you are nice to them, they'll actually help you more" (Shaunna). Shaunna felt that because she had known many of the service techs for years, "they knew that I was doing everything I could to keep things from going to them. And I was always grateful, thankful; I appreciated them." Due to well-planned procedures and trustworthy relationships, "we were one of the quicker schools for turnaround" of broken devices (Shaunna). Shaunna recognized the value of relationships with teachers, parents, and the service technologist and formed a robust and supportive community for student achievement.

Principal Middleton also appreciated the relationships Shaunna built with staff, students, and parents. "She worked so hard to build relationships as well with staff, and so even if they weren't comfortable with whatever technology issue they were having, they felt comfortable with her enough to be able to ask" (Middleton). Shaunna provided staff with space for understanding and provided "whatever they needed to understand to get that technology to work for them" (Shaunna). Her efforts were vital for the LEA's technological plan to succeed. Principal Middleton deeply valued Shaunna's talents, stating, "The fact that she took the time to build the relationships and then also work with the teachers and students and show them how to do things was wonderful." Principal Middleton perceived how Shaunna's relationship-building talents enhanced the school community.

Teachers utilized new computer-based curricula in their classrooms before COVID-19 closures. Dianne reported that her classes used technology "every day in some capacity, and I was trying to grow that." She also used the LEA-provided online mathematical program iReady (https://www.curriculumassociates.com/products/i-ready) to facilitate workshop centers. Gabriella used Google Classroom "since day one" of the school year and felt comfortable communicating with her students through the platform. Renee's students used Chromebooks for research and writing and Google Classroom to share documents and assignments. In Jenny's classroom, students used iPads to achieve their IEP goals. She projected the unique curriculum on the classroom whiteboard and provided students with a visually interactive experience. Only Johnathan reported using few digital lessons in his classroom instruction, but he had exposed students to video production using computer software through project-based learning activities.

Theme 2: Continuous Communication

Before the emergency COVID-19 closure of Coleman, participants utilized three primary communication vehicles: email, phone calls, and in-person contact. All valued the volume of communication and the relationships formed. The following sections includes details of each participant group's experiences of the school-home connection forged through communication.

Site Communication Within Staff and Administration

Teachers described the level of familiarity they felt with the administration in their interview responses. Although many indicated using email for formal communication, all expressed their ease with direct conversations, especially with the principal. Gabriella recounted that "all I had to do was just go and knock on the door" to address her concerns. Johnathan recalled that he would spend his nutrition breaks outside talking with the principal and the school

counselor. Renee spoke with the principal "pretty frequently throughout the week." She found that face-to-face discussions were the most efficient way to "get something moving." When reflecting on her direct communication with administration and staff, Dianne portrayed them as "every day, as much as possible." She viewed the school administration as "very available, accessible" and that she could speak with them "whenever I want, daily." Jenny's rapport with the administration was unique due to her morning routine. "First thing in the morning at the bus is where we receive the students." At the same location, the principal greets parents and students as well. The arrangement provides Jenny access every morning to the principal, so "if there's a pressing problem, I can deal with it right then and there and get a quick answer." Teachers felt there was an environment of trusted communication with the administration.

When she began building the Coleman school community, Principal Middleton desired personal connections with all staff, ensuring that they knew "that I am coming from a place of love and care and not from a place of wanting to gotcha or persecute them." To these ends, she provided staff with her cell phone number and fostered an open-door policy. She covered much of the school's business during the twice-monthly Monday staff meetings. For other issues, "teachers knew that they could stop by in the office before school, after school." She found these after-hours meetings provided "an opportunity to communicate and connect in addition to all the regular modes, whether it's email, cell phone, and all of that." Through her accessibility, Principal Middleton signaled to staff that she respected their communications.

Shaunna also had an open-door policy with teachers. "If they were having an instructional issue or an issue with a student, we could talk about it and brainstorm." Some teachers regularly spent their preparation periods conferring with Shaunna. If Shaunna wanted to

review pertinent data with a teacher, she "did the footwork to get them the data, and then I would try to meet with them." Shaunna also used the twice-monthly Monday meetings to present to the entire staff. Most important to Shaunna was that staff knew, "they were more than welcome to stop by, and we could talk about whatever they needed." Open communications and accessibility provided staff with more than technical supports.

As the school psychologist, Herminia communicated with staff primarily through the forms she needed for student evaluations. She explained, "I usually send forms for teachers and put them in the boxes because I want to gather more information about how children do in the classroom." Additionally, if a teacher struggled with the forms, she met with them to assist. In her position, Herminia facilitated the Department of Child and Family Services abuse reports with teachers, supporting them through the process.

Faculty Perspective of Site Communication with Parents

Teachers expressed that parent communication was an ongoing process beginning with the first week of school. "August is heavy on the communication," reflected Dianne. She continued listing the opportunities to meet with parents, such as Back-to-School and Parent Conference Day. All teachers mentioned this pattern of extreme communication as the year began with a transition to an at-need basis as the year progressed.

Teachers used email as their primary mode of communication with parents. "I think communicating with parents through email was super easy," Gabriella stated. Johnathan utilized the LEA provided platform Blackboard Connect (https://www.blackboard.com/engage-your-community/communications/blackboard-connect) to send whole class emails and phone blasts. "I can send just an update. We have this coming up or we're doing this project next." Renee "would

email parents once a week." Both Gabriella and Renee discussed parent conferences. "I had a lot of parent conferences," recollected Gabriella. Renee conducted data chat parent conferences for those with students in her ELD classes.

> I worked after school from like 3:00 until 7:30 PM and every 15 or 20 minutes met with a new parent and their kid and had a translator if needed and really just talked about where their kid was and talked about their strengths and talked about their areas for improvement.

These meetings were instrumental in increasing parent involvement and student achievement. Parents learned specific ways to support their children at home, and students understood what steps might help them be more successful.

Jenny's students, due to their moderate to severe disabilities, necessitated additional communication with parents. Although she did use email, "parents felt they could come by my classroom anytime, and they would talk to me." Since she does not speak Spanish, one of her classroom aides was available for translation when parents would stop by or call. Unlike the other teachers, Jenny still sent home paper letters. "For community trips, I always sent home some kind of letter, letting them know you need this much money to ride the bus. You need at least $5 to buy a Happy Meal," and if parents did not respond, she sent "letters home multiple times." She pinned these letters to backpacks and the student's jackets; anywhere prominent so that the student's parent or caregiver will locate them.

Relationships with families impacted the form of communication teachers chose. Gabriella sorted her parents' communication requests "about 10-15 of them prefer that phone call" and "about 15-20 of those parents that would stop like to just kinda stop by after school."

As she learned more about her parents, she was better able to accommodate their communication needs. Johnathan kept his "phone right next to me so I can always respond back. I communicate with parents, two or three parents almost every day." Teachers comprehended the benefits of parent involvement and utilized many tools to increase it.

Principal Middleton employed many forms of communication to keep in touch with Coleman's parents. She used the same system as Johnathan, Blackboard Connect, to send weekly emails and phone blasts to parents. She and the assistant principal updated Coleman's social media almost daily. "We have a Facebook. We have an Instagram. We have Twitter." She provided parents her cell phone number and remarked, "they know that's a way that they can get ahold of me and communicate at any given time, weekends included, late nights included." If parents requested a face-to-face meeting, "part of my day is our meet-and-greet where I meet students in the morning and parents." She refers to these conversations as "my sidewalk conferences." Like with her staff, Principal Middleton extended an open-door policy to parents where "parents knew that when they came into the school if they were there to see me, I would definitely drop whatever I needed to drop in order to talk to a parent." Principal Middleton understood the importance of her accessibility and knew "that was appreciated" by the parents.

Shaunna primarily interacted with parents through email during the school day. She knew that some parents were not accessible through email and would utilize other methods. She explained, "I would call in the evening. If I knew a parent was picking up the kid at a certain time, I'd either be in the office, waiting for them or at the drop-off or pickup point" (Shaunna). When she needed paperwork signed by a parent, "I just used the kid." She would call the student into her office, hand her the required paperwork, and provide her parents' instructions.

Because of the sensitivity of her position, Herminia tended towards in-person communication with the parents. "I like to invite them over into my office so I can have a face-to-face conversation and get to know them." She felt that "they open up more when it's person-to-person." Because she needed to evaluate students for special education, these personal connections were crucial "this is how I work" but would use whatever means required to encourage parent participation in the evaluation process.

In my role of RTI coach, I contacted many parents. Most of my communication was by phone, calling to inform parents of an incident during the school day, or requesting permission to refer the student for mental health services. I conducted parent conferences to discuss student progress on behavioral contracts. I met with or called foster parents and group homes, working to create positive educational experiences for foster youth while knowing that their time at Coleman could end at any time. Additionally, I participated in the daily meet-and-greet with Principal Middleton, welcoming students to school and holding impromptu parent meetings. I rarely used email for my parent contacts because the issues I handled were time-sensitive and required prompt attention.

Parent Perspective of Site Communication with Parents

Teacher participants suggested parent participants for this study. This procedural choice may have influenced the percent of parents who regularly spent time on campus. Gwen stated that she made in-person contact "daily . . . stood out on the sidewalk in the morning, in the afternoon, and talked to the assistant principal or the principal." Petrona believed that she was "always talking to them. I'm always at school." Trini also felt she could make early morning contacts with the principal, stating, "I saw her every morning saying hi to the students when I

usually needed to say something." Sage felt that she "lived on campus" and that "everyone's doors were always open. I never came across anyone who shut me out." Felipa knew she could meet with staff but felt it unnecessary for her daughter's eighth grade year. "I don't think we communicated that much this year, except for like all the eighth-grade activities we were planning." Belinda spent time in the offices of the school counselor and the attendance secretary, explaining, "I interacted with the counselor frequently enough, maybe three or four visits, just trying to get an idea on how I can better help my son in his situation academically." Due to medical and family issues, both of Belinda's children had missed school. She reached out to the attendance secretary, who "helped me navigate through the absences; it is a big deal for us with my daughter being asthmatic and all of her issues." Belinda knew that she had advocates on campus who would steer her through whatever steps were necessary to support her child.

Parents cited email as the most frequent manner of communication with teachers and school staff. Gwen recalled that when one of her daughters struggled in math, she emailed the teacher, and the teacher immediately responded. Belinda found that "reaching out to the staff was not only convenient, but it worked; I was responded to in a time-efficient manner." Although parents were likely to reach out to teachers and staff with something critical, many empowered their children to advocate for themselves with the teachers. With her daughter in the eighth grade, Felipa witnessed, "It was all self-initiated. She was so motivated to do the work." Tasha encouraged her daughters to advocate for themselves, especially concerning grades and assignments. Gwen was tenacious with emails concerning a teacher issue but felt her daughters needed to be independent with her "constantly behind the scenes." All parents acknowledged receiving the principal's weekly phone blast and accompanying email.

Theme 3: Active Engagement

Coleman was not known for school spirit before the arrival of Principal Middleton, and it was her drive to create school pride and empowerment when she began at the school. Since the participants have identified active engagement as a vital component of a community, the next section will explore how community members engaged with the school.

Parent Site Engagement

All California public schools composed an annual Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA), the school plan, setting school-wide goals for the next school year. One component of the school plan was parent engagement, measured through volunteerism, parent membership in school committees, and the Parent Portal school information system usage.

Parents primarily volunteered at Coleman through the arts programs, Associated Student Body (ASB) activities, and parent groups. As an arts magnet, arts-based shows occurred almost monthly at Coleman. Parents volunteered to sew the costumes, build the sets, fold programs, and assist backstage. When students performed off-campus, parents drove equipment and students to the locations, set up equipment, dressed performers, monitored student behavior, and, after the events, cleaned up equipment to return it to the school site.

In union with the Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA), the ASB hosted the Fall Festival, Winter Formal, Spring Fling, and grade-level end-of-year celebrations. The PTSA supported the school garden project. The garden grew produce that the PTA sold weekly to the public. Belinda recalls the garden’s value selling “all the yummy goodness that they grow in the garden” and that she found “common interests. I really do enjoy gardening, and I can help even though I have no green thumb.” The sixth-grade classes applied for and received funds for a

project in the garden. Dianne remembered, “The students were planning their own little plots of the garden.” Petrona expressed the importance of the PTSA, saying, “There’s the PTA moms. They’re working moms. You just work to make it happen for the kids.” The other parent organizations on campus were the School Site Council, the English Learners Advisory Committee, the Coleman Arts Annual Fund, and the African American Parent Committee.

The 2019-2020 SPSA recorded Coleman’s progress towards parent engagement goals. Over 50% of parents have signed up for Parent Portal access, an increase but well short of the 75% stated goal. Membership rose in all parent committees except African American Parent Council. Felipa witnessed the commitment of some parents in that “we had a very hardcore group go above and beyond because they had the means; they had the financial means, they had the community means,” but she worried about including those parents who did not have those means. Shaunna broached the same topic, explaining, “Rarely did we get those people that were working all day at night.” She added, “A lot of these parents probably would love to be able to volunteer, but they also enjoy putting food on the table for their kids.” Opportunity and availability influenced the number of parents involved and how they could participate at Coleman.

Student Site Engagement

California Department of Education (CDE) measured student engagement through chronic absenteeism. The CDE defined chronic absenteeism as “the percentage of students who are absent 10 percent or more of the instructional days they were enrolled” (CDE, 2021). According to this metric, if a student was engaged in a school community and classroom activities, they will regularly attend school. The following sections describe some methods

employed by Coleman teachers and other staff to increase student engagement before the emergency COVID-19 closure.

Classroom communities. As part of the larger school community, classroom communities reflected the values and priorities of each teacher. “I read a lot and have heard a lot about building community from day one,” began Dianne when describing how she constructed her classroom community. All teachers described activities they used in the first weeks to create a classroom community. Dianne used a thumb ball activity with “open-ended questions for student introductions. I do ask them to pronounce their name because I think it’s important for kids to have an opportunity to say, ‘Ok, my name on the attendance sheet might be Samantha, but what I really want you to call me is Sammy.’” She spent this time watching her students’ body language, looking for those who are outgoing, yearning to speak, and those who might be a bit more reserved. “I have my students introduce themselves. They need to know their names. They need to know who they are,” Gabriella recounted. During those initial class meetings, her goal is to create a classroom environment where “they have to understand that regardless of where they come from, regardless of how they think, they have to respect each other.” Johnathan builds classroom culture through “structure. I believe in structure. I think that all students, just like adults, need a sense of a program. They know that every day is going to have that comfortability of know what’s going to come. There are no surprises.” Renee’s goal for her classroom community is “all about relationship building and taking time to get to know each other and doing that continually.” Jenny began by “being very transparent in setting the tone and being an example, especially for the adult staff in there to emulate.” Her need to be an example to the other adults in her classroom grew from past experiences with aides at other school sites

she “had to pull aides aside and say, ‘You know what? We don’t get physical with kids. We don’t use that tone with kids.’” Teachers invested in building supportive classroom communities at Coleman.

The parents’ views of classroom communities reflected their understandings of how their children experienced classes. “Most of the teachers created a family environment. We were in it together. We were working for the better of the school. My girls were learning leadership skills from their teachers,” Gwen reflected. She named Dianne and Renee two of the outstanding contributors to her girls’ development. “She just created a core within her classroom that carried throughout the whole day,” was her opinion of Dianne’s classroom community. Renee “built up my daughter to the point of making her feel like could do anything,” Gwen stated, adding, “which is exactly what we needed for our daughter to build her confidence.” Felipa expressed that her daughter “had that very safe space and the support of all her teachers in her classroom where she felt above and beyond empowered to know that she was heading off in the right way.” Trini commented, “I’ve been interacting with some teachers. I love how they get involved with the students. They really give a hundred percent or more.” Petrona summed up her perspective of the classroom communities her son belonged to, saying, “Yes, they have a community . . . they were trying to explore their world, their world with their own eyes.” These parents felt that the classroom communities were meeting the social needs of their children.

Belinda’s children’s experiences of classroom communities varied. Her daughter was in Jenny’s class, and she believes that the classroom culture has “been outstanding as far as integrating what I think is important for her to function outside of a classroom setting.” As for her son’s sixth-grade experience, she said, “The transition can be difficult having periods

pasting, changing classes, and having more than one teacher can be stressful." Sage also had mixed reactions about her daughter's classroom communities too: "There were some classes where it felt like we could express concerns, and that teacher responded with concern and really good feedback and engagement." What troubled her were "other teachers that were quite the opposite of that. Weren't engaged, weren't supportive, weren't understanding, didn't engage my daughter much." Felipa also commented on the seventh-grade team that "the lack of community in that team made it very difficult, at least for my child." Through parent comments, the seventh-grade teaching team emerged as less community-oriented than the rest of the school community.

Student voice. As an arts magnet, Coleman's administration and staff supported student expression. Whether in the classroom, in the cafeteria, or on the stage, adults on campus provided students the safe spaces necessary to value student contribution. Principal Middleton cited several opportunities students had to voice their concerns in a safe space. For instance, she said, "We had the opportunity of having an RTI coach who assisted us in making a protected space for students to be able to express their feelings and feel safe in good times and bad." Although not all teachers, "certain teachers also provided space for students in the classroom and even made it part of their lessons." Principal Middleton witnessed students using their unstructured times to "have a safe conversation where they would feel listened to." Stationed on the common area during lunch and nutrition break, Principal Middleton made herself available for student conversations. She also invited students to come to her office when they were having an issue, commenting, "I've always allowed for students to have that space where they're able to connect with me only." While working to build relationships with students, Principal Middleton found, "you can't break the trust that you build with students, and so they need to know that

some things, some conversations will be protected, and they know that." Creating spaces to safeguard student voices was essential to Principal Middleton's vision of creating the Coleman school community.

Shaunna mentioned the RTI room as well when discussing student expression, indicating that "students had a space where they could decompress, and they could explain what was going on without it being a discipline measure." She also reflected on Renee's classroom practices as encouraging student expression. As for her interactions with students, Shaunna made herself available to solve technical issues and behavioral difficulties. She said, "I had some students that would come to me, just for a cool down, like they just needed to be out of the room." As she traversed the campus, "I would find them in the hallway, and I'd be like, 'Okay, you can't be out of class, you have to be somewhere,' and they'd come with me." Shaunna's office became another space for students struggling, and she "could provide that quiet space" students needed to reset, express frustrations, and prepare themselves to return to the classroom. Even though Shaunna's primary job responsibilities were to serve the teachers, she offered students additional adult support within the Coleman school community.

As the school psychologist, Herminia specialized in creating a safe space for students to express themselves. In addition to her scheduled counseling sessions with students, Herminia ran therapeutic student groups. "I have children come into my office and just talk about other teachers or what's happening or why they feel this way . . . hopefully I had created a safe environment for them so they can come and talk openly," she explained. Herminia concluded that this level of safety for student expression, "that's important." Herminia's services as the

school psychologist benefitted not only the students on her caseload but also those interacting with them.

As the RTI coach, my office was a designated safe space. I decorated the space with comfort objects. There were many cozy chairs, a rug-covered space, and lots of toys and games. Students came to this space to have their needs met, whatever they might be. Students knew they could yell, scream, cry, and express what they were feeling at the time. Sometimes we would need to walk off their emotions. Located near the PE area, students could walk as many laps around the track as they needed. Additionally, I made myself available during unstructured times, standing on the quad during nutrition and in the cafeteria at lunch. As the RTI coach, I was the students' sounding board, advocate, and biggest champion.

Some teachers provided safe spaces for student expression in the classroom. Gabriella began classes with quick writes, which she described saying "we had free topic Tuesdays and Thursdays; we call them FTTs, and students will bring up certain things that would be their concerns. We'll have a conversation." She also incorporated mini-conferences "where it would be just kind of ask them how they were doing, show me something and then move on. Some of them will open up and share information." Johnathan provided space for student opinion with his "cite your source" activities "where they have their own personal opinions. They have their own insights. . . There is never a wrong answer." Jenny, too, provided time for students to express themselves in her classroom. "There's a lot of expression from the kids who can talk." She found that for her students, they "want to get it all out." Dianne used Google Forms to open her classroom up for discussions: "it was just a little survey, and it said, 'How are you feeling today? Is there anything you'd like me to know? Is there anything you need help with that I rushed

through?’” She found that students “didn’t want to say anything in class, but kids will write on the survey.” She was able better to address her students’ needs through her surveys. Renee used Friday circle conversations with varied success in her classes. She worked to create the norms of the circle but found difficulty since she was one of the only teachers providing this type of open space for conversation. She used daily reflections for students to express their feelings about their learning experiences and their personal lives. She commented, “I’m big on reflections, and we reflect a lot in my class. I have so much data about their reflections and how they feel about things, and I try to take it into consideration.” Teacher classroom activities and attitudes invited students to share their voices; they were listened to and respected.

Parents provided several examples of their children’s concerns and opinions being responded to on campus and in the classrooms. Petrona stated, “he was able to communicate with them, and they did help him,” when reflecting on her son. Gwen expressed appreciation that at Coleman, “there are all these other adults that were just always available for my two children.” As one of her daughters struggled with her English teacher, “the assistant principal was constantly on it, and he would call my daughter out of class and talk to her . . . in a way that was like, ‘I hear you.’” Belinda recalled an incident in the physical education class where her son participated in a behavioral incident, and “he was absolutely given the opportunity to express himself and to let people know what his recollection of the events were.” Sage’s daughter had a positive experience of self advocation in her physical education class when “she emailed the PE teacher because she was given a B instead of an A, and she really thought she deserved an A.” Her PE teacher acknowledged the mistake and apologized to Sage’s daughter while she “commended her for standing up for herself and reaching out to her.” Sage spoke with her

daughter afterward and reflected that "she felt heard, and she felt good about the fact that she could make change by just standing up." Although Tasha's daughters did not contend with any personal issues at school, both "were very comfortable going to the teachers" with any academic needs. Parent responses illustrated the comfort and confidence their children had with expressing themselves at Coleman.

Student choice. When students have choices in their academic experiences, they can more fully express themselves and personalize their educational achievements. Principal Middleton witnessed student choice available at Coleman augmented by school-wide arts integration. She noticed that "there were wonderful lessons being built in the classroom from project-based learning type lessons to workshop model type lessons to opportunities for presentations and performances." Through these choices, "students knew that they were going to have something exciting in the classroom to look forward to, and it was what drew them into their classes." Shaunna was working with teachers to implement the workshop model in their classes. She noted attempts in Renee's and Dianne's classrooms, explaining, "There were choice boards on assignments, where you had to get so many points to complete an assignment." Herminia, in contrast, said, "I don't think that they were given choices. I might be wrong, but that's my perception." Herminia's information about classroom activities came primarily from the students, whereas the teachers informed Principal Middleton and Shaunna.

All teacher participants recounted at least one effort towards providing student choice in their classrooms. Because of his highly structured format, Johnathan limited student choices to projects. "Student choice doesn't tend to be when we are doing note-taking . . . because, and I want to qualify this, I say that because I try to teach my students a way of note-taking." Along

with her attempts at the workshop model, Dianne worked with one of the artists-in-residence to create art-inspired math and science lessons. Gabriella based her choices on “incorporating learning styles. And I realized that by not providing choices, you don’t tap into those and you kind of tend to forget some of those students that don’t necessarily think like you.” Like Johnathan, she presented end-of-unit projects. Students could show their understanding through “writing, putting together Google slides which incorporates a little more images, to putting together a podcast or a video” (Gabriella). Jenny’s students’ special education identification structured the choices she could offer: “I always try to integrate the kids’ IEP goals into the lessons.” She individualized lessons for all four core subjects, allowing for artistic expression whenever possible. Renee was able to facilitate student choices in English Language Development (ELD) through the workshop model. Mondays were highly structured instruction, Tuesday through Thursday were small group learning stations, and Fridays were class circle discussions of the week’s work. Students had choices in reading materials and reflection procedures. In her elective course, Renee implemented student choice in most areas. Students chose writing topics, designed productions, and directed their short shows. An example of this was the fall environmental production. She explained, “We studied *Twilight Zone*, and we watched several episodes, and we talked about fear and what are human fears.” After a whole-class brainstorming session, groups chose “which fear they wanted to explore.” Groups wrote, cast, rehearsed, designed, costumed, and performed their six to ten-minute productions. “They did get to choose . . . what time period was it set in, what are the characters wearing. They got to kind of design all of those aspects.” Teachers varied in their academic activities, with student

choice available through their professional development in arts integration and other student engagement strategies.

Parents voiced their appreciation of teacher efforts to provide choices in the classroom. Valencia's daughter was a student in Renee's ELD and elective classes where "she would let her pick what books she wanted to read, and I knew that she was picking books that were sometimes too easy, so she would kind of motivate her to do something a little harder." Petrona saw her son's teachers allowing the students to formulate "their own understanding of their own work." When her son was doing projects in his classes, he "had a title, but everything else is going to come from your mind." Due to their family's religious beliefs, Trini spoke with her son's English teacher, "and she was very open and offered other options for those books." Sage also spoke of the choices given in her daughter's English class, "they were given like five to ten choices on how they wanted to do their book report, not just a written book report, but maybe a skit, a poster, a scrapbook. A variety of choices." Tasha mentioned English classes as well: "In the eighth-grade English class, you can do a book report. You can act it. You can draw . . . so, yeah, there were some choices." Felipa highly valued the open-ended quality of the work, "which I loved because she was able to see other ways, not just the book text content of it. So how do I apply? How does history apply to my world?" Gwen cited the art teacher and her daughters' math/science teachers as examples of choices given. "The art teacher just pushed them to continually have choices and think outside the box and think deeper when it came to their art." Since one of her daughters qualified for a 504 plan, Dianne, her math/science teacher, "constantly gave her different ways of implementing exams and tailored her curriculum so that

she could excel." Parents expressed that their children had a variety of choices in their academic activities at Coleman.

Peer collaboration. Peer interactions are an integral component of early adolescence. Through peer collaboration activities, children learn how to navigate complex social situations within a guided classroom environment. Through providing choice, many classrooms allow for students to work with their peers. "Strategies like workshop model, small grouping, small group learning, presentations, and project-based learning. All of that was occurring inside the classes," commented Principal Middleton. Shaunna added, "I know a lot of teachers were using Google Docs and Google Slides so that kids could work together on different projects; they could collaborate on that." Although she noted that group work happened in classes, Shaunna cautioned that "the success of the group wasn't dependent on every team member playing. So, a lot of those times, I saw certain students pick up the load and carry it, and other people just kind of come along for the ride." Herminia witnessed some racial disparities for students to work with peers outside of the classroom. "I see a lot of White children; they have that opportunity to work outside school. I see that they participate more in activities after school than Black or Brown children, and that's worrisome to me." She did not comment on seeing this division within classrooms but also noted, "I don't see a lot of Black or Brown children participating in more academic opportunities." Herminia observed inequity of choices presented to students of color at Coleman.

Teachers related peer opportunities that went beyond small group work. Dianne's math students had "quite a few opportunities to check each other's work, to problem-solve together." Johnathan described a video project on which his students worked, "The students do two videos

per year. This is part of our project-based learning." He supplies the topics—coming to American in the first semester and Western expansion in the second—but the rest is up to the groups' discretion. "They will research the topic, they'll write the script, they will practice their lines, they will use iMovie and create a five-minute video." This project utilized groups of four students working collaboratively together. The workshop model and the production groups in Renee's classes depended upon students working together in and out of the classroom. Instead of having peer work primarily for projects, Gabriella has her classroom set up "where students can pair up, do the shoulder talk, talk to the person that's in front of you or to the left or to the right or at your tables. So, there was always that possibility." Teachers provided peer collaboration in structured project-based lessons and through daily classroom procedures.

Peer work took on a very social aspect in Jenny's class in that "I had to find who are the people that are going to enjoy working together because I'm not forcing any partnerships because then I'm going to have behaviors, and that would be a nightmare." Outside of the academic space, students took care of each other. "What was really nice was kids helping each other in the bathroom during dance clothes changing time, and it was so heartwarming to see." She saw that helpful attitude on display in the bathroom as an extension of the students' relationships formed in the classroom. As Jenny's students were able to rely more on each other, they needed the adult aides less, leading to greater autonomy and interdependence while still always under adult supervision. Supporting choices for students with moderate to severe disabilities increased their self-reliance and their confidence as they learned how to navigate independently within the Coleman community.

Parents, too, saw the impact of student peer collaboration. Belinda's daughter was a student in Jenny's class. She witnessed that her daughter "was definitely given numerous opportunities just to broaden herself" through her opportunities to work with her peers inside and outside the classroom. Trini recounted a science project that her son was completing with a partner where the partner had "agreed to bring it here to the apartment to work together a couple of times." Sage praised the peer opportunities provided in her daughter's English class. Although she did not provide specific examples, Tasha stated that there were "lots of opportunities, lots of collaborative work." Working with students in other grade levels excited Gwen when discussing her daughters' experiences with peer work: "In drama, my daughter made very good friends with eighth-graders." While her other daughter "was in art with seventh- and eighth-graders." They both participated in ASB, providing another avenue for them to encounter students from other grade levels. Felipa felt that group work provided her daughter with practical social skills when her teachers allowed students to choose their groups. She notes that there were "activities where she was able to, even at that point, discern which partners would work best to accomplish the goal or not, or if you had to even change from that to make sure you got the desired results." Parents witnessed the effects of student peer collaborations through the reactions of their children.

Before March 2020, the school community at Coleman was still evolving, but progress occurred over the preceding five years as well. Under the leadership of Principal Middleton, the Coleman school community had shifted from competitive and adversarial to compassionate and supportive. Although not all staff, students, or parents were fully committed to this new direction, most embraced these changes. Through arts integration and other interactive strategies,

teachers were providing students opportunities to strengthen their academic and social-emotional proficiency. Parents had the opportunity to fully participate in the Coleman community; those who had available time and resources did so. The Coleman school community was progressing towards realizing Principal Middleton's vision that set when she arrived.

Site Transition to Distance-Teaching Due to COVID-19

According to a World Health Organization (WHO) situation report released on March 12, 2020, 987 Americans had tested positive for the novel coronavirus, and 29 had died due to complications (WHO, 2020b). On March 12, 2020, Coleman received this update from our superintendent.

> At this time, Public Health does not recommend proactively closing schools.
>
> - Per the L.A. County Department of Public Health because closing schools disrupts so many lives and may put vulnerable children at risk, significant efforts need to be made to create safe school environments. However, should one or more students or school staff members test positive for COVID-19, and they expose others at school, the school will need to close.
> - Beyond providing education for our students, public schools are the access point for critical social services for thousands of families. Many of our students' parents are on the front lines of the COVID-19 response. School closures also create concerns about childcare and possibly exposing at-risk caregivers. By keeping our doors open, we help ensure that our community stays safe. Unless the Department of Public Health orders school closures, the result could be the loss of significant funding to the District. (Superintendent, district email, March 12, 2020)

Since Friday March 13, 2020 threatened rain, we were preparing for a possible rainy-day schedule. When the assistant principal emailed the rainy-day schedule, one teacher responded, "we're not really going to put all the kids in the auditorium again, are we?" (Personal email, March 13, 2020). Little did she know, I spent my last day on campus in the auditorium showing movies to the classes of those teachers who had called out. As usual, there were not enough substitute teachers or staff to supervise students in their classrooms. Whenever someone coughed or sneezed in the auditorium, the kids would loudly react. Kids kept asking if we were coming to school on Monday. By 12:40 PM, I had the answer to that question provided by our superintendent. Students would not be returning to school on Monday, but staff would.

- In an abundance of caution and in response to widening concerns about COVID-19, all . . . students will be dismissed from attending school on Monday, March 16, 2020; staff will report on Monday, March 16th, but no students will be present. This includes all schools and programs . . . including children's centers, preschools, grades TK-12, and our adult school. Staff will receive additional instructions from your school administrator or director later today.
- Schools remain closed with no students on any campuses from Tuesday, March 17 through April 5, 2020. Schools will reopen for students on April 6, 2020, barring any further developments. Schools will undergo a deep cleaning during the closure period. Staff will continue to report to their assigned work location until notified otherwise by the District. (Superintendent, district email, March 13, 2020)

Since we received an email at 12:30 PM about a mandatory after-school meeting from Principal Middleton, the superintendent's message did not surprise us. Emails poured in from all levels of the district, along with those from concerned parents. The Division of Academics had warned teachers on March 12, "remote learning will become our most reliable source for continued instruction over time. We have the resources to enable such a plan because Chromebooks are available to all students." A list of actions to take followed, including "gather and travel with teaching resources you may need in the event that you must work in an alternate location" and "identify and provide your students with resources that can be used for learning at home" (Division of Academics, district email, March 12, 2020).

At 2:35 PM, most of the teaching, office, and custodial staff gathered in the Coleman library to learn that we would report on Monday, March 16, 2020, at our contractual time, with more information to follow. We had transitioned from what was known and familiar to an unknowable future in less than thirty-six hours.

Faculty Transition to Distance-Teaching

The faculty of Coleman turned to its leadership to comprehend the magnitude of the changes to come. As the school leader during the time of transition, Principal Middleton faced challenges, personal and professional. She explained, "It wasn't a school-specific emergency. It was a—my whole life has been turned upside down." She wrestled with "how I'm going to continue to do my job and be there for my students and my school. So, it was very abrupt. It was all at once." She expressed, "we were doing the best we could in transitioning from what we knew to be our daily lives and routine to something we'd never experienced before." Principal

Middleton struggled to shepherd her staff through this experience while attempting to build her comprehension of events.

Shaunna felt a bit more prepared for the transition as “I luckily had been on the tech team and the innovator team before this, so I had gotten much more training than everyone else.” The instructional coach’s job duties quickly shifted so that “immediately my position went into content development and supporting teachers.” Although teachers sought her technical skills, it was her support that many truly needed because “a lot of it was more mental health support initially because we had some teachers that were on the brink of losing it because they were dealing with their kids at home.” In the first weeks of the transition to online teaching, Shaunna spent many hours “walking teachers through it, but sometimes also just doing it because at that point, they weren’t ready to learn. They didn’t have the bandwidth to learn.” The relationships that Shaunna had developed informed her actions when assisting teachers through their distance teaching transition.

Herminia summed up her transition as “it was hard. I had a hard time concentrating and paying attention to things because it’s unknown.” It was her sense of a loss of control that troubled her in the first two weeks. During her initial difficulties, she recalled the flood of emails she had received about the possible difficulties with continuing therapy in an online environment stating, “There were a bunch of emails; people talking, other psychologists, saying that they were not going to do DIS (therapy) because it was not HIPAA eligible.” Herminia was frustrated because “we didn’t have any direction from the top, from my director.” She and the other psychologist longed “to have something in writing because our licenses can be in jeopardy.” To prepare herself for when she might be able to resume with her students when “I got my list of

children, and I started organizing myself to see, okay, what are we going to do with this one and this one." Her strategy of self-organization was her path to self-preservation. "I think after a shock, you come to realize that this is the way it is. And you have to organize yourself. Otherwise, we die." Herminia recognized her need to create a sense of organization and order as she responded to the e-school community's transition.

Johnathan used one word to summarize his experience of the transition, "Chaos." Faced with the uncertainty, he cataloged "the necessary materials that it's going to take to teach from home." Knowing that the LEA launched a boilerplate curriculum to cover the two weeks between school closure and Spring Break, Johnathan "spent those two weeks preparing for the remainder of the year. I worked every day, probably eight to ten hours just creating Google class. I had to learn. I didn't know anything about it." While creating his lessons, "I had to keep in mind during those lessons that they weren't going to be face-to-face. . .. I'm a big face-to-face person. I want to be in front of you." As a veteran teacher, Johnathan had to adjust his typical student interactions approach as he developed lessons for distance teaching.

The suddenness of the transition caught Renee off guard: "We went home, and it was very abrupt." She was pleased to learn that the LEA would allow her to continue using Google Classroom. During the two-week transition, she directed her students to the LEA online curriculum on PowerSchool (https://www.powerschool.com). However, she found it "ended up being so much more confusing to students because they were like, 'What am I doing?' This was mostly PDFs, and they were like, 'What do I do with a PDF? I can't fill it in.'" Flooded with questions, she finally "posted some other things on my Google Classroom instead, and some kids

did that." Even with the LEA-provided lessons, Renee found herself needing to immediately create distance teaching lessons to keep her students engaged in her classes.

Like Johnathan, Dianne used the district-provided curriculum "as like a two-week time to kind of figure out what we're going to do." While planning, Dianne realized that even with her heavy reliance on technology before closure, "I also used myself and the students collaborating, and a vital part of the classroom was gone; our classroom was gone." Dianne felt overwhelmed by the technological aspect of the transition to one hundred percent online teaching explaining, "I've been trained a little bit but not well, and I don't have a comfort with it yet." Pausing in reflection, she added, "It was difficult." With her training as a technological support leader, Dianne was in a better position than most teachers during the transition to distance teaching, but even she felt out of her depths when facing the task.

When the Academic Department sent out its update on March 12, Gabriella began preparing her students for the possible transition. She said, "I remember telling my students, 'I am going to be communicating with you via Google Classroom. Make sure you know how to log in.'" Because of her preplanning, "It wasn't too difficult because I had Google Classroom. So, I knew that if I wanted to reach out to my students, all I had to was post some questions and have them answer through Google Classroom." Her students had been using Google Classroom since the beginning of the school year; Gabriella "knew every single one of my students were already in there." Already using Google Classroom accorded Gabriella a sense of connection to her students during the transition.

Jenny's transition encompassed many stages. When she first learned that we would be moving to remote teaching, "I panicked because I felt that I was not savvy in the area of virtual

learning. So, it was scary. I felt that I wasn't going to be capable of it." While reaching out to those who provided her students' services, she received some photos from one speech pathologist. "She sent me some photos of horses and chickens and roosters that she had taken from her friend's farm in Malibu, and I changed my attitude. I said, 'I'm going to have fun; this is going to be fun.'" At that moment, Jenny altered her point of view, and "it turned it all around for me, and then it became easy because I wasn't fighting or telling myself, 'I can't do it.'" Because of the needs of her students, she "knew I had to jump in on it. I didn't want any lag time." She learned how to get online, schedule Google Meets, and connect with her students.

Parent and Student Transition to Distance-Teaching

The prior distribution of Chromebooks and classroom experiences using the Google platform eased the transition for students and parents. Although abrupt, many parents commented on the ease of the transition to online teaching. "I think the fact that that was already something that kids are very familiar with made that an easy transition," cited Felipa. She recalled being "speechless" because of all the preplanning that was evident. She continued, "had it not been for the technology piece, it wouldn't have happened. If we weren't that step ahead where our kids already had Chromebooks, then it would have been a whole different scenario." Tasha stated that her daughters "did really well with the online learning." Each daughter set up a schedule to structure their days. Her older daughter needed to have this structure in eighth-grade due to her anxiety; she needed to "shape her day." For her seventh grader, "She's my nerd, so she was like scrolling through looking for more work." Sage felt that her daughter's transition was smooth as well, stating "Everyone has a Chromebook, and all the kids are used to using the Chromebooks, and they were used to getting assignments in this method." This familiarity

lessened the shock of the transition. She continued, “It seemed to be pretty close to how they were assigned things before the closure. So that piece seemed to flow pretty well.” Belinda was impressed that the school “had already laid a pretty solid foundation for the children to have what they needed to make the transition.” With the technology piece in place, her family’s “little hurdle was just the lack of focus. It’s just a different flow when you’re at home and in your own personal, comfortable space.” Belinda had some struggles with “not having that authoritative, respectful figure that you see in a professional teacher and educator. Now that shifts to mom who’s also loving and the caregiver.” Even with these challenges, Belinda felt “as far as what was given . . . what my kids needed to maintain their academic excellence, we were right on the money.” The past educational experiences of their children contributed to the positive experiences many parents felt during the transition.

The transition impacted many aspects of Valencia’s home life, as she described, “I had to upgrade my internet right away. I have two children, and I myself was working from home.” With everyone online, their internet speed was “not up to the standards of what we needed.” Before the upgrade, she found that when her children were attempting to access the online curriculum, “they were a little slow or would freeze.” Valencia experienced how vital reliable internet connections would be to successful access to the e-school community.

Trini’s son had some difficulties with the transition, which she described saying, “Wow. Well, it changed everything. It was now hundred percent technology, and wow.” In a follow-up response, Trini explained that the dependence on that was “not good.” Her son wanted “to see the teacher, the teacher.” She felt that at that time, “They need the teacher.” Trini felt that technology could not fill the void created by her son’s teachers’ absence in his daily life.

Petrona's family "had to scramble. Check it out. Try to learn what we can about the program. How to explain it." She felt she needed to make sure that her children realized that being home did not mean that school was out. "We encourage our kids to go in, talk to the teachers. They are still in school; this is not vacation," she replied with a laugh. Keeping her children engaged from the beginning was essential to Petrona during the transition to distance teaching.

This dependence on technology was upsetting to Gwen and her twin sixth-grade daughters. She commented, "Technology was the only school. To go from being in a classroom with a teacher at lunchtime every day to looking at a screen with a bunch of text, a totally different thing." Internet access was a challenge as well, she said, "The internet is not always super strong. There were days where PowerSchool was just shut down, and then it's self-taught. You're asking eleven years old girls to figure out how to do school on their own, with a computer screen." Gwen expressed her frustration with unreliable internet connections, confusion about the PowerSchool LMS, and the vacuum created by her daughters' teachers' scarcity of direct instruction.

Parents attempted to manage the transition to distance teaching for their children, and they felt comforted knowing that past experiences provided their children with a certain level of expertise in the Google Workplace. The unfamiliarity of PowerSchool, unreliable internet access, and the absence of daily teacher interactions concerned and frustrated parents. All Coleman school community members searched for their path to the newly forming e-school community while coping with the emerging COVID-19 worldwide pandemic.

Community Characteristics During Spring 2020 COVID-19 Emergency Closures

With schools closed for an indeterminate amount of time, Coleman's school community transitioned to emergency online teaching. Due to my unique position, I did not need to recreate a classroom experience online, but I did feel the need to connect with our students. As the foster youth advocate, I reached out to our students' case managers and social workers to ensure that our students in foster care had Chromebooks, had chargers, knew how to access the teachers' online classrooms, and knew how to reach me. I combed through IEP data with our special education teachers to formulate a plan for continuing student support services. As the RTI coach, I set up an advisory site on PowerSchool accessible to all students. On the homepage was a form for students to reach out if they needed tutoring, technical assistance, or a chat. The page also had dance lessons, social-emotional lessons, and updates on school-wide activities. I held meetups with students and one-to-one tutoring, but the lack of traffic underscored how many students no longer engaged at Coleman in Spring 2020.

Theme 1: Caring Support

Forming the e-school community required leadership and compassion; Principal Middleton attempted to provide both. "The one silver lining was the fact that we had each other," reflected Principal Middleton when recalling how staff and faculty reacted throughout this challenging time. She continued, "So, it was definitely having the supports that we had in place prior to was the silver lining. That people felt like they could at least lean on each other through it." The staff relationships encouraged through the community building practices promoted during Principal Middleton's tenure gave staff support through the transition.

Peer Supports Within Teaching Staff

With confusion at a fever pitch, staff turned to the administration and to each other for emotional and professional support. “It was a stressful time at the beginning, the fear,” Jenny expressed when recalling the support teachers provided one another. Those already using Google Classroom provided supports to those new to it. “I ended up helping some people with Google Classroom stuff, kind of on the side,” said Renee. She commented on staff sharing information about the students, for instance, “Did XYZ student check-in? No? They’re coming to me every day.” Through these exchanges, Renee felt that “we knew what was happening.” Johnathan stated that his grade level team met via video chat “to make sure we’re all on the same page.” During the meetings, they discussed “grading policies and our standards, what we want to use, what we’re going to use. Who’s on Google Classroom.” He spoke more extensively with the English teacher to support her in completing the eighth-grade senior defense projects. The honors classes had been preparing to present their defenses when schools closed. The English teacher, the school’s librarian, Johnathan, and others became a virtual panel for these presentations. “We did a little evaluation that had different criteria that the students would meet . . . the standards that were expected out of them.” Johnathan saw his support of his peer’s project as valuable “because they get to do their senior defenses in high school, this is a practice run . . . and our school is the only one.” He was impressed that students “reflect and think back and think of what they accomplished in sixth and seventh and eighth grade, and that’s hard for a thirteen-year-old to do.” The continuation of the eighth-grade defense added to the students’ and teachers’ sense of normalcy and expectations.

Not all teachers experienced a collective effort within Coleman's teaching staff. Dianne expressed her frustration with other teachers on her team, "I don't feel there was a consistent response among our staff." She formed this opinion based on "a lot of my kids, a good percentage, were saying, 'I don't know where to find my such and such work. I haven't heard from such and such teacher.'" Her annoyance grew when students told her "they did not see their teachers face-to-face or hear from their teacher from March until the very end of May, and I don't think that's okay" (Dianne). It was this lack of consistent effort that upset her. "I'm here doing my best to connect and do my best to teach something with all the things I have going on at home . . . and that bugged me, to be honest." The lack of consistent expectations of teachers frustrated Dianne as she compared her efforts to others on her grade-level team.

Administrative Supports for Staff

Experiencing support and direction from the administration was meaningful for the teaching staff. "I felt in some ways more supported during closure, professionally, and I think it's because people's time, not having so many factors to deal with in a day," stated Renee. Without the day-to-day issues, Renee explained, leadership could devote more time to the teachers, "but my administrators were still kind of absent from my work." Professionally Johnathan felt supported by the administration, but "personally, there's nothing. It's just, you're just getting by." When thinking of the supports given by the administration, Dianne weighed both sides, "It's hard because this situation sucks. And so did I have everything I needed? No, but is that someone's fault? Does that mean I was unsupported? No, it's just the situation." She expressed that, "I have five kids in this house and a husband and the demands that are on me as a wife and as a mom." Sitting in her bedroom teaching while her "kids are coming through, my husband's

coming through. It’s a lot.” What support she most appreciated was “just as pre-COVID, I felt if I needed to talk to someone, then I could.” Just knowing that she had someone on the administrative team, she could reach out to comforted Dianne as she grappled with balancing her home and work life.

When thinking of the administrative support provided, Gabriella conveyed her feelings stating, “the number one thing that comes to mind would be the redundant ‘we’re all in this together.’” Despite hearing that phrase many times, “I was doing things on my own. I wasn’t collaborating with anyone.” Gabriella understood why there was a lack of professional preparation because “we didn’t know what the heck we were going to do.” She felt that she had administrative support that “if I made a mistake, it wasn’t going to be used against me because I was trying my best to do whatever it was that I needed to do to do my job.” Gabriella was relieved that while she was learning how to be a teacher in the e-school community, the administrative team would not judge her efforts.

Jenny felt “one hundred percent supported because it seemed like everybody jumped in to help me.” She felt comfortable with her curriculum “because I’ve been using it for like three or four years. So I just had to figure out, how am I going to translate that to PowerSchool and how can I get help?” Jenny found value in the staff meetings when she found guidance from the administration “about different things and finishing out the school year; how are we going to do it?” Overall, she said, “I never felt like I was isolated because if I did feel that way, I would go check my email” and reach out to others. Jenny expressed that her connection to others was still strong even when using digital communication.

Herminia provided several examples of how the Coleman administration supported her during this time. “One day, I needed to go to pick up my files, and Principal Middleton said, ‘Yes, come.’ So, I never had any obstacles if I needed something from the administration.” She has been able to bring some of her school furniture to her home office “because I’m going to be working longer and will have some kind of comfortable space at home.” She summed up her perception of administrative support as: “if I need something and the administration can provide that for me to do my work better, they will do it.” Herminia continued to value the practical supports she received from the administrative team.

Because of her position, Shaunna found most of her administrative support off-campus. As a district site-based instructional coach, she had coaches’ meetings once a week. “We had the Chief Academic Officer on most of our calls. Our Assistant Superintendent of Instruction was there. So, it was really nice that higher-ups were actually paying attention because they realized that the coaches were hearing the sites.” As for the site administration, “I felt supported by admin in the sense they let me do what I needed to do. Did they understand what I was doing? No.” As the closure continued, the administration began to rely on Shaunna more. “Towards the end, it was ‘Hey, I need this paperwork from you.’ When it was all there, but for whatever reason, they didn’t remember where we had put it or why we had done it.” As Shaunna tried to balance responsibilities, this added paperwork “felt like a lot of what I was doing was trying to save their butt in the scene of compliance.” Overall, Shaunna valued that her position afforded her “the benefit of being in different circles,” where she could evaluate the situation from the site level, the LEA level, and as an out-of-district parent. “I think just having multiple areas was nice.” Shaunna continued, thinking about those who did not have her scope of alternative supports,

> I can see how, for some people, they felt very isolated if they were just a teacher of math and science and didn't have those connections. I could reach out; I knew who to ask. I could only imagine how frustrating it would be if you're just emailing the tech TOSA as Jane Smith and not getting a response. (Shaunna)

Shaunna's expansive network of relationships augmented the supports she needed to succeed in her position during the emergency mandated closure.

Site Supports for Families and Students

The already established relationships and parent expectations shaped the parent experiences of site supports. When asked what she would do if she or her son needed any supports during the emergency COVID-19 closure, Trini stated, "Well, I guess if I have any problems, I go first to Dianne." In response to a follow-up question, she explained whom she would contact at Coleman for any issues, including mental health and educational assistance, stating "I would go to Dianne." Like many of Coleman's parents, she had identified the person on campus she trusted. Valencia cited her daughter's English teacher, saying, "I would have probably reached out to her English teacher or to Principal Middleton. I'm sure they would have responded." Petrona's response mirrored Valencia's, "I would first contact the teacher and let her know what we were going through, what we needed, and CC all of you so that we were on the same page. So we were all working on it." Gwen stated, "I know I personally could call Principal Middleton. I could call the assistant principal at the drop of a hat." Despite her comfort with those on Coleman's campus, she stated, "I only know that because I know you guys personally, but I don't know what resources are out there for people who don't know you personally." Gwen voiced her concerns for those who might not have access to the school staff. She understood that some parents were not as active as she and her husband were before closure. This lack troubled her as she reflected on the advantaged access afforded by her resources and availability.

Felipa, Tasha, and Belinda all mentioned the meal service at Coleman. "I'm glad LEA kept that because that's probably, for some, that's all they had. That's why we continue to support it because we don't want that to ever go away for the other kids," explained Felipa. Tasha's family visited the food site at Coleman for more than nutrition. "The connection to the school of the meals every day was very important to my kiddos. Yes, seeing their school, seeing familiar workers at the school handing out the food, that was very important," she explained. Belinda's family did not utilize the food service, "but I can only imagine for the parent and kids who were in need, how beautiful of a gift that was." The continuation of daily food service provided nutrition for those struggling with food insecurity and a social connection to the school site.

Site Supports for Student Mental Health

The trauma of the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures highlighted the need for mental health services for students. "Mental health, I think, was addressed as best we could with school staff," responded Principal Middleton. She noted that although the LEA provided additional resources, "this was a place we could have done a lot better." When speaking with concerned parents, she offered to connect families to social workers and other counselors, "there weren't too many takers for that because again we're talking about very, very personal and painful situations." She noticed that "it just boils down to the foundation that you had prior. If there was nothing there before, it sure wasn't built in closure, right?" The relationships built before March 2020 were foundational for the continuation of the mental health supports provided.

Herminia processed the referrals for mental health services that she received from staff and administration during the closure. When given these referrals, her priority was "to communicate with a parent to see what's happening." She insisted upon phone calls, not emails, "to get a better picture." In sessions with students and on the referrals received, she witnessed anxiety, depression, withdrawal, and fighting with their parents cited as concerns. She did have some students report that online school "was better because they were being bullied in school and since they were not in school, they were not being bullied by others." Another concern of Herminia's was the reduction of abuse reports. "The numbers of cases being reported decreased like sixty percent, which is saying it's not like they're not, but nobody's reporting. Teachers are not seeing the bruises or the behaviors." With students coping with so much, Herminia expected a decline in learning. Noting that anxiety and depression "significantly" impact a student's self-motivation, she added, "not only desire but their cognition, their ability to concentrate, pay attention. It will be significantly affected by depression or anxiety or both." She warned, "we have to do whatever it takes to reach out to the parent and to see that their child is safe, which is the most important thing, safety." Herminia conveyed many concerns about student mental health and safety within the e-school community. The absence of direct daily access and intervention heightened her concern.

Although she had a plan for what she would do if she became aware of student mental health issues, Shaunna felt "we didn't have a plan in place for what to do." She mentioned an email that staff and parents received detailing district services, but she did not "think we had a system in place to deal with that. That wasn't something we talked about in a staff meeting." Like Herminia, she viewed addressing student mental health as vital, explaining, "We have to

figure it out because the kids that are in those situations aren't going to learn until we address the other situations." Acknowledging the challenges of the emergency closure, Shaunna reflected, "in emergency learning, we were allowed to just let them go because it was emergency learning like just stop following up at a certain point." Shaunna knew that some students were no longer actively contacted by the school site nor by the LEA because of the emergency aspects of the situation.

A section on the school advisory PowerSchool site was for social-emotional learning with lessons on frustration, motivation, and anger management. In addition, a form on the home page made sure students knew they could reach out to me as the RTI coach. I hosted peer meet-ups to see their friends and talk about how they were handling being at home.

I made several mental health check-in phone calls with the foster youth on my caseload. The assistant principal alerted me that one of the foster youths triggered a Gaggle alert with his writing in Google Docs. Gaggle was a program that monitored student Chromebook usage on district-provided devices. I knew this student's father was an incarcerated person separated from his son for 20 years minimum. The student decided to let his social worker know that he was open to adoption as he did not want to spend the rest of his childhood in foster care. The student had written this in a letter for his father, and Gaggle had tagged it. He and I had several conversations, some initiated by me, some by him. I also spoke with his house parent, his social worker, his CASA, and his therapist. When he was in a physical altercation at his group home, he called me to explain his side of the story, tell me how angry he was, how frustrated, and then he cried. Throughout this, I was grateful for all the time we had been able to spend forging this relationship before closure.

I referred at least three students to Herminia for mental health services. Teachers also reached out to me to see if I had heard from or spoken to those who had spent a significant amount of time in the RTI reset room. I contacted a few, provided them my cell number, and let them know they could call or text me as needed. I slowly earned students' trust through the nutrition and lunch supervision, the morning meet-and-greets, cooldown sessions, and so much more. They knew if they needed me, I would be there for them.

When teachers discussed the mental health supports provided during the emergency closure, their responses illustrated the differences in awareness. Jenny was not sure about mental health services, "I can't answer because I don't know. I just heard from a therapist that it was very difficult via virtual. So I don't know." Johnathan stated that "most of the stuff, if I've seen anything, has been more stuff that can be handled through school personnel, either RTI, the assistant principal, or Principal Middleton." Gabriella tried to recall an email about mental health services that "I read, that one or those several emails out of the thousands that we've received." She was unsure who at district to contact if a student was in crisis but felt confident that she could have contacted Principal Middleton and would be "told where to go." Renee thought that "mental health services continued; I believe that therapists were still offering teletherapy." As for new referrals for mental health supports, Renee replied, "I don't know what that process was like, or if it was even possible to get services. That is a gap I have in my knowledge of how that works." Dianne was the most positive about Coleman's continued mental health supports commenting, "It's been great. I mean, mental health, we have our RTI coach, we have Herminia." Teachers were unsure of what precisely the new procedures were to secure mental

health services for students. However, all of them knew who to contact if they were aware of a mental health situation.

Technological Supports for Faculty and Families

Technological supports during the emergency mandated closure were extremely important. With every communication, academic instruction, and student service moved to the digital realm, technology was the only way to build the e-school community. “I think that the technical support after closure not only was wonderful and great, but it was necessary on another level. The need for it became something that you could not live without,” stated Principal Middleton. She added, “thank God we built the relationships that we built prior to closure because that has been the foundation for providing the support we did.” Principal Middleton suggested that if trusting relationships had not already been established, the technological aspect of the closure would have suffered.

Shaunna provided most of that support. For teachers, that meant being a mentor, a sounding board, and, at times, a sympathetic listener. “Shaunna checked in with me regularly, and when I was doing as well, initially I was doing ok, and when I wasn’t, I told her,” recalled Dianne. Johnathan had similar remembrances of Shaunna’s assistance. He was having difficulty learning how to set up his Google Classroom, and she was “so, so helpful.” He met with Shaunna on Google Meet, and she walked him through the necessary procedures. Johnathan concluded by stating, “I have nothing but positive, yeah. I think if we would have had someone else in that role, I don’t know that it would have been as good.” Renee, too, appreciated the support from Shaunna. “A couple of times, it was, luckily, as simple as texting Shaunna ‘I’m sorry I’m texting you. Can you please post on my Google Classroom that I’m having technical difficulties?’ And

that was that." With guidance and support from Shaunna, Jenny became so proficient with her online classroom that she presented her PowerSchool pages to a conference of "two hundred special ed teachers from here all the way down to San Diego" (Jenny). This experience, she shared, "built up my confidence. That made me feel, you know, other teachers like it. The other teachers could go back and look at the recording of it and get some ideas or something like that. Not feel like it's so scary. That's wonderful" (Jenny). Through their relationships with Shaunna, teachers could express their fears, attempt unfamiliar tasks, and gain confidence in their technological skills.

Shaunna's relationships with the parents also created opportunities for problem-solving of technological issues. Students, parents, or teachers knew to alert Shaunna to a student's issue, and she would begin troubleshooting. "If they were at all computer savvy or their parents were, I would have them power wash because unfortunately, our devices get their brains full, and they need to be cleaned." She sent out a district-provided step-by-step explanation sheet. "That solves a lot of our problems because our kids don't turn off their devices, so they don't update, and that would solve about fifty percent of the problems." If the issue persisted, she would video chat with the family, having the student share their screen. Once she had done all she could do remotely, Shaunna would "have them call the LEA or put in a ticket and then take it to the warehouse." Once at the warehouse, "they were just swapped one for one because of the required site time for them to be repaired." When reflecting on her biggest technological support challenge, Shaunna stated, "I couldn't touch their computers. I couldn't just take it and fix it. I had to walk them step by step by step. So instead of taking two minutes to do something, it took

twenty-five." Distance teaching complicated once simple technological solutions at a time when technology was essential.

Two parents commented on technical difficulties they encountered during the emergency closure. One of Tasha's daughter's Chromebooks "went on the fritz. So she was able to email IT services. They opened up a ticket for her, and then we did the drive-thru at the LEA service center." Overall, she found the experience "very good." Sage's experience finding someone to assist her was a longer journey than Tasha's. "First, I went through a technical support person, Shaunna, and she couldn't help but said that we need to go to the district." Sage had the same phone number as Tasha, but people did not answer at the district. "You left a message, but who knows where it was left." After several phone attempts, she connected "to the correct person, and that person at the LEA was able to walk us through the issue with the Chromebook and got it working. So, once we got ahold of the person, it was a positive experience." Knowing that her daughter was missing out on school and homework made the experience more frustrating for Sage. "I quite frankly don't want to go through that process." Once Shaunna could no longer address a technological issue, it moved to the LEA service center, which was difficult to access and navigate.

The remaining parent participants did not experience technical difficulties, but two offered advice for possible supports. Gwen felt that "programs like PowerSchool are not interactive enough. There's just gotta be something out there that is a classroom. There has to be." Petrona's concern was the lack of training for parents on the platforms. "The students will not teach the parents, so how would we learn?" she asked. She felt that parents becoming trained would allow them to "help a kid" when they complained that they did not know how to access

the platform. Parents' concerns included increasing parent training and understanding of their students' technological tools to provide students with the best possible online classroom experience online.

Theme 2: Continuous Communication

The chance meetings in the hallways and meet-and-greets were replaced by technology as the main conduit for school communication and casual conversation. All communication became digital through text, phone, video chat, or email. Principal Middleton commented, "My inbox quadrupled." The emergency closure challenged the Coleman school community to connect exclusively at a distance.

Site Communication Within Staff and Administration

Because Coleman uses the Google platform for email and other cloud computing applications, much of the staff turned to Google Hangout Chat to communicate informally once the school closed. Principal Middleton commented,

> There was a technology chat, principal chat, Coleman chat, leadership team chat, I mean, you name it, and that was used to be able to continue to connect and definitely increased in frequency because you didn't have the in-person. So, whatever mode we had as tools at our fingertips was utilized because of that sense of urgency.

Principal Middleton felt the need to recreate the immediacy of person-to-person communication while in the digital space. She found "a silver lining" in digital communication where participants are connecting to the meeting in their personal spaces. "It definitely opened up another, new chapter of connection, which is quite nice." Principal Middleton discovered unexpected points of connection through the use of video conferencing.

Both Herminia and Shaunna commented on how the lack of in-person communication with the faculty impacted their ability to accomplish professional tasks. Herminia used email as

her main form of communication with faculty and administration. Although she "can put everything" in an email, she felt that in person, "I can say more things or make my point or in a different way." In reflection, Herminia stated, "We have to be creative, I guess," and then she added, "It's just different." Herminia's desire to stay connected to the students on her caseload drove her to ensure that she was communicating with the Coleman staff.

For Shaunna, her lack of immediate access to teachers and inability to read body language impeded her efforts.

> We're a staff that doesn't always read things, and so much is done in person. So, if I need something, chances are, I'm going to walk up to you versus send you an email just because that's my personality, and I find that I get it done.

In reflection, she found she was missing talking to staff in person because "they're going to tell me things they don't want to put in writing, or I can pick up on body language." This disconnection concerned Shaunna because she understood that she was a sounding board and a confidant for many teachers.

All teacher participants commented on the Coleman staff chat and how valuable it was for school-wide communication. Jenny stated, "I have really been enjoying the Coleman staff chat," adding, "that keeps us connected." Dianne viewed the chat as a place "where we can all catch up and share." Dianne felt that the administration was still very accessible because "they give their phone number and say, 'Hey, call me anytime,' and they mean it." As for the other teachers, she found that aside from the staff chat, "it depends on the teacher; I think we have a wide variety of personalities, a wide variety of comfort with technology and things like that." Johnathan reached out to a specific circle of staff members. "The English teacher and I talked all the time when we were doing the defenses." He also kept in contact through text with the school

counselor and the assistant principal. "I didn't feel like I couldn't reach out. I felt like I was always able to if I needed something." Gabriella also utilized personal modes of digital communication to stay in contact with specific teachers. "I have a few that I communicate with via social media." She used emails "when it pertains to something that is important in regards to students." Renee highlighted the increased sharing between staff members. She noted that there was "a lot more communication between staff, a lot more sharing resources, sharing ideas, a lot more helping each other get acquainted with whatever the technology is." On the negative, Renee noted, "There was not better communication from our administrator." Teacher-to-teacher communication continued informally on the Google Chat, but teachers and other school staff felt the effects of the distance created by digital communication.

Faculty Perspective of Site Communication with Families

The school staff at Coleman dedicated themselves to maintaining the connections made with students and families during the emergency mandated closure through communication. Keeping a boundary between work and personal life "was completely thrown out the window" as Principal Middleton attempted to continue to provide access to herself for families.

> Having parents know that they can come and see you every morning at the drop-off, or after school, or during the school day, that's one thing, but knowing that pretty much the only way they're going to get ahold of you is either via text or email is another.

She went from receiving a hundred emails to "probably something like three hundred emails a day." She ensured that students and parents had her cell phone number and felt comfortable calling or texting any time. Her motivation was her "fear of if I don't continue to connect this way, I'm going to lose them, and I wasn't willing to risk it." With spending much of

her time and energy constructing these valuable relationships, Principal Middleton expanded her ability even further than before closure.

Herminia valued connecting with families and students through video chats. Even though it was different, she tried to ensure that she was able to “connect with them no matter.” Families were able to share their homes and their personal spaces, adding new aspects to her connections. She explained, “I can be in their homes, and they’re sharing openly with me their homes and their experiences.” Of utmost importance to Herminia was that she was “connecting, and I think they value that.” Herminia recognized the importance of her continued connection to students and appreciated their willingness to invite her into their personal spaces.

Shaunna, mindful that everyone was “getting inundated” by emails, limited her parent contacts to “an as-needed basis.” Once a parent reached out or if she received a teacher referral, she “tried to respond, usually within about twelve hours.” She would continue to contact the parent until she resolved the issue or “three or four times if I didn’t get a response back from them.” To ensure transparent communication, she “also always CC’ed the teacher, the referring teacher, to keep everyone in the loop.” With all schooling held online, keeping students connected through technology was vital. Shaunna ensured that “when they (*parents*) reached out to me, I reached back to them,” but she “didn’t start the conversation.” Shaunna understood that families might be facing challenges unknown to her and therefore limited her communications.

Teacher participants expressed an increased level of communication with families during the school closure. Jenny had scheduled her students to meet weekly one-on-one for her Google Meets; she “would be making phone calls to remind all of them. ‘Don’t forget to log on,’ or ‘Your time is right now. Are you going to log on; I’m online. I’m waiting for her. Are you guys

having any problems?'" Gabriella attempted to make some parent phone calls, but when the parents "didn't recognize a number, they wouldn't answer the phone. So, then you send out a text." She primarily relied on "the platform. It was Google Classroom. It was email." Johnathan sent out weekly emails to parents to "work with their students because we're learning." He strove to "keep the parents involved" by including "ask your parents" sections in his lessons. Except for "a couple of parents," Renee communicated with her students' parents "pretty exclusively" through email, as did Dianne.

Teachers' communication affected the teacher-parent relationships. "I think everything had a tinge of 'I understand what you're going through. Just do the best you can. Let's just see what we can do here. Let's get through this,'" Johnathan reported; this was a departure from what he felt was his typical parent messaging. "Before, I didn't not care," but he would have been more likely to tell a parent, "Tell Jonny to get his butt in gear." Communicating with parents during her weekly Google Meets altered Jenny's relationships with several parents. "I became closer with some of the families; I became more appreciative of the parents who were reliable, and I think they started to appreciate me."

Dianne received "panicked emails from parents worried about all kinds of things; worried about missing assignments, worried about students' grades, worried about what would happen in the fall." She "tried to address as best I could" but admitted that "some of the answers, I just didn't have." Dianne commented, "the same parents who I was hearing from consistently before I still pretty much heard from consistently after." Renee felt "that online learning ended up putting a spotlight and focus on school and on issues in a very direct way, and so there was kind of more parent communication because we were at a distance." She noticed that parents "wanted

to know more. 'What are you doing' versus when we were just in school." She elaborated on this point, "They were kind of like drop my kid off, and I'm going to trust that you're all there all day and all working; whatever communication I get from the teacher is awesome, but that's a bonus." Now she found that parents had more specific questions because "there were so many more unknowns." Like Dianne, Renee devoted much of her parent communication to reassure her parents. Even though she sent weekly update emails, she had parents "who were confused still and asking questions." Teacher communications to families consisted of clarifications and reassurances with little focus on the academic progress of students.

Parent Perspective of Site Communication with Families

During the emergency closure, parents felt that they received the same level of communication from Coleman. Tasha commented, "I feel like it was the same. I feel like Coleman's always been good at communicating, and it didn't ramp up, per se, just kinda stayed." Felipa did notice an increase in digital communication, "It is a lot, but we rather the abundance is there than that there isn't enough, so it was understandable." Sage listed how the school administration kept her family informed: "via email and those weekly voicemail blasts." Belinda added that she "got text messages. I got a phone blast on my landline, and I also had an email communication." She appreciated Coleman alerted her about new postings on the LEA website because "you're already directed there, and you are immediately informed on what the superintendent is saying." Belinda concluded, "You guys have absolutely reached out and kept us well informed." Trini commented on her email conversations with Principal Middleton. Trini had expressed her concerns about her son's academic advancement; Principal Middleton assured her, "it is not something that is going to happen only to one student. It is happening in all

communities, to everyone, the nation, the whole world; this is something that is impacting everyone." These words put Trini's mind at ease. Petrona felt comfortable with her level of communication, adding, "we're in constant communication." Although all communication was through email, she knew "that I can email any of the staff, and you guys will send me an email right away." One parent, Gwen, perceived an alteration, "before the closure, it was one hundred percent; it was maybe five percent." When asked about what may have contributed to the decline, Gwen responded, "We're in a freaking pandemic." Most parent participants were comfortable with the amount of communication they received from Coleman.

Teacher-parent-student communications varied for parents. "I can't compare because teachers have always been easy to access," stated Valencia, adding, "if I've ever needed anything, usually the person I bug is my daughter's English teacher, and she responds the same day. She is super at communication." The continued use of email worked well for Felipa's family when communicating with teachers, "it was effective, especially because so many of us were going through so many things. I guess it was easier to open when it's best convenient for us." Knowing whom to contact proved critical for some parents.

Trini and her son received constant communication from only one of his teachers, letting them know when "she was available. She was present at a certain time and would wait for the students." Sage also noticed a lack of teacher communication.

> I don't think one time when I heard from an individual teacher myself I kind of don't think they would have reached out if like, my daughter fell off the face of the Earth. I don't know if they would have asked about her. Maybe the math teacher.

Sage expressed her frustration with her daughter's teachers' lack of connection with her and her daughter. When asked what actions by the teachers led her to feel this way, Sage replied,

"It's kind of like if a parent's not complaining, I'm not going to reach out to them. Like, just let it be if the parents are not complaining. Fine. I don't see the kid for a while. Fine." She completed her response, "that group was just kind of going through the motions and getting through day-to-day." Although Gwen also felt that her daughters' teachers did not communicate very often, she was "very sensitive to the fact that this was new to them too, and we're all just in shock, trying to survive the couple of months." Gwen recognized that the teachers were attempting to deal with their lives while still trying to teach. In contrast, Sage felt that her daughter's teacher's lack of communication was a continuation of behaviors she observed before the closures.

Two of the parent participants noticed that most teacher communication was with the students and not with them. Petrona expressed that in her mind, her son could "take care of it, and I would let him. I didn't feel the need for me to step in since I knew they were working together; my son and the teachers were able to communicate." Tasha noticed that the Google Meets and email communication "shifted to be more like to the kids." Both Petrona and Tasha appreciated that their children could stay connected to their teachers and were confident that the communication was sufficient.

Because she had two children in very different academic programs, Belinda's teacher communication experience depended upon the teachers. For her son, teacher communication occurred through email. The same was true for her daughter's teacher at the beginning of closure, but her academic placement provided additional teacher access. Since her daughter was in a moderate to severe special education class, she received one-on-one meetings with her

teacher. These meetings provided Belinda with an additional access point to her daughter's teacher, and they were able to "check-in, say hi" every week.

Communication during the emergency mandated COVID-19 closure moved from in-person daily interactions to digital communications. Many of Coleman's staff worked to bridge their peer communications with the addition of informal chats and other social media platforms. Communication between staff and administration consisted of Google Meet sessions for staff meetings and emails. Parents received many emails from Coleman, and most felt that the level of communication was satisfactory. The frequency and quality of teacher communication with families depended mainly upon the connections built before the closure.

Theme 3: Active Engagement

Parents Online Engagement

The emergency closure of Coleman denied the parent community daily physical access to the school staff. Belinda reflected on this loss, "The only difference is because I was there in the physical school so often that I feel like a little piece has been yanked." Sage remarked that "dropping off my daughter and being involved physically at the school, I was naturally in the know about things. I felt more connected because I was there." Gwen echoed this sentiment, "The whole thing was so devastating. I mean to go from me hugging you every day and the girls seeing that to zero connection is too shocking." The loss of the daily informal engagement with the school site was a hardship for some parents.

Coleman's PTSA, ELAC, and SSC conducted their monthly meetings on Google Meet. Trini recounted the last ELAC meeting, "It was funny. We didn't know how it worked, the Google Meet. The president didn't make it for that time." Although this would be the last

meeting of the school year, there were “very few persons. We did the meeting with Shaunna, Principal Middleton, and Renee. It was a really short meeting.” Using Google Meet impacted Trini’s experience, “to be honest, I finished with a huge headache because it was too much for me. I mean a meeting online.” Trini’s inexperience with technology hampered her ability to engage in the Coleman e-school community.

Tasha reached out to others in the Coleman parent community through a parent Facebook page. “We have a Facebook parent page. It’s only positivity on there. So, I would share all the programs that are offering services to our families.” Petrona facilitated the Facebook page for the ELAC parents. She, too, alerted other parents to services available, especially the daily food services, “That need was one of the big ones because more than half of the students, they eat there. That is the meal right there at school.” In this way, Petrona continued her role in Coleman’s English Language Learner parent community,

> There’s some parents that they work, and they don’t have the opportunity to learn so much about the district. And if I know where they have to go I can easily tell you ‘Go this way or that way.’ And that’s part of community, you know, to help each other, to help our parents be able to help their students.

Petrona continued to be a pillar of the Spanish-speaking community at Coleman, informing parents of changes, services, and opportunities for their children.

Felipa worried that the transition to all online communication would disenfranchise some families because, “we might all be in this together, but it looks a lot different for all of us.” She was concerned with families’ lack of access to reliable internet connections and that “an email was not going to be enough for them.” Valencia also was concerned about parents being able to engage in the online community due to internet access. “There were names of companies given to the parents. I did hear from some parents that they were trying to call the companies, that the

phone numbers were disconnected and that some of the providers weren't serving their area." Although she could connect to the e-school community, Valencia worried about those families that did not have the resources or information.

Student Online Engagement

Teachers did not officially record student attendance during the emergency-mandated COVID-19 closures. The LEA allowed schools to utilize the attendance accounting from prior months as a proxy for their Daily Student Attendance counts. Therefore, the exact numbers of students accessing and engaging during this time is unverified, but an estimate is possible through the administration and teachers' experiences.

When Principal Middleton reflects on student access and engagement during the emergency mandatory school closure, the first words that came to her were, "it makes me sad." She went on to elaborate, "it was definitely something that was sad for me because this isn't the way we want to connect with students. When I started to see that we were losing a lot of them, I can't even put into words what that did for me." She recognized that students had not chosen this new school reality, that it "was forced upon them. That you wouldn't want this for them. So, it is definitely just something that made me feel an immense amount of sadness." Due to her drive to increase student engagement, especially through the arts magnet, Principal Middleton felt troubled by the increased disconnection of students.

Herminia focused on child poverty when discussing student engagement. With seventy-six percent of students identified as socioeconomically disadvantage (CDE, 2020), Herminia reflected on space available in students' homes. "Do you have a space that you can call your own to do your work in a quiet place? Not every student has that. Children who live in poverty, they

usually share rooms or homes or apartments with many other people." According to Herminia, these shared spaces create additional engagement obstacles for students in poverty. "If they have brothers or sisters that are in a similar situation, trying to access their education, where are they going to go if there's only one table that they can share?" She viewed these circumstances as a continuation of a societal issue. "Children who are poor, they have less advantages to access their education, either pre-COVID or post-COVID, it doesn't matter." Herminia understood that parents were doing the best they could in this situation but "many, many poor kids are not going to be accessing education during this time and that's very sad." Those students in poverty were foremost in Herminia's thoughts when reflecting on student engagement during the closure.

Shaunna believed that "only 30 to 40% of the kids responded. They weren't turning in work. They weren't doing much. They weren't going to meetings, but a lot of it was that they never were independent workers." Expanding on her thoughts, she added, "they were never able to work on their own, so why would we hope that they could now? Their teachers were always on them, helping them." Lack of student-teacher relationships was another reason Shaunna believed students did not log into classes. "Why would they want to go to the class of the teacher that hates them already? They knew the teacher hated them, so why? What's it going to matter?" She did observe some students who were eager to spend time with their teachers. "We had kids that really enjoyed that interaction with the teacher, that were waiting for the teacher in the classroom. They really wanted to talk to them." She credits the engagement of these students to the efforts of certain teachers. "We had teachers go above and beyond," she shared. Shaunna believed that student engagement reflected teachers' efforts and relationships built before closure.

Shaunna viewed the release of the LEA's grading policy as a significant impediment to student engagement during this time, "I think as soon as we came out with that grading policy, we were screwed for engagement." She went on to describe the grading policy.

> A student couldn't get a lower grade than what they got at the 10-week grading period. However, if they got an F at the 10-week grading period, you had to prove as a teacher that you did everything within your means to reach out to that child. Realistically, our teachers didn't do that.

Like Herminia, Shaunna was sensitive to the possible struggles students encountered while trying to learn from home. "I don't know if they're now in charge of six younger siblings and the four kids next door. I don't know if food is an issue. I don't know what's an issue." Shaunna credited the lack of grade accountability and the possible increase in home life issues as factors in student disconnection.

Teachers experienced mixed levels of student engagement. About half of Renee's elective students were accessing and submitting work, but "for ELD consistently showing up, it was really only about 10 out of 50." Having an adult at home was the primary factor that encouraged students to log in. "If there was a parent or an older sibling or uncle or someone who was home and being able to monitor the kid, those are the kids who engaged on a regular basis," she explained. She saw the impact of the LEA grading policy when students asked why they had to do work since "I don't get graded, so, what does it matter?" She reminded students that they were "warrior scholars," and the response Renee received was "Hahahaha. I don't have to see you. I'm no warrior scholar no more." Renee attempted to connect back to a classroom community expectation, and the students no longer believed in its value.

Johnathan witnessed differing levels of engagement when comparing his honors class to his others and from the beginning in March to the end of the year. "When we got back . . . I

would say a little more than half to two-thirds of my honors class and then the other classes, maybe four or five kids per class," and Johnathan confirmed that a typical class size at the time of closure was "30 plus." By the end of the school year, participation in his classes "was down to less than half in the honors and maybe two, maybe three. I had one class that I didn't have anybody show up." He attributed this attrition to the LEA grading policy since he felt that once students knew their grades would remain the same as what they earned in March, "they stopped showing up." Like others, Johnathan believed that once students were no longer accountable for their grades, they did not engage in the e-school community.

The remaining teacher respondents reported varying levels of student engagement. Dianne stated that about seventy-five percent of her students accessed her online academic materials but added, "that's a broad question because I'm counting if one person looked at one thing or even if they did ten minutes of iReady." A realization that surprised Dianne was "some of the top students that were in my class had a really difficult time with the online." These students reached out to Dianne, "They were checked out; some of them unmotivated." In a follow-up response, Dianne provided details of a video conference conversation with one of her students.

> I had a student say to me that at school, the way her day was structured, when she would go to math, she's ready for math. She had her items, and she had her materials. In her mind, these are her words, her mind was there, and she was ready. She knew she was going to do math for about an hour. Then she would move on to her next class, history, and go throughout her day, and she said to me that the structure of the day helped her do really well, and now that she was at home—and by the way, we were speaking on Zoom at this point. She is in her bed under the covers, talking to me, and she's like, 'Now that I'm home, I just, I don't have the structure. I don't have a schedule. I don't do what I'm supposed to do. (Dianne)

Dianne viewed this lack of structure as detrimental to her student's ability to focus and successfully engage in the e-school community.

Gabriella experienced similar levels of student engagement with her online materials. "I want to say maybe out of 30, a good 20 accessed the curriculum." She believed that her choice of materials to post was a contributing factor to the level of engagement. "I made it so simple for them because all I wanted them to do was communicate with me. I just wanted to make sure that they were there," she commented. Keeping lines of communication open allowed Gabriella to keep her students engaged in her class materials.

Jenny encountered "100%" of her class accessing the online materials. She attributed her success to her strong parent communication, small class size, and individualized curriculum. Jenny, with the assistance of Shaunna, provided each student with a dedicated PowerSchool page linked to the class homepage. The students' pictures identified the links so that her students who could not read or had great difficulty reading could still navigate the site. Jenny spoke with parents every week and reviewed the online materials to guide parents and support their efforts in teaching their children. In addition to the online resources, Jenny mailed hands-on materials for specific students "so they can have what I need for them to work on, and then I talk them

through it." Because of her one-to-one approach and other advantages, Jenny was successful with 100% student engagement.

Classroom community. With the closure of physical classrooms, the "in-person" school experience transferred to video conferences through Google Meet. Except for special education classes, there was no set schedule for teachers to hold these online meetings. All teacher participants held Google Meet sessions with varying results. Renee witnessed higher levels of participation during Google Meet sessions when they first began, and then "it was about maybe 12 kids, and then towards the end, it was about 8." Johnathan held Google Meet sessions once a week for about an hour. He scheduled two sessions: one session for his honors class and one for his other classes. He found the number of students willing to engage in these was higher than those accessing the online materials. "Everybody seemed to show up for Google (Meet) because they want to say hi." Even with this perception of engagement, he clarified that of his 100 students, "25 would show up out of those 100. So, it's still a quarter of the class." He spent time reviewing and previewing the online materials and then spent the remainder of the time to "give them some encouragement, ask about their families." For Dianne, the Google Meet sessions were her "favorite part." She held three to four sessions per week. Like Johnathan, she held separate sessions for her honors class, where she "has 14 kids show up at once, which is nearly half the class." In her other classes, she "had at the most ten in one session." When asked why this was her favorite part, Dianne stated, "I got to see them. I got to see their faces, and we would catch up a little. There was very little instruction because I wanted to have that connection with them." As Google Meet sessions replaced the in-person class sessions, teachers had varying degrees of participation.

At the beginning of the emergency mandated closure, Gabriella held one Google Meet session per week, per class period, but she found that she was not successful. “They didn’t want to turn on their cameras, and hardly any of them wanted to talk. Three or four that wanted to take over, and they didn’t want to stop talking.” On average, these per-period sessions only garnered “six to seven students, so . . . [she] closed that down.” She replaced the per-period sessions with one weekly session for all classes. Even though she experienced light attendance, she saw the value in holding these weekly meetings “because all I wanted was for them to know that I was here, even if I wasn’t physically there, they could see me, they can talk to me. They can ask questions or just tell me anything that they wanted to.” With very few students accessing, Gabriella’s Google Meet sessions were still vital to those students who accessed them.

Jenny scheduled one-to-one Google Meet sessions every week with her students and their parents. Some of her students’ physical and mental limitations required parents’ or another adult’s assistance during sessions. She would alert the parents if physical objects were necessary. “If you’re to identify money, I tell the parents to get five single dollar bills because we’re going to work on this, and I need you to sit there and help your son or daughter.” Jenny appreciated these weekly sessions “because I could really have that one-on-one time I couldn’t get in the class. Every time I would try, there was an interruption.” Jenny enjoyed her one-to-one Google Meet sessions with students because she provided focused instruction that was not possible in the regular classroom setting.

All parent respondents expressed their understanding of the teachers’ challenges while continuing school in the online format. Their children’s experiences of online classroom community varied greatly. Lack of structure during the Google Meet sessions frustrated Gwen.

“There was no organization. It wasn’t a classroom environment at all. It was, you know, and everybody was talking over each other.” After attending several Google Meets, Gwen’s daughters decided to stop going “because they’re not getting anything out of it, and it stresses them out.” Sage’s daughter did not attend many Google Meets because they were not available. “I think the PE teacher tried to do some initially in the beginning, but that fizzled out after maybe a few attempts. The history teacher—nothing at all, just assigned worksheets.” Sage recalled that her daughter’s English teacher “tried to do the Zoom thing or the video classroom or whatever, and I think she was struggling technology-wise, and so it didn’t go much further.” Only her daughter’s math teacher continued to hold regularly scheduled online office hours with students.

Some parents felt Google Meet sessions were more successful than others. Trini’s son attended few Google Meets and, to her frustration, completed all of his work “in two hours. He was done. The whole day.” Petrona only recalled the Google Meets he attended with his English teacher. “She was very friendly and tried to encourage. She asked different kinds of questions just to help the kids be more happy or welcome them to the conversation, and I like that she did that.” Petrona shared that her son’s English teacher would read the names of those in the Google Meet session and speak to every single one of them.

Parents with eighth-grade students conveyed more positive Google Meet experiences than others. Felipa recalled, “I want to think most of their teachers would actually set up in-person Google Meets just so they could not only review the information they had to go through, but also bring that environment in and give it some sort of normalcy for them.” Tasha concurred with Felipa. She especially mentioned the history and English teachers, “The history teacher was fantastic at doing that. The English teacher, I know she struggled with the tech piece, but she was

funny, and she connected very well with the kids." Felipa expressed that the eighth-grade teaching team's Google Meet sessions encouraged the continuation of the students' relationships with the teachers.

Valencia and Belinda's daughters' special education IEPs necessitated weekly scheduled in-person Google Meets. During this time, I assisted in creating and updating Google Meet attendance records for all special education students to fulfill the LEA's legal obligations. Valencia did not know her daughter's schedule; I confirmed that she attended all her classes for at least thirty minutes per day. Since her daughter was in Jenny's class, Belinda's daughter met once a week for thirty minutes. Belinda commented on the "community type vibe" of the sessions because Jenny would have one of her classroom aides also participate, and they "would talk about more than just academic things in life." During the last week of school, recalled Belinda, "they ended up having a Zoom party with the class, and we got to see everyone there. And that was a really great reunion." Belinda appreciated the Google Meet sessions her daughter attended, especially the end-of-the-year whole class party.

Student voice. After Coleman closed, students were able to have their voices heard through survey forms, emails, phone calls, PowerSchool LMS, and Google Meet sessions. Principal Middleton, Shaunna, and Herminia cited the advisory pages posted on PowerSchool as one location where students could reach out. Shaunna qualified her answer with, "but it was also for the kids that understood how to get there because we still had some kids that didn't understand that." Principal Middleton included the importance of personal phone calls home and one-to-one Google Meets. "We became aware of some pretty dire situations, and if it wasn't for that, we wouldn't have been able to intervene and provide some kind of support. I'm so grateful

that we have that tool." Shaunna speculated that "for a lot of our kids, they're missing that person." She was thinking of those students who spent their lunches in the library talking graphic novels with the librarian or who spoke every day to the security staff. Shaunna reflected, "not having that person and that availability is really hard. So, it's almost like how do they put in a ticket that they just need to talk?" Shaunna expressed her concern with the distance created by technology between a student's need to talk and those willing to listen.

Teacher representatives solicited student input using the Google Workplace with meets, chats, forms, and discussions. Dianne and Johnathan used their Google Meet sessions to measure and adjust their online lessons. Dianne would start each of her sessions with, "Hey guys, how's everything going? What's working? What's not working?" Johnathan asked his students, "How are the lessons? Do we need to modify them?" Both teachers incorporated the student feedback into their lesson planning. Renee's Google Meet sessions were driven by her desire to create a space for connection, "It's just about being in community with one another." Google Meet sessions provided Renee with an avenue to be in community with her students.

Jenny spent many of her early one-to-one Google Meet sessions clarifying the situation for her students. "They kept asking me, 'When are we going back?' 'Why can't we go back?'" She used her lessons to enforce the importance of mask-wearing and social distancing. As time progressed, her students began to express how much they missed their friends and the adults from school. To keep students connected with those they were missing, Jenny created "little games while online to keep their memory alive to remember their classmates' names." Jenny believed that these interactions "kept that community feeling going." Playing games, chatting,

and reassuring students were methods Jenny employed to keep her students connected to the e-school community.

Written responses were another method teachers utilized to capture student contributions. When she realized that students were not engaging in the online academic discussions, Gabriella "changed it to social and emotional questions." Gabriella found that these questions allowed her "to establish that sense of belonging or community." She wanted her students to acclimate to "the different classroom setting." Renee furnished her students with a check-in form that "was mostly socio-emotionally focused." She appreciated that "students really engaged in that."

Parents reported that their children expressed their concerns, questions, and opinions either through email or during Google Meet sessions. Tasha commented that "there was a lot of communication back and forth between the kids and the teachers." She also noted that the teachers' response time was rapid. "They would email the teachers, and they would get almost instant feedback." Petrona, Sage, and Trini reported that their children emailed their teachers, but they also mentioned the availability of teachers' Google Meet office hours. Felipa and Gwen's daughters reached out to me to schedule individual Google Meet sessions. Felipa's daughter "didn't get too much of the information" covered in her honors math class, so she scheduled tutoring sessions. Gwen felt that her daughters "couldn't get a word in edgewise" during the class Google Meet sessions but that our one-on-one time was "the healthiest interaction for sure, that they had." Because of her academic program, all of Belinda's daughter's Google Meet sessions were individual where "there was always time for personal reflection." Only Valencia felt that teachers heard her daughter's voice during class Google Meet sessions, because "she always has an opinion, and she would speak up during the session, and she would ask questions."

Student choice. After the closure, implementing student choice at Coleman varied by the teacher. “I feel like the choice part of lesson planning was not something that was offered to students, unfortunately,” remarked Principal Middleton. She noted that the message given to students was, “this is what we’re able to offer, and let’s get it done, kids.” Herminia agreed that she did not witness any choices supplied to students. However, Shaunna recollected that Renee and Dianne posted some lessons where students could use “different ways to show . . . understanding.”

Teachers’ technical comfort influenced their abilities to provide choices. For example, Renee developed choice boards for her ELD students.

> I was really proud of my choice boards; they were pretty cool. I made them in Slides, and they were all hyperlinked, and they were super cool. So, in my ELD class, we were learning about the hero’s journey. After we developed some base knowledge together as a group, they got to choose different activities that explored different aspects of the hero’s journey. One was watching a video and respond. Another one was vocabulary.

Renee excitedly posted these lessons, “choice boards are really cool.” Dianne recalled a choice lesson she assigned to her science classes. Dianne invited students to create their versions of a neuron, “I told them, ‘You can do this however you want. You can draw it. You can create in a Google slide . . . you can build it.’” She recounted how one of her students created his model “out of materials from his house. Which I thought was really, really cool. He made an actual sculptural structure of a neuron.”

Johnathan incorporated choice in at least one of his lessons where “they wrote as if they were a person back in that time;” the person was the students’ choice. Jenny and Gabriella did not offer choices in their academic work, but Jenny posted choices in electives. For example, “They could choose the art project on PowerSchool or the dance thing or choir; they had the choice of all three.”

Overwhelmingly parents reported that teachers did not offer choices when posting work. "It was very directed by the website, from what I could tell. It was very rigid," stated Tasha. Petrona's son "just do what he was given. He just followed the instructions." When asked about choices, Gwen replied that her daughters had "no traces" of choice in their core classes and maybe a few in their elective classes. Belinda explained that her daughter's teacher "just had like a layout that was pretty self-explanatory, which was fine. I felt comfortable with that." Valencia, Felipa, and Trini did not know if teachers had given choices, and the only choice that Sage could recall was whether students participated in the math teacher's office hours.

Peer collaboration. Technical limitations restricted student peer collaboration and interactions. Principal Middleton was aware that "some teachers were proficient enough with the online technology where they were able to have students meet with each other at least via things like a Google Doc." As the instructional coach, Shaunna fielded teacher inquiries on integrating student interactions on PowerSchool and Google Meet. In describing one teacher's attempt, Shaunna recounted that the teacher "was trying to do an escape room, and we were having some issues with our technology bumping up with the worksheets." Herminia was "not aware" of any opportunities for students to work with one another.

Teacher responses confirmed the lack of opportunity for online student collaboration. Only Dianne, the teacher who attempted the escape room, provided students an avenue for peer-to-peer collaboration. She explained, "I did allow them to work together and share information, share clues to get through the escape rooms." Due to her one-to-one Google Meets, Jenny's students could not work with one another during her classes, but their speech therapist held group sessions in which the instructor guided them through conversations. Gabriella, Johnathan,

and Renee were unable to create online collaborative spaces. As Renee stated, “collaboration felt really difficult to curate during this time.” Technology and other aspects of the e-school community impeded teachers’ ability to create online collaborative lessons for students.

Parents named few opportunities for peer collaboration. Belinda was grateful for her daughter’s peer interactions during her speech sessions. She explained, “A few sessions, another young lady was involved, and I thought that was great because it kind of gave us this classroom feel.” Belinda appreciated that her daughter had “a little bit of time to have social interactions” but noted that her son “did not.” Seventh-grader parents described a partner science project that teachers assigned before the closure. Petrona remembered, “he actually did most of his work by himself, but I think there was one project, and it was like half done.” Sage provided more details about the project, noting that teachers assigned it to the students at the beginning of the school year. Her daughter had been working on the project with her partner before the closure, but the teacher canceled it “a couple of weeks into the closure.” The teacher’s decision discouraged Sage, “I was dumbfounded on why. I thought it would be a great opportunity to continue science learning and to work together as a team. She certainly didn’t take any consideration that some students might have already started it.” Five parents discussed the class Google Meet sessions as opportunities to interact with peers, but as Tasha mentioned, “they would see other students in the big classroom meeting, but there was no collaboration with other peers.” Tasha’s comment highlighted that students might glimpse one another in a Google Meet session but no longer had opportunities to connect in either structured or unstructured moments.

Student reactions to the lack of peer collaboration and interaction concerned many of the parent participants. Petrona described her son as “very crazy, very sad. He missed everybody. At

first, he was very excited that we were going to be at home, but now, it's like, 'I miss my friends.'" Valencia's daughter has "completely suffered. She can't see her friends and, you know, her best friend? She had seen two times, and one time was because we bumped into her at Walmart." Felipa's concern was that her daughter would be transitioning to high school in the fall. Due to feeling physically disconnected, students would only have "virtual relationships, and how will they transition into the real relationships?" Because Felipa chose not to give her daughter a mobile device, she found that her daughter was struggling with a loss of social interactions. The family has been coping with the "anger and frustration and emotions that come with having the lack of that." Felipa expressed that her daughter's disconnection from peers increased her frustration and anger towards the closure situation.

The loss of social interaction induced anxiety for Sage as well, which she expressed, saying, "It's negatively impacted her ability to socialize face-to-face now because it's been several months of texting or face-timing." Sage did not "think that the school did anything to keep that because the teachers didn't have live classrooms with other students on video and therefore you lose connection." Tasha overcame her apprehensions about social media and allowed her daughters to have an Instagram account "against my better judgment" because it has "been very hard not seeing their friends."

Belinda believed that her son "is going to be totally fine. He spends a lot of his time playing video games online" with friends. It is her daughter's social development that distresses her. Before coming to Coleman, Belinda's daughter had difficulties having "relationships with peers and wanting to play with kids her own age." While attending Coleman, Belinda witnessed a change in her daughter's social activities as "she gravitated towards other young girls and kids

her age, and I was so excited." While being out of school, Belinda's daughter spent most of her time with adults, and Belinda worried that she will not "be as eager to jump into hanging out with her friends as opposed to how she was before we left." Belinda's worry about her daughter's peer interactions showcases that she could not continue her development of social skills during the closure.

Gwen felt that the sudden disconnection from peers derailed her daughters' social transition to middle school, especially for one of her twins "she felt a huge loss almost to the point of grief." Through peer collaboration in her classes, her sixth-grade daughter had become best friends with an eighth grader. Because of the closure, they had not seen each other; when she texted him, "he had moved to Texas, and she went through a couple of days where it was the end." Her daughter's social experience in middle school had been "way better than elementary school." As her daughters' isolation deepened, Gwen noticed a shift in their academics. "It's impossible to continue with the motivation to learn when you're isolated like this." She summarized the suddenness of their loss, "They immediately connected and were so integrated into it, and then it was over." The suddenness and the severity of its impact on her daughters shocked Gwen.

Conclusion

Coleman was a school that had been evolving under the leadership of Principal Middleton. Teachers and other staff had become more collegial and trusting of the administration and other staff. Parent engagement had increased. Through the arts magnet grant and other initiatives, student engagement was becoming an expectation of all classes. Student mental health was a priority for staff and administration, as was the wellness of foster youth. Principal

Middleton had not established all the systems and procedures she hoped for, but the school was progressing towards her vision for Coleman.

When the emergency mandated COVID-19 closure occurred, many of Coleman's school community foundations were damaged. Students could no longer interact with peers and adults on campus. Parents no longer had immediate access to teachers and administration. Teachers no longer met to chat with colleagues during lunch, nutrition, or preparation periods. The curricular shift was extreme, with a huge learning curve for all members of the Coleman community. To better detail these impacts, the next chapter will analyze these results through the lens of the conceptual framework.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS

When this study began, little was known or understood about the COVID-19 virus and the worldwide pandemic that it was to become. This study captured the first moments of the pandemic as schools attempted to comprehend the upheaval and what was to become the 'new normal.' This study offers a glimpse at the impact of the pandemic on the day-to-day lives of students, their parents, and school staff at the Los Angeles County middle school community.

Purpose of the Study

As a qualitative case study, the purpose of this investigation was to record the characteristics of a Los Angeles County middle school community before and during the emergency mandatory COVID-19 school closure. Through interviews, document collection, and researcher participation, the study illustrated the school community's many adjustments as they transitioned from a physical- to a digital-school community.

Research Question

The following research question guided this study to investigate the magnitude of the emergency mandated COVID-19 closures on Coleman's school community.

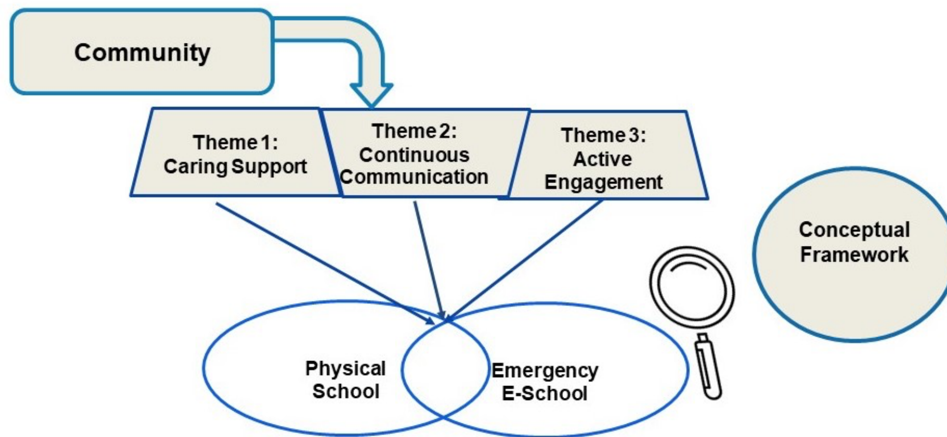
> How did a mandatory school closure and a rapid shift to emergency distance teaching transform the school community at a Los Angeles County public middle school?

Discussion

Answers to this study's research question required utilizing the conceptual framework combined with the themes of community to guide the analysis. Figure 11 demonstrates the synthesis of these factors.

Figure 11

Theme/Conceptual Framework Synthesis



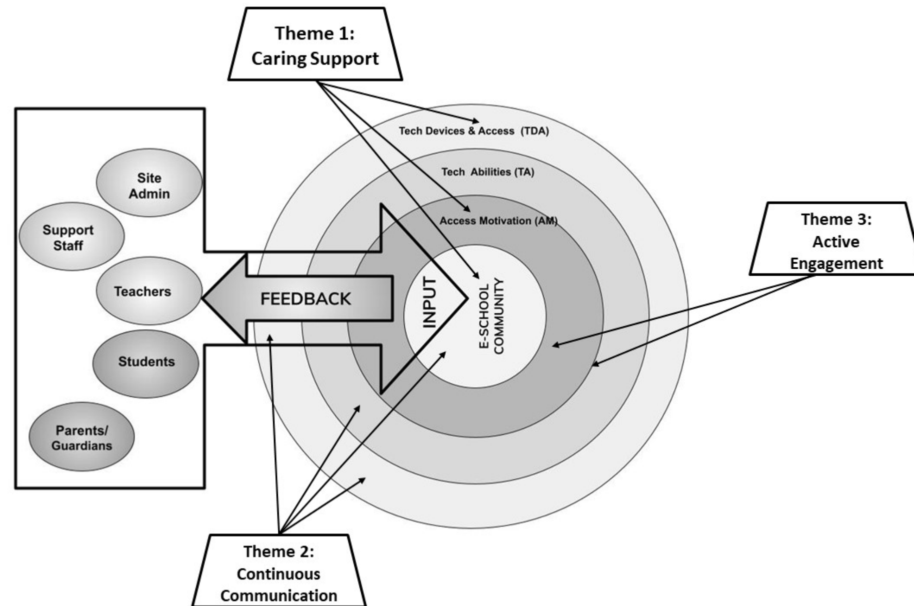
This discussion begins with the first level of noise, Tech Devices and Access, and then proceeds through the other two layers of noise. Next, there will be an examination of communication on the Communication Pathway. The final area of the framework for consideration will be the newly formed e-school community.

Community Themes and Conceptual Framework

The community themes identified by the participants organized the data for analysis. When coding for the conceptual framework connections, themes encompassed data applicable to multiple areas of the framework. Figure 12 illustrates how the data organized within the themes correlate to the conceptual framework.

Figure 12

Theme Integration in the Conceptual Framework



Note: Conceptual framework adapted from *A Framework for Building Virtual Communities for Education*, 2006, by I. Varlamis and I. Apostolakis, *Proceedings of the EC-TEL06 Workshops, Crete, Greece,* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/221549657_A_Framework_for_Building_Virtual_Communities_for_Education; copyright 2006 by I. Varlamis. Used in combination the Shannon-Weaver Model of Communication by CommunicationTheory.org, 2010; copyright 2010 by Communication Theory.

Tech Devices and Access

Due to the LEA's one-to-one policy, all students were issued a Chromebook and charger before the closure. Students, parents, and teachers understood that Shaunna was the point person for any device complications before and during the closure. Once on closure, she could only service devices via emails, video conferences, and phone calls. "I couldn't touch their computers. I couldn't just take it and fix it. I had to walk them step by step by step. So instead of taking two minutes to do something, it took twenty-five," Shaunna explained. Further complicating this issue, any broken device required contact with the LEA technical department through email or phone. If a replacement device was necessary, parents needed to travel to the LEA service center

instead of their child's school site. These steps became obstacles for some families. Remembering Sage's frustration attempting to reach someone at the LEA offices to assist her with her daughter's device, it is essential to note that Sage is a native English speaker who is comfortable speaking on the phone with others to solve problems. When students lost or broke their charger cables, the district directed them to an Amazon page to purchase a replacement. This response assumed that a parent could access Amazon (www.amazon.com), possessed a credit card, and had the necessary monetary resources.

Assumptions about reliable internet connections further complicated access. Internet service in some locations was undependable due to the service providers. Some families could not afford service. Others were unbanked or without a credit card, blocking them from initiating services. Public libraries and other public areas with free internet were not available during the statewide sheltering, denying unhoused students a possible resource. Many participants noted that the LEA had some internet hotspots for those who could not secure the internet, but their supply quickly diminished to nothing. The LEA was unable to secure additional hotspots because all their suppliers were back-ordered for hotspots. The most vulnerable students, those in extreme poverty and with housing insecurity, could not participate in the school community.

Tech Ability

The LEA's 2018 Equity Chromebook initiative aided students to be confident when accessing Google Workplace applications. Most students had used Google Docs and Slides through in-class activities prior to closure. As Sage, a parent of a seventh grader, stated, "Everyone has a Chromebook, and all the kids are used to using the Chromebooks, and they were used to getting assignments in this method." Additionally, some classrooms had established

Google Classroom procedures before closure, increasing student access. The art integration program at Coleman augmented student technological skills with their exposure to digital art and video programs.

The Chromebook initiative added faculty confidence with the Google Workplace. Some teachers integrate digital resources into their lesson plans before closure with the LEA adoption of the curriculum, such as iReady for math instruction. Professional development options had garnered some early adopters of Google Classroom. As with most initiatives, some teachers were more reluctant than others to transition from pencil-paper activities, but all had the opportunity to experience possible digital tools.

The LEA's choice of PowerSchool as the LMS for district-wide closure curriculum complicated the technical transition to an e-school. Students and teachers had no familiarity with PowerSchool, leading to confusion and frustration. The two-week PowerSchool curriculum posted by the LEA impeded student engagement because students could not intuitively interact with the PDF worksheets. Without previous professional development, teachers needed to engage in online lessons on an unfamiliar LMS within three weeks of the closure. The LEA heard the teachers' frustration and consequently approved the usage of Google Classroom as a substitute for PowerSchool. Now students had to log into two different LMS sites when searching for assignments and directions, leading to some students' decision to disengage from school.

Coupled with the LMS confusion, most of Coleman's school community members had never used a video conference before. The Google Meet application seemed simple, but teachers became frustrated when they realized students could stay in the rooms after the teacher had

logged out of the meeting. Having no experience in distance teaching, lessons that would have been engaging in a physical classroom did not translate well. With all the focus on the LMS issues, little effort was available to improve instruction online. As Gwen recounted, “It was chaos” during the online class meetings. Since Coleman’s leadership had only implemented a Google Meet schedule for special education classes, there were no clear expectations as to when classes were held, the length of each class, and how many video sessions were necessary per week. Without the structure provided by a set schedule and online video lessons hosted by confident, well-prepared, and experienced teachers, students lacked a personal connection to their teachers and peers, furthering their disconnection from the school community.

Access Motivation

In conjunction with the technical difficulties, student mental health and the LEA grading policies influenced students’ motivation to engage in the e-school community. Descriptions of depression, anxiety, and isolation persisted in the data. Herminia, the school site’s psychologist, commented that anxiety and depression “significantly” impact a student’s self-motivation; she added, “not only desire but their cognition, their ability to concentrate, pay attention. It will be significantly affected by depression or anxiety or both.” Although some mental health services were available, they began well into closure due to legal uncertainties of using video conferencing for therapy sessions. Participants knew of mental health services and how to refer students before the closures but were less confident after. Access to informal social-emotional support became more formalized because it required students to complete request forms, shifting the responsibility from adults to the students. Without a well-publicized, understandable systematic procedure for identifying, referring, and servicing students coping with mental health

issues, it is unknown how many students would have benefitted from early detection and intervention during this abrupt transition.

The LEA released the COVID-19 grading policy in mid-April 2020. School staff participants cited this as a significant impetus for students to discontinue class attendance and classwork completion. The perceptions of school staff underlie a belief that students attend school and do work to avoid the punishment of receiving failing grades. With grade punishment removed, school staff did not feel that their relationships with students and their families were sufficient for students to continue to engage. No parent participants expressed this rationale for student disengagement from the school community, highlighting discrepancies between them. In combination with one another, student mental health and removing the possibility of failing grades decreased student motivation to engage with the e-school community.

Communication Pathway

The most substantial alteration of the communication pathway was the elimination of daily in-person access. The community felt a loss when the daily greetings and casual conversations were no longer available. Parents could no longer go on campus, diminishing the stability of the school-home connection.

> Having parents know that they can come and see you every morning at the drop-off, or after school, or during the school day, that's one thing, but knowing that pretty much the only way they're going to get ahold of you is either via text or email is another.

Student, family, teacher, and staff isolation increased as all communication became digital, increasing the possibility of mental health consequences. Student isolation intensified for students lacking digital access, such as smartphones or prior robust peer attachments.

Google Meet sessions could not fill the void of in-person communication. Due to the inadequacy of scheduling, absence of session expectations, and inexperience of teachers, parents, and students, Google Meet sessions were inconsistent in their contributions to the e-school community. Jenny and Herminia's one-to-one sessions were the most successful at extending the e-school into the digital space, while the general education classes were less successful. Google Meet sessions strained parent committee meetings as parents tried to access the session, view documents, and translate for one another. Google Meet sessions, meant to substitute for in-person communication, further fractured the e-school community.

Participants reported sustaining the communication pathway primarily by email. Participants were familiar with this mode of communication, allowing community members to provide and receive vital information. Some respondents felt overwhelmed by the volume of email communication, but all appreciated the school site's efforts to keep all informed. All students had school-issued email addresses, but the accuracy of parent emails was questionable. If a Coleman community member did not have a current, accurate email and phone on file, that member could no longer expect to participate in the e-school community fully.

E-School Community

The unexpected abrupt transition to online teaching shook the Coleman community. Gone were the collaborative art-infused lessons, the school-wide performances, and the casual congregating of members. Renee, the ELD and elective teacher, expressed that "collaboration felt really difficult to curate during this time." Impersonal digital lessons and Google Meet sessions attempted to fill the vacuum. When Gwen, a parent of twin sixth-graders, considered the impact of the closures, she said, "They immediately connected and were so integrated into it, and

then it was over.” The alteration of the school community was extreme, but some relationships within the community remained.

Relationships were foundational to the e-school community. Teachers worked with one another and support staff to tackle technological, pedagogical, and personal challenges. The administration created safe spaces for teachers to express their frustration and fears coupled with support and understanding. Parents appreciated the obstacles teachers encountered when they undertook the creation of new online lessons. During therapy and one-to-one Google Meet sessions, student and adult relationships deepened and expanded with the sharing of personal spaces. Teachers reached out to students and their families, communicating care and concern in place of rigorous academics. The literature supported the fundamental necessity of relationships in a school community (Blum, 2005; Frazier et al., 2015; Hawkins et al., 2001; Osterman, 2000; Ryan & Patrick, 2001; Schaps, 2005). COVID-19 disrupted every segment of life, but at Coleman, relationships anchored the preservation of the former community through the transition to the e-school community.

Analysis of Conceptual Framework

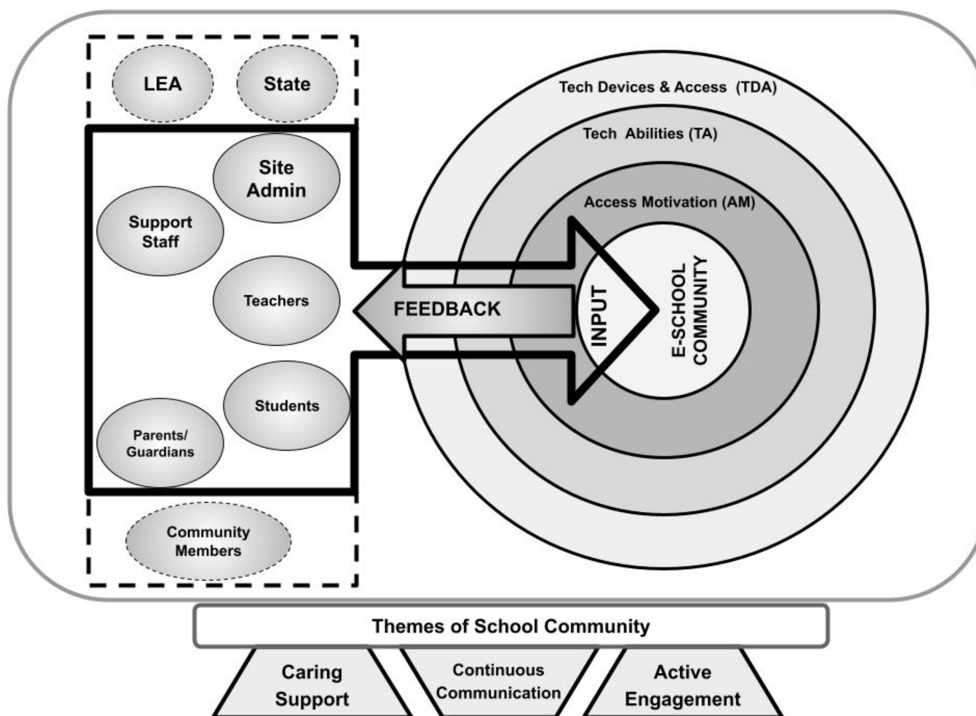
The unique circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and the mandatory emergency closures of public schools drove the development of the conceptual framework utilized in this study. A valid conceptual framework is “the total, logical orientation and associations of anything and everything that forms the underlying thinking, structures, plans and practices and implementation” of a research project (Kivunja, 2018, p. 47). After this study’s completion, there was a necessity to include the operationalization of community through its three themes. It was

using these themes during the analysis of the data that uncovered vital implications and revelations.

With its focus on a single school site, the current framework's community included only those at the site. A more encompassing framework would include other sites at the LEA and surrounding community. The actions of these auxiliary participants influence the formation and sustainability of the e-school community. The conceptual framework now includes broader community representation and the community themes as the foundation. The Figure 13 illustrates the reimagined conceptual framework with these modifications.

Figure 13

Reconfigured E-School Community Access and Engagement Conceptual Framework



Recommendations

Based on this study, the researcher asserts the following recommendations to address the community benefits lost due to the emergency mandated COVID-19 closure. California public schools experienced emergency school closures before the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to do so in the future (Elew et al., 2019; Lambert & Washburn, 2018). Applying the results from Coleman's school community experiences will fortify subsequent preparation measures.

Classrooms

As classrooms represent the most direct point of contact for students, teachers need to be the first to preserve students' sense of community. At the beginning of a school year, teachers explicitly teach and practice expectations for their classroom. Because it represents a new environment, an e-classroom necessitates the same procedures. By taking these steps to outline procedures and expectations, students would know how to engage productively during a video class session. They would feel confident about how to access, complete, and submit assignments. Taking this time would reduce student anxiety and form a more cohesive e-school classroom.

Knowing that the closure was due to an emergency makes thoughtful lesson planning essential. Lessons weighted more towards teaching how to use the LMS and social-emotional wellness are appropriate at the outset of an emergency closure. If the closure continues, then teachers should create additional academic lessons. Some students might not be able to attend live video lessons, so posted recorded lessons would assist students in their work, as would supplemental online resources. Furthermore, student feedback on the amount of assigned work, the difficulty level, and the timeframe for completion will increase students' voices and allow

teachers to adjust. Breakout rooms and collaborative project groups contribute to peer interactions and serve to offer choices in assignments. Teachers emphasize care for their students when their emergency closure lesson planning is student-centered and emergency impact aware.

School Sites

As identified by the participants of this study, clear, concise communication is critical during emergencies. The email has come to dominate communication between schools and families. Although email is convenient and somewhat simple, success with reaching people also requires updated addresses and accessibility. Home visits can augment efforts to include all members of the school community. These can be especially helpful when contact information becomes outdated. Due to financial situations and other family circumstances, some families move residences or switch phone numbers without notifying the school site. Therefore, the home visit is one way to ensure the school stays informed on any phone or address changes. During home visits, families may be more inclined to reveal how the school site could better support them. Even during the pandemic, with safety precautions in place, home visits were possible. Most importantly, the school administrative team needs to plan the criteria for visitation weekly or bi-weekly strategically. The scheduling will allow administrative teams to enlist others, especially translators, to assist in the home visits and block other possible conflicts during these times.

Parents can be more supportive when trained as part of their children's educational team. The professional development and training plans for new educational technology need to include a parent component. Therefore, it is important to keep parents informed on the purpose of the technology, acquire a working knowledge of the technology, and understand how to monitor

their children's progress when using the technology. When facing an emergency where students cannot attend a physical school, parents versed in the educational technology allows for a more successful transition. If the emergency necessitates additional technology or an alteration in technology usage, schools need to provide various avenues for parents to access additional training. Due to the increased educational reliance on technologies, parent training and access have become vital characteristics of any school's parent involvement plan.

Local Educational Agencies

Reliable, affordable internet access would be the most advantageous assurance LEA could provide to teachers, other staff, and families. Most curriculum is now available in a digital format in the wake of the current pandemic and school closures. Even with a return to the physical classrooms, digital schoolwork will be a staple of American education. For students to complete their assignments, projects, and homework, they will require internet access. LEAs can partner with local internet providers or their local governments to guarantee that every student has the necessary tools to complete work, whether at school or home. Furnishing each student with an internet-accessible device is no longer sufficient; without access to the internet, a device is an unfulfilled promise.

Comprehensive mental health screenings and follow-up services would be a preventative measure for any LEA. Instead of reliance on parent, teacher, and school site referrals, these screenings, distributed digitally and during home visits, would identify students and families before a student disengages from school and the school community. Screenings would also target therapeutic resources to the areas of most need and reduce the potential long-term repercussions

of adverse childhood events. This proactive mental health intervention would be beneficial for the students and the school community, with or without a present crisis.

As part of their yearly planning, LEA and school sites revise their emergency preparedness plans for earthquakes, fires, active shooters, and other disasters. Schools hold monthly drills to ensure all stakeholders know their responsibility for keeping students safe. What these plans do not include are actions that students, teachers, and parents must take after an emergency occurrs. LEAs and schools require a community emergency educational planning committee to create a community-wide safety net for students after an emergency. Members of this committee would include local elected officials, local business leaders, religious organizations, non-profits, union leaders, services organizations, public health departments, and mental health providers. Additionally, to guarantee that the most vulnerable students receive support after an emergency, homeless shelters, advocacy groups, group homes, and foster care providers need to be involved. These plans would consider students' physical health, mental well-being, and academic needs. With the formation of this committee and their creation of a community emergency student safety plan, stakeholders would ensure that all students would be seen, heard, and cared for during and after a crisis occurs.

Future Research

By completing this study, several avenues of research have emerged as possible next steps or alternative steps to continue investigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic school closures. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted every aspect of the educational experience. Capturing data from this period can illuminate socioeconomic, gender expression, ethnic identity, and other inequalities that may have gone unnoticed before.

Student Experience Survey

Due to time constraints, this study utilized only adult participants. However, since students have experienced the academic and social consequences of the COVID-19 school closures, their voices would illuminate our understanding on the impact of the closures. Through a student survey, entire school populations would be able to participate. A researcher could compare and contrast students of different ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnic identity, gender expression, and home life. With a survey, it would be possible to delineate how these factors altered the student experience and possibly indicate additional ways to vary their support for a more significant impact.

Expanding the Types of Adult Voices in Narrative

This study was conducted in English and had only one male participant. Interviewing participants in their primary language broadens and deepens the quality of their responses (van Nes et al., 2010). If a native speaker of the primary language had been conducting the interviews for this study, at least three participants could have shared their experiences more fully. This study could not represent the phenomenon from a father's perspective as only mothers replied to the email request. Adding male parent voices to how the school closures affected students could reveal details not observed by or shared with mothers.

Ethnographic Study of Boundary Impacts

Teachers in this study expressed their increased levels of stress as they attempted to balance the requirements of their professional and personal lives under the emergency mandated school closures due to COVID-19. The e-school community allows for constant access to teachers from their students, the parents, and the administration. An October 2020 survey of 359

American K-12 teachers ranked their anxiety and burnout due to the demands of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although academic issues held priority for the teachers, the effects of communication on their mental health were evident. "As the primary contact for parents, teachers often receive the brunt of criticisms from parents regarding educational decisions made by the district or school" (Pressley, 2021, p. 3).

To further investigate how teacher and administrator boundaries have been affected by the transition to digital communication, an ethnographic study of a specific school site would provide a personalized perspective. Knowing that each division of education has unique parent expectations, to further this study, a comparison of an elementary site with a secondary one would provide additional insights and broaden our understanding of the impact of the shift from a physical- to online-school learning.

Reflective Narrative Study

As the COVID-19 pandemic has continued for over twelve months, revisiting the participants from this study would illuminate similarities and differences of an emergency closure with that of an expected closure. This reflective follow-up study would capture how their perspectives and opinions have evolved since March 2020. In reflection, participants would be able to reread their statements from the original study and, through reflection, comment on their current feelings.

Comparative Mixed Methods Studies

The current study only investigated one Los Angeles County middle school. Future studies could utilize surveys, interviews, and focus groups to compare and contrast various levels and groups of schools. One study of this type could focus on middle schools from different

socioeconomic areas or within different counties. Another type could choose an elementary, a middle school, and a high school within one district. A third option would be to select public, charter, and private schools of the same grade levels. Mixed methods research design would be advantageous for these studies because it would provide a general overview of opinions through the survey and the specific voices through the interviews and focus groups.

Conclusion

Although centered on one Los Angeles County middle school, this study reflects a more extensive experience of the COIVD-19 pandemic. As the school community grappled with the emergency mandatory COVID-19 closure, relationships gained prominence in members' lives. When everything familiar about the public schooling experience shifted to the unknown, relationships sustained the school community. The value of social bonds drove humans to form communities (Cook, 2013) and, through these relationships, communities sustain despite adversity.

Epilogue

Thirteen months ago, the COVID-19 pandemic upended my life as a doctoral student and educator; public schools closed, and California began to shelter in place. On Friday, March 13, 2020, as usual, I focused on making it through the day, ushering students in and out of the auditorium. I had no idea this would be the last day I would see many of these students.

When I later phoned my dissertation chair, Dr. Jill Bickett, we saw that this could present an opportunity. I was in the spring semester of my second year and had not firmly decided on a research topic. I had tried on many different ideas, but none of them fit. With my mock proposal

defense looming, I needed to decide, and then schools closed. Dr. Bickett and I seized the moment, changed my dissertation topic one more time, and this study commenced.

Conducting a dissertation during a global pandemic presented novel challenges. Since I wanted to capture what was happening in the Spring of 2020, I knew I had to interview all participants before the 2020-2021 school year began. With this time crunch, and because I did not have time for a full IRB review, I realized I could not interview students. I had postponed a major ankle-foot surgery to the summer earlier in the year, believing I would have few responsibilities. When I considered postponing it again, my doctor told me it was either now or, with the way the pandemic was progressing, not until sometime in 2021. I had the surgery in June 2020. My proposal defense was set for the second week in July. My chair, Dr. Bickett, suddenly announced her retirement less than two weeks before my proposal defense. Devastated, but buoyed by Dr. Elizabeth Reilly's decision to take me on, Dr. Bickett remained on my committee, and with my close Cohort 15 friends' support, I successfully defended my proposal.

After my first few Zoom interviews, I realized a couple of things. First, my interview protocols might be a bit long and not well worded. Next, I would be interviewing for over 30 hours if every interview took as long as the first few. Finally, Zoom transcription was not as accurate as I had hoped. I was so focused on scheduling and conducting interviews that I was not following the research rule of continuous analysis. I finished the last interview in August 2020—days before the new school year started.

With no funding from my RTI position, I had to return to the classroom, albeit an online version. As a veteran teacher, I felt like I would be able to adjust to this new reality with few problems. I did not realize just how much of my energy and passion for teaching came from

daily interactions with students. I was tired, frustrated, and despondent. I would dread spending even one more minute at the computer, and my research suffered. I did not want to review and code transcripts because that meant looking at the computer again. I did not want to reshape my proposal writing because that was on the computer too. In September, my paternal grandmother passed. I was barred from being with her in her last months due to COVID-19 protocols; I was heartbroken. Not for the first time, I considered staying ABD (all but dissertation) forever. It was my Cohort 15 community, my work community, and my family that pulled me through. Finally, by the conclusion of winter break, I had an online routine in place, had forged relationships with my students, and began to hit my researcher stride. What I discovered through my research transformed me into a somewhat successful online teacher.

Because of what I learned from the participants, my perspective on online teaching requirements was utterly relationship driven. In my daily advisory class, I created spaces for students to express their emotions concerning online school and their experiences. I instituted Freedom Fridays, where students met in interest-based breakout rooms. In math and science classes, I gave grace with the understanding that I could not wholly know all the challenges of students' home lives. When I struggled as an online teacher, I openly shared this with my students and invited their suggestions. I made sure to enjoy the students being children. I met many pets over this school year, as well as students' siblings. I have laughed at a variety of typical middle school jokes. In return, my students attended my classes, tried their best, stopped me when they were confused, and embraced our class time as valuable.

My research has impacted my advocacy in my school community. I facilitated perspective-taking in staff and grade level team meetings when we discussed curriculum,

grading, and schedule changes. Even though parents and students are not present in these meetings, they need always to be front of mind. I have continuously spoken out about the importance of relationships over subject matter acquisition, noting that students dealing with a crisis have impaired cognitive abilities. I champion the increase in mental health services and teacher development in trauma-informed education. My inspiration for much of my advocacy stems from the honest, open interviews conducted for this study. I am eternally grateful to the parents, peers, and administrators who entrusted me with their stories.

Over my entire dissertation journey, it has been the members of my Loyola Marymount community who have inspired and supported me. When I applied to LMU, part of the selection process was a group interview. Since everyone at the interview seemed more scholarly and more poised than me, I was sure I would not get an offer. What I came to learn is that each member of Cohort 15 brought something unique to our group. Although we did not always agree, we respected each other. I cannot express how much I miss the time between the first and second classes. We would talk around the microwave, walk to get coffee, take quick trips to the library, and “get our steps in” by walking the floors of University Hall. Since the closure, we continue to message on Slack (www.slack.com), text, and email. If we had not already formed such strong relationships, the unique Cohort 15 spirit might not have continued. Higher education needs to know that all students require informal peer interactions to deepen their educational experiences and understanding. Especially at LMU, the on-site experience was one of mind, body, and soul; when we went online, something went missing.

Researcher, writer, and speaker Dr. Brené Brown stated, “Connection, along with love and belonging, is why we are here, and it is what gives purpose and meaning to our lives”

(Brown, 2018, p. 126). School communities at every level of education must facilitate opportunities for these connections to develop for the students, staff, and other community members. As we embark on the following chapters of education—virtual, in-person, or hybrid—finding connections within our school communities will deepen our understandings, broaden our worldview, and amplify our impact in realizing a supportive and empathic society where all can bloom.

APPENDIX A

Parent Interview Protocol

Introduction:

Thank you for volunteering to participate in my study. Before we formally begin, I would like to cover a few items.

First, have you received, read, and understood your rights during this interview and the terms in the consent form? Do you have any questions and/or would you like clarification about either form? Great!

Next, I would like to ask you some demographic questions. Like all questions during the interview, you do not need to provide an answer if you choose not to do so. Just let me know.

1. What is your name?
2. Since I will be using pseudonyms for this study, is there a name you would like me to use for you?
3. What is your connection to the school site?

Historical—before closure

1. In your own words, what makes a community? When you think of the community at your child's school before the closure, what words would you choose to describe it? How about in specific classrooms?
2. Thinking about the schoolwork your student was given before the closure, was there a teacher or teachers who provided your child choices of subjects, procedures and/or products for schoolwork? How about opportunities to work with other students in or out of the classroom?
3. If you were to ask your child, what might she/he say was her/his relationships with her/his teachers? Anything specific stand out in your mind? What about other adults at school?
4. Do you believe that your child's concerns, questions, and opinions were heard and responded to at the school? Can you give me some examples?
5. What were the ways in which you communicated with your child's teachers before closure and how often did you do so? How about the school site?
6. What was your child's comfort level and expertise with educational technology before the school closures? Yours?
7. Could you describe any experiences your child had using digital classrooms before the closure?
8. How would you describe other supports available through the school? How supported did you and your family feel before the closure? Can you describe what actions made you feel that way?

Lived Experience—during closure

1. In what ways did the role of technology impact the transition to emergency distance learning? Did you or your child have any difficulties accessing the online information or classroom resources? Describe this experience for you and your child.
2. How often did he/she access online school material? For how long? Any difficulties encouraging your child to access?
3. In the online platforms, was your child given opportunities to work with other students during closure? What about choices of subjects, procedures and/or products for schoolwork?
4. Describe any opportunities your child had during closure to voice concerns, questions, or opinions?
5. Has your child expressed his/her opinion of school during the closure? If so, could you provide some examples?
6. Once your child began working exclusively online, describe any ways the teachers attempted to build on or create relationships with the students? What about other adults at the school?
7. Can you describe any examples of school community building that occurred during the closure? What about classroom communities?
8. During this time, how often did you and your child communicate with his/her teachers? What were the methods you and your child used? How about teachers contacting you and/or your child? The school site?
9. If there were any technological, mental health, or other supports that your child or your family needed from either the district or the school site during the closure, what steps would you have taken to have your issue addressed?

Reflection

1. How has your child's relationship with technology changed? Why do you think that is the case? How about your relationship with it?
2. Before we talked about how the teachers and school reached out to you and your child: How was communication during the closure different than before? The same?
3. Thinking of schoolwork and educational activities before and during closure, what three aspects of the work changed the most and why? Describe these changes please.
4. How do you think the closure affected your child's relationships with the adults on campus? What about her/his peer relationship?
5. What do you believe teachers need to know about the parent/ home side of the emergency distance school to assist students in accessing and participating?
6. Examining the technical supports provided to you and your child before and during closure, what would be your takeaways and why? What about other supports like mental health, meals, etc.?
7. In your observations, what will be your child's emotional takeaways from emergency distance schooling? Could you elaborate on that?
8. What, if any, experiences during the closure makes you feel positively towards the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year? What gives you pause? Why?

APPENDIX B

Teacher Interview Protocol

Introduction:

Thank you for volunteering to participate in my study. Before we formally begin, I would like to cover a few items.

First, have you received, read, and understood your rights during this interview and the terms in the consent form? Do you have any questions and/or would you like clarification about either form? Great!

Next, I would like to ask you some demographic questions. Like all questions during the interview, you do not need to provide an answer if you choose not to do so. Just let me know.

1. What is your name?
2. Since I will be using pseudonyms for this study, is there a name you would like me to use for you?
3. What is your connection to the school site?

Historical—before closure

1. In your own words, what makes a community? If in your physical classroom you worked to achieve a community, what were the characteristics of that community? How was it shaped and constructed? In what ways did you witness its impact on students—emotionally, socially, and academically?
2. How would you describe the whole school community before closure and what examples would you give to support your description?
3. Thinking about the schoolwork you assigned before the closure, what were the choices, if any, of subject, procedure and/or product for work in your classroom? Describe any opportunities you provided for students to work with one another in or out of the classroom?
4. How would you describe your relationships with your students and their parents? How did you go about building those relationships?
5. Would you describe instances, if there were any, where students were provided a space and an opportunity to express their opinions, concerns, and/or insights in your classroom?
6. What were the ways in which you communicated with parents and students before closure and how often did you do so? What about your communication with the school administration and other teachers?
7. What was the role of technology in your classroom before closure and what was your comfort level with it? Comfort level and engagement of your students?
8. Before closure, what were the procedures in place, if any, that you followed when you or your students had technical difficulties or other technical issues?

9. Overall, how supported did you feel before the closure? Would you explain why you felt that way?
10. Describe the other supports available to students and their families before the closure. How did students and families access these supports? How did these supports impact your students and their families?

Lived Experience—during closure

1. When schools closed in March, describe the transition process of you and your students to emergency distance teaching. In what ways did the role of technology change your teaching practice during closure?
2. How many of your students accessed the online materials you provided? If you held online Google Hangout Meets, how often did you hold them and how many students attended?
3. Did you notice any patterns in those who did or did not access either the online materials or Google Hangout Meets? Follow up: Did you discover any top reasons for students not engaging?
4. Do you know how many of your students had internet access and a district provided Chromebook with a working charger? Please explain how you came to this knowledge.
5. In the online platforms, were you able to provide opportunities for students to work with other students? What about giving choices of subjects, procedures and/or products for schoolwork?
6. Describe any opportunities you were able to provide for students during closure to voice their concerns, questions, or opinions?
7. Were there specific activities or assignments you provided to bridge the community of your classroom to emergency distance teaching? Could you describe them?
8. Once you began working exclusively online, describe any ways you attempted to build on or create relationships with the students and their parents? What about with other teachers, staff members, and the school administration?
9. During this time, how did you, your students, and their parents communicate and how often? What about your communication with other teachers, staff members, and school administration?
10. How supported did you feel during the closure – personally and professionally? Can you explain why you felt this way?
11. If you or one of your students were having technical issues, what steps would you have followed to address them?
12. If there were mental health, or other supports a student or a student's family needed from either the district or the school site during the closure, how would you have addressed it? Do you have any specific examples you would like to share?

Reflection

1. How has your relationship with technology changed by going through this experience? Why do you think that is the case?

2. Going back to your responses about students accessing and participating during emergency remote teaching, what are your reactions and thoughts? What do you believe teachers need to know about the nature of emergency distance teaching to assist in ensuring their students access and participate?
3. How was communication with students and their families during the closure different than before? How was it the same? What about your communication with other teachers, staff members, and school administration?
4. Thinking of the schoolwork and educational activities you provided before and during closure, what three aspects of the work changed the most and why? Describe these changes please.
5. How do you think the closure affected your relationships with the students and their families? What about with other teachers, staff members, and school administration?
6. Examining the technical supports provided to students and their families before and during closure, what would be your takeaways and why? What about other supports like mental health, meals, etc.?
7. What, if any, experiences during the closure makes you feel positively towards the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year? What gives you pause? Why?

APPENDIX C

Site Administrator Interview Protocol

Introduction:

Thank you for volunteering to participate in my study. Before we formally begin, I would like to cover a few items.

First, have you received, read, and understood your rights during this interview and the terms in the consent form? Do you have any questions and/or would you like clarification about either form? Great!

Next, I would like to ask you some demographic questions. Like all questions during the interview, you do not need to provide an answer if you choose not to do so. Just let me know.

1. What is your name?
2. Since I will be using pseudonyms for this study, is there a name you would like me to use for you?
3. What is your connection to the school site?

Historical—before closure

1. In your own words, what makes a community? When you think of your school's community before the closure, what words would you choose to describe it? How was it shaped and constructed? In what ways did you witness its impact on students—emotionally, socially, and academically?
2. Thinking about the schoolwork teachers assigned before the closure, what were the choices, if any, of subject, procedure and/or product for work in their classrooms? Describe any opportunities teachers provided for students to work with one another in or out of the classroom?
3. How would you describe your relationships with your students and their parents? How did you go about building those relationships?
4. Would you describe instances, if there were any, where students were provided a space and an opportunity to express their opinions, concerns, and/or insights in their classrooms and/or at the school site?
5. What were the ways in which you communicated with parents and students before closure and how often did you do so? What about your communication with the other administrators, teachers, and school staff?
6. What was the role of technology in your position before closure and what was your comfort level with it? Comfort level and engagement of site teachers and staff?
7. Before closure, what were the procedures in place, if any, that were followed when you, the teachers, other staff, and students had technical difficulties or other technical issues?
8. Overall, how did you support students and their families before the closure? Would you explain why you felt that way? What about teachers and school staff?

9. Describe the other supports available to students and their families before the closure. How did students and families access these supports? How did these supports impact students and their families? Could you provide a couple of examples?

Lived Experience—during closure

1. When schools closed in March, describe your transition process. In what ways did the role of technology change how you performed the duties of your position during closure?
2. Do you know how many of your students had internet access and a district provided Chromebook with a working charger? Please explain how you came to this knowledge.
3. Describe any other difficulties students, parents, teachers, or staff expressed to you about accessing the online platform and how these were addressed by either the site or the district.
4. In the online platforms, are your aware of opportunities provided by teachers for students to work with other students? What about giving students choices of subjects, procedures and/or products for work?
5. Describe any opportunities students were provided during closure to voice their concerns, questions, or opinions?
6. Were there specific activities the school site provided to bridge the school community to emergency distance teaching? Could you describe some them?
7. Once work began exclusively online, describe any ways you attempted to build on or create relationships with the students and their parents? What about with teachers, staff members, and other district administrators?
8. During this time, how did you communicate with students and their parents and how often did you do so? What about your communication with teachers, staff members, and other district administrators?
9. How did you and other staff support did you teachers during the closure – personally and professionally? What were some of their responses and reactions to this support?
10. If you, the teachers, school staff, students, or their families were having technical issues, what steps would you have followed to address them?
11. If there were mental health, or other supports a student or a student's family needed from either the district or the school site during the closure, how would you have addressed it? Do you have any specific examples you would like to share?

Reflection

1. How has your relationship with technology changed by going through this experience? Why do you think that is the case?
2. Going back to your responses about students accessing and participating during emergency remote teaching, what are your reactions and thoughts? What do you believe administrators and teachers need to know about the nature of emergency distance teaching to assist in ensuring their students access and participate?
3. How was communication with students and their families during the closure different than before? How was it the same? What about your communication with teachers, staff members, and other district administrators?

4. Thinking of the schoolwork and educational activities teachers provided before and during closure, what three aspects of the work changed the most and why? Describe these changes please.
5. How do you think the closure affected your relationships with the students and their families? What about with teachers, staff members, and other district administrators?
6. Examining the technical supports provided to students and their families before and during closure, what would be your takeaways and why? What about other supports like mental health, meals, etc.?
7. When thinking of technical supports provided to teachers and other site staff, describe the differences between before and during closure with how the school site and district attempted to address these. What about supports provided to you from the district level?
8. What, if any, experiences during the closure makes you feel positively towards the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year? What gives you pause? Why?

APPENDIX D

School Psychologist Interview Protocol

Introduction:

Thank you for volunteering to participate in my study. Before we formally begin, I would like to cover a few items.

First, have you received, read, and understood your rights during this interview and the terms in the consent form? Do you have any questions and/or would you like clarification about either form? Great!

Next, I would like to ask you some demographic questions. Like all questions during the interview, you do not need to provide an answer if you choose not to do so. Just let me know.

1. What is your name?
2. Since I will be using pseudonyms for this study, is there a name you would like me to use for you?
3. What is your connection to the school site?

Historical—before closure

1. In your own words, what makes a community? When you think of your school's community before the closure, what words would you choose to describe it? What about in specific classrooms? Could you provide a few examples?
2. In what ways did you witness community impacting students—emotionally, socially, and academically?
3. Thinking about the schoolwork teachers assigned before the closure, were you aware of teachers providing choices about subject, procedure and/or product for work in their classrooms? Describe any opportunities you know of that provided for students to work with one another in or out of the classroom? If yes: How did these opportunities impact students socially, emotionally, and academically?
4. How would you describe your relationships with your students and their parents? How did you go about building those relationships? What about your relationships with the site administration, teachers, and other school staff?
5. Would you describe instances, if there were any, where students were provided a space and an opportunity to express their opinions, concerns, and/or insights in classrooms or on campus? If yes: How were students affected socially, emotionally, and academically?
6. What were the ways in which you communicated with parents and students before closure and how often did you do so? What about your communication with the school administration, teachers, and other staff members?
7. What role did technology play in your daily tasks before closure and what was your comfort level with it?
8. Before closure, what were the most pressing student mental health issues you encountered? What about the adults on campus, did you notice any issues arising before closure?

9. Describe the supports available to students and their families before the closure. How did students and families access these supports? How did these supports impact students and their families?
10. Overall, how supported did you feel before the closure? Why did you feel that way?

Lived Experience—during closure

1. When schools closed in March, describe your transition process. In what ways did technology change your position duties during closure?
2. Were you aware if all students had internet access and a district provided chromebook with a working charger? Please explain how you came to this knowledge.
3. Describe the changes in how your provided services to students and their families during closure.
4. Did you notice any patterns in which students did or did not access with you either online or in video therapy? Follow up: Did you discover any top reasons for students not engaging?
5. In the online platforms, were you aware of any teachers providing opportunities for students to work with other students? What about giving choices of subjects, procedures and/or products for schoolwork?
6. Describe any opportunities during closure you knew of that provided a space and time to students to voice their concerns, questions, or opinions?
7. Were there specific activities or assignments you were aware of that provided a bridge from the on-campus communities to emergency distance teaching classrooms? Could you describe them? If yes: How were students affected socially, emotionally, and academically?
8. Once the school site began working exclusively online, describe any ways you attempted to build on or create relationships with the students and their parents? What about with teachers, staff members, and the school administration?
9. During this time, how did you communicate with students and their parents and how often did you do so? What about your communication with other teachers, staff members, and school administration?
10. How supported did you feel during the closure – personally and professionally? Can you explain why you felt this way?
11. During closure, what were the most pressing student mental health issues you encountered? What about the adults on campus, did you notice any issues arising?
12. If there were mental health, or other supports a student or a student's family needed from either the district or the school site during the closure, how would you have addressed it? Do you have any specific examples you would like to share?

Reflection

1. How has your relationship with technology changed by going through this experience? Why do you think that is the case?
2. Going back to your responses about students accessing and participating during emergency remote teaching, what are your reactions and thoughts? What do you believe

administrators, teachers, parents, and students need to know about the nature of emergency distance teaching to assist in ensuring students access and participate?

3. How was communication with students and their families during the closure different than before? How was it the same? What about your communication with teachers, staff members, and school administration?
4. Thinking of the schoolwork and educational activities teachers provided before and during closure, how were students affected socially, emotionally, and academically?
5. How do you think the closure affected your relationships with the students and their families? What about with other teachers, staff members, and school administration?
6. Examining supports you provided to students and their families before and during closure, what would be your takeaways and why? What was the most challenging aspect of providing these supports?
7. Examining the support you felt before and during closure, what are your reactions and reflections?
8. What, if any, experiences during the closure makes you feel positively towards the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year? What gives you pause? Why?

APPENDIX E

Instructional Coach Interview Protocol

Introduction:

Thank you for volunteering to participate in my study. Before we formally begin, I would like to cover a few items.

First, have you received, read, and understood your rights during this interview and the terms in the consent form? Do you have any questions and/or would you like clarification about either form? Great!

Next, I would like to ask you some demographic questions. Like all questions during the interview, you do not need to provide an answer if you choose not to do so. Just let me know.

1. What is your name?
2. Since I will be using pseudonyms for this study, is there a name you would like me to use for you?
3. What is your connection to the school site?

Historical—before closure

1. In your own words, what makes a community? When you think of your school's community before the closure, what words would you choose to describe it? What about in specific classrooms? Could you provide a few examples?
2. In what ways did you witness community impacting students—emotionally, socially, and academically?
3. Thinking about the schoolwork teachers assigned before the closure, were you aware of teachers providing choices about subject, procedure and/or product for work in their classrooms? Describe any opportunities you know of that provided for students to work with one another in or out of the classroom?
4. How would you describe your relationships with your students and their parents? How did you go about building those relationships? What about your relationships with the site administration, teachers, and other school staff?
5. Would you describe instances, if there were any, where students were provided a space and an opportunity to express their opinions, concerns, and/or insights in classrooms or on campus?
6. What were the ways in which you communicated with parents and students before closure and how often did you do so? What about your communication with the school administration and other teachers?
7. What was your role with technology before closure? How would you rate the comfort level and engagement of students and their parents? What about teachers, site staff, and administration?
8. Before closure, what were the procedures in place when students or their families had technical difficulties or other technical issues? What about teachers, site staff, and administration?

9. Overall, how supported did you feel before the closure? Why did you feel that way? What about the support felt by teachers, site staff, and administration? How supported in technology, academics, and personal concerns do you believe each of these groups felt before closure?
10. Describe the other supports available to students and their families before the closure. How did students and families access these supports? How did these supports impact students and their families?

Lived Experience—during closure

1. When schools closed in March, describe your transition process. In what ways did technology change your position duties during closure?
2. Do you know how many students had internet access and a district provided chromebook with a working charger? Please explain how you came to this knowledge.
3. How many students accessed the online materials? What about teachers' Google Hangout Meets?
4. Did you notice any patterns in those who did or did not access either the online materials or Google Hangout Meets? Follow up: Did you discover any top reasons for students not engaging?
5. In the online platforms, were you aware of any teachers providing opportunities for students to work with other students? What about giving choices of subjects, procedures and/or products for schoolwork?
6. Describe any opportunities during closure you knew of that provided a space and time to students to voice their concerns, questions, or opinions?
7. Were there specific activities or assignments you were aware of that provided a bridge from the on-campus communities to emergency distance teaching classrooms? Could you describe them?
8. Once the school site began working exclusively online, describe any ways you attempted to build on or create relationships with the students and their parents? What about with other teachers, staff members, and the school administration?
9. During this time, how did you communicate with students and their parents and how often did you do so? What about your communication with other teachers, staff members, and school administration?
10. How supported did you feel during the closure – personally and professionally? Can you explain why you felt this way?
11. If students were having technical issues, what steps were followed to address them?
12. If there were mental health, or other supports a student or a student's family needed from either the district or the school site during the closure, how would you have addressed it? Do you have any specific examples you would like to share?

Reflection

1. How has your relationship with technology changed by going through this experience? Why do you think that is the case?
2. Going back to your responses about students accessing and participating during emergency remote teaching, what are your reactions and thoughts? What do you believe

administrators, teachers, parents, and students need to know about the nature of emergency distance teaching to assist in ensuring students access and participate?

3. How was communication with students and their families during the closure different than before? How was it the same? What about your communication with other teachers, staff members, and school administration?
4. Thinking of the schoolwork and educational activities teachers provided before and during closure, what three aspects of the work changed the most and why? Describe these changes please.
5. How do you think the closure affected your relationships with the students and their families? What about with other teachers, staff members, and school administration?
6. Examining the technical supports you provided to students and their families before and during closure, what would be your takeaways and why? What about other supports like mental health, meals, etc.?
7. When thinking of technical supports you provided to teachers and other site staff, describe the differences between before and during closure. What was the most challenging aspect of providing these supports?
8. What, if any, experiences during the closure makes you feel positively towards the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year? What gives you pause? Why?

APPENDIX F

Interview Tracking Chart

Initials /Type	ID	Invite	Reminder	Scheduled	Conducted	Transcript	Approved
SP		7/19/20	Resent email 7/21/20 Form	7/24/20 – 10:00AM	DONE* 7/24/20	Sent 10.12.20	No corrections sent
AD		7/19/20	YES/	08/04/20 10:00 AM	DONE 08/04/20	Sent 10.12.20	No corrections sent
TL		7/19/20	YES/ Form	7/21/20 – 2:00 PM	DONE * 7/21/20	Sent 8.10.20	No corrections sent
T 6		7/19/20	Text/ Responded 7/21.20 Form	7/22/20 – 10:00AM	DONE * 7/22/20	Sent 9.12.20	No corrections sent
SpT		7/19/20	Text/ Responded 7/21/20 Form	7/28/20 2:00 PM	DONE * 7/28/20	Sent 10.12.20	No corrections sent
T El		7/19/20	YES/ Form	7/25/20 5:30PM	DONE * 7/25/20	Sent 10.12.20	No corrections sent
T 8		7/19/20	YES/ Form	7/23/20 – 01:00PM	DONE * 7/23/20	Sent 10.12.20	No corrections sent
T 7		7/19/20	YES/ Form	7/22/20 – 01:00PM	DONE * 7/22/20	Sent 9.14.20	No corrections sent

Parent Participants

Initials /Type	ID	Invite	Reminder Form	Scheduled	Conducted	Transcript	Approved
6/		7/25/20	FORM	7/30/20 9:00 AM	DONE 7/30/20	Sent 10.12.20	No corrections sent
6/		7/25/20	Second email 7/29/20	Never heard back			
7/		7/25/20	FORM	7/28/20 12:00 PM	DONE 7/28/20	Sent 10.12.20	No corrections sent
7/		No Email	Phone Message 7/29/20 Spoke w/ Sending Information 7/30/20	Several messages text and email back and forth; never scheduled			
7/		7/25/20	Phone Message & second email 7/29/20	08/06/20 12:30PM	DONE 08/06/20	Sent 10.12.21	No corrections sent
8/		7/25/20	FORM	7/29/20 10:00 PM	DONE 7/29/20	Sent 10.12.20	No corrections sent
8/		7/25/20	FORM	7/31/20 11:00 AM	DONE 7/31/20	Sent 10.12.20	No corrections sent
ELD/		7/26/20	FORM	7/29/20 6:00 PM	DONE 7/29/20	Sent 10.12.20	One comment
ELD/		7/26/20		7/30/20 12:00 PM	DONE 7/30/20	Sent 10.15.21	No corrections sent
SP/			Phone Message 7/29/20	8/04/20 5:00 PM	Rescheduled several times; parents decided that they didn't have the time		
SP			Phone Message & email 7/29/20	08/03/20 12:00 PM	DONE 08/03/20 12:00 PM	Sent 10.12.20	No corrections sent

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