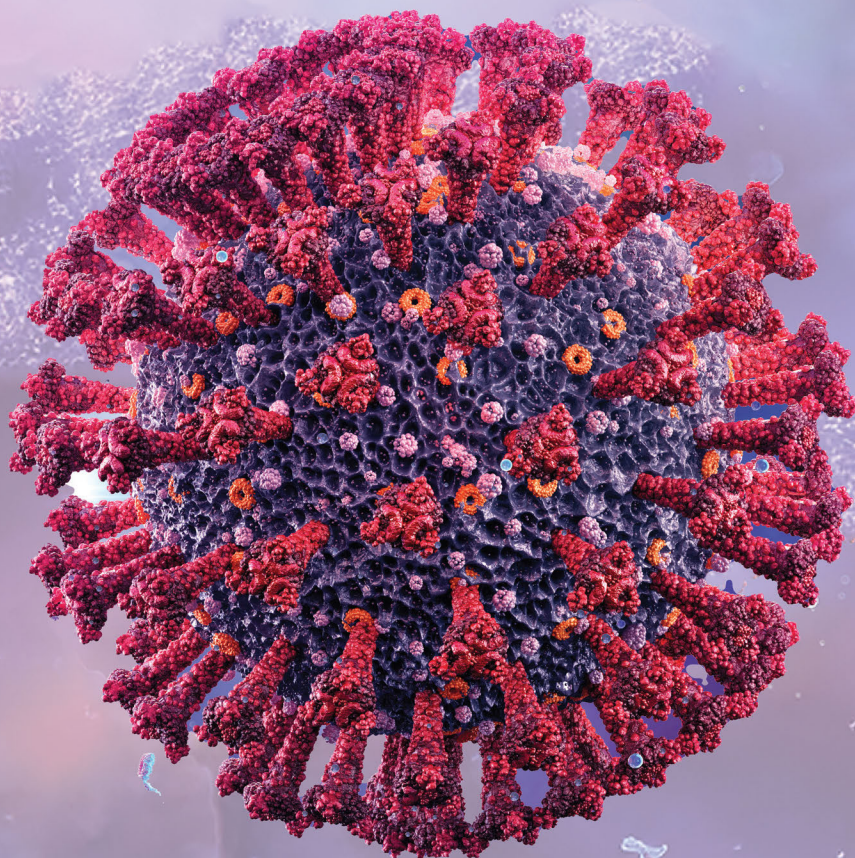


Instructional Survival *in the* **Midst** *of the* **Perfect Storm**

THE EXPERIENCES OF K-12 TEACHERS
DURING THE COVID-19 GLOBAL PANDEMIC



Jill D. Salisbury-Glennon
Chih-hsuan Wang
David M. Shannon

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CONTENTS

Preface	vii
<i>Daniel W. Wong and Lucy Wong Hernandez</i>	
1. Introduction: Instructional Survival in the Midst of the Perfect Storm: The Experiences of K–12 Teachers During the COVID-19 Global Pandemic	1
<i>Jill D. Salisbury-Glennon, Chih-hsuan Wang, David M. Shannon, Daniel W. Wong, Lucy Wong Hernandez, and Yan Dai</i>	
2. Instructional Survival: A Qualitative Case Study of Elementary Teachers’ Experiences Teaching Remotely and Concurrently During COVID-19	9
<i>Karen Ladendorf</i>	
3. Educators’ Job Burnout and Intentions to Leave During the COVID-19 Pandemic	29
<i>Andrew M. Camp, Gema Zamarro, and Josh McGee</i>	
4. A Perfect Storm: COVID-19 as a Demotivating Factor Contributing to Teacher Stress, Burnout, and Mental Health	53
<i>Denisha Jones, Brianne Kramer and Clint Broadbent</i>	
5. Elementary Teacher Morale and Mental Health Following the COVID-19 Pandemic	73
<i>David T. Marshall, Tim Pressley, Natalie N. Schoettler, Deja’ L. Trammell, and Natalie E. Smith</i>	
6. Social Support and COVID-19: How U.S. K–12 Teachers Were Impacted by Gratitude and Mentoring During the COVID-19 Pandemic	87
<i>Kristen C. Mosley, Christopher J. McCarthy, and Aradhita Gupta</i>	

7.	Teacher Self-Efficacy During COVID-19: A Qualitative Study on Experienced High School Teachers.....	107
	<i>Sarah M. Conley</i>	
8.	Impact of COVID-19 on Students With Special Needs and Parent Involvement	127
	<i>Jo Nell “Jody” Wood and Amanda Wood</i>	
9.	Researching the Entangled: Post-COVID-19 Cognitive, Psychological and Motivational States.....	145
	<i>Pinar Ayyildiz and Adem Yilmaz</i>	
10.	K–12 Teacher Support During the COVID-19 Pandemic.....	169
	<i>Velma D. Menchaca and Alejandro Garcia</i>	
11.	Attachment, Attention, and Achievement During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Conceptual Literature Review.....	191
	<i>Romona F. Banks, Mahaliah Bowman Campbell, Dana M. Dillard, and Joseph A. Torres</i>	
12.	The Impact of the Coronavirus COVID-19 Global Pandemic on K–12 Students, Teachers, and Schools in the U.S.	213
	<i>Daniel W. Wong and Lucy Wong Hernandez</i>	
	Biographies	233

PREFACE

Daniel W. Wong and Lucy Wong Hernandez

The COVID-19 novel virus caused a memorable pandemic worldwide. At the national level, it kept us and our families contained in our homes for months and reoriented our relationships with the policymakers, our communities, and even with each other. Schools had closed, and workplaces initiated remote practices to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Parents and caregivers everywhere struggled to keep their children healthy and occupied. Social-emotional skills are crucial during the formative years for the overall well-being of children and are at the core of all meaningful learning experiences. During these challenging times, while children did not always have access to ideal instruction in their academic subjects, they could still learn essential emotional literacy skills that will serve them their entire lives. The pandemic crisis also presented opportunities for our learning communities and school systems to put into practice more sophisticated and flexible uses of technology, to adjust common approaches to teaching and learning, to re-engineer learning skills and to promote school system changes while expanding education practice to develop a holistic approach to fully engage parents, caregivers, teachers, and all stakeholders.

The strengths and benefits of an edited book such as this are that we have a group of researchers committed to conducting various kinds of evidence-based re-

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search studies in an effort to investigate all factors related to the impact of the pandemic. This research can contribute to our knowledge of how we can improve our learning system to better serve our students, parents, caregivers, teachers, school administrators, policymakers, and all stakeholders. Each chapter of this book represented a well-designed, well-organized presentation of a research product to provide readers with pertinent information about the impact of the pandemic on the educational community at large.

Learning, writing, and editing are a journey that will never end. We hope this book will provide knowledge-based educational information to students, parents, school communities, and all stakeholders to continue improving our students' learning system. We believe our mission will be accomplished if this book facilitates a positive learning experience for the readers.

—Daniel W. Wong and Lucy Wong Hernandez

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: INSTRUCTIONAL SURVIVAL IN THE MIDST OF THE PERFECT STORM

The Experiences of K–12 Teachers During the COVID-19 Global Pandemic

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INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW

In 2020, many K–12 schools across the world initially planned to shut down for a brief period of time in response to the COVID-19 epidemic. As the Coronavirus

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began to spread rapidly across the globe, The World Health Organization (WHO) declared this epidemic a pandemic (Mseleku, 2020), and these shut-downs were extended into months and even into entire academic years in an effort to protect students. During these shut-downs, many schools quickly implemented newer modes of instruction for teachers to continue to teach and reach their learners. Specifically, many schools began to implement emergency remote teaching to continue to deliver instruction (Marshall et al., 2022; Trust et al., 2020; Whittle et al., 2020).

These emergency forms of instruction often included Zoom or other forms of on-line distance learning that teachers had to implement quickly, often without the necessary training, guidance and/or technological resources (An et al., 2021; Ferri et al., 2020; Marshall et al., 2022). Ferri et al. (2020) found that this transition to emergency remote learning often resulted in technological, pedagogical and social challenges. As school districts gradually began to approve the in-person return to schools, there was an increase in more hybrid forms of instruction. In some cases, K–12 teachers were expected to teach on-line and in person, often at the same time. In other cases, teachers delivered packets to students who didn't have the technological resources, or the Internet for example, to attend these on-line forms of instruction.

These abrupt shifts to emergency remote and other novel forms instruction in the face of the pandemic often resulted in higher levels of stress and anxiety for K–12 teachers (Hooker et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2022; Pressley et al., 2022). Many considered teachers to be put on the “front lines” (Mosley et al., in press, Ch. 6). Further, much of this instruction took place in isolation. Not only did teachers not have face-to-face contact with their students, but they also lost face-to-face contact with their peer teachers, administrators and other forms of social support in the workplace (An et al., 2022; Leech et al., 2022). In addition, due to stay-at-home orders, many teachers were teaching from home. In many cases, this further caused teachers to experience challenges associated with their work-life balance, as many teachers were tasked with the challenge of teaching their students on-line from their homes, while they also helped their own children to navigate on-line instruction for their teachers (e.g., Marshall et al., 2022; Mutch et al., 2023). This co-edited book serves to elucidate some of the research into both the instructional and the emotional impacts of the COVID-19 global pandemic on K–12 teachers.

BOOK OVERVIEW

The present co-edited book serves to synthesize the research conducted by many scholars with a focus on the many challenges and opportunities that have been experienced by K–12 teachers as the result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. This book will elucidate the various theoretical frameworks, research methodologies, participant populations, research findings, challenges, positive outcomes and future implications for policy and practice based on the results this research.

Instructional and Emotional Impacts of the COVID-19 Global Pandemic on K–12 Teachers

In the second chapter included in this co-edited book, *Instructional Survival: A Qualitative Case Study of Elementary Teachers' Experiences Teaching Remotely and Concurrently During COVID-19*, Ladendorf (Chapter 2), used a qualitative case study methodology to investigate the lived experiences of elementary teachers as they taught both remotely and concurrently during the pandemic. Results were categorized into two themes: instructional and emotional impacts. The instructional impacts of the pandemic directly affected the emotional impacts, as the transition to more remote forms of instruction led to the primary emotions experienced by teachers of shock, fear and isolation. The results of this study imply that when faced with future challenges and crises which are perhaps inevitable, K–12 teachers need to be provided additional instructional resources and training and perhaps equally as important, with the necessary emotional support from administrators, mentors and peer teachers (Ladendorf, Chapter 2).

Teacher Stress, Burnout and Job Dissatisfaction

In the third chapter, entitled *Educators' Job Burnout and Intentions to Leave During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, Camp, Zamarro and McGee (Chapter 3), used nationally representative samples to investigate K–12 teachers' levels of job related burn-out including their thoughts regarding leaving the profession. Results of the analyses indicated that the pandemic was a very challenging time for teachers resulting in large increases in teacher stress, burn-out and even their consideration of exiting the teaching profession. Some of the factors that contributed to these increases included teacher age, the need to change instructional modality, often multiple times; and COVID-related health concerns. Finally, these researchers found that the expressed concerns were actually somewhat different between teachers and administrators suggesting a potential disconnect in the workplace. The results of this study suggest the importance of administrators' awareness of the concerns of K–12 teachers as well as the need to assist teachers with their technological and emotional needs to help retain K–12 teachers.

Somewhat relatedly, in the fourth chapter in this co-edited book, *A Perfect Storm: COVID-19 as a Demotivating Factor Contributing to Teacher Stress, Burnout and Mental Health*, Jones, Kramer and Broadbent (Chapter 4) conducted a mixed methodological study using close to 4000 K–12 teacher participants from across the U.S. to investigate the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on teachers' stress, burnout and mental health. Quantitative results indicated that there was a significant increase in teacher stress, burn-out and mental health as the result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Further, the results of qualitative written responses, focus groups and interviews demonstrated that some teachers chose to leave the profession, while others started to explore other career options. Specifically, some teachers discussed side hustles that they were developing,

while others considered going back to school to obtain degrees outside of the field of education. Based on these findings, Jones, Kramer and Broadbent (Chapter 4) suggested that during these challenging times, there is a need for administrators to work toward meeting the needs of teachers and that more resources need to be in place to help teachers such as additional technological and student supports. Finally, the authors concluded that increased incentives for teachers to remain in the profession such as better salaries, student loan forgiveness options, and overall efforts to help make the teaching profession more valued, respected and appreciated could potentially all help to retain more teachers.

Teacher Morale, Mental Health, Mentoring and Social Support

In Chapter 5, entitled *Elementary Teacher Morale and Mental Health Following the COVID-19 Pandemic*, Marshall, Pressley, Schoettler, Trammell, and Smith (Chapter 5) used a theoretical framework of teacher demoralization to explore teacher morale and mental health at the end of the 2021–2022 school year. According to Marshall et al. (Chapter 5), several factors contributed to the fact that the pandemic was incredibly challenging for educators. First, many K–12 teachers were forced to teach using novel online formats for which they had not been properly trained. Further, these online modes of instruction often resulted in significantly less social interaction. These factors as well as others resulted in higher levels of teacher stress, burn-out and job dissatisfaction. Further, [Kim et al. \(2022\)](#) asserted that teacher stress and burnout was at an all-time high when hyflex teaching was introduced (as cited in Marshall et al., Ch. 5). Thus, Marshall et al., conducted an explanatory, sequential mixed methods design ([Creswell et al., 2011](#)) using both a quantitative survey as well as focus groups to investigate the effects of the pandemic on elementary teachers' morale and mental health. Results of these analyses indicated that while teacher morale definitely suffered as the result of the COVID-19 global pandemic, such factors as administrative support, parent support and teacher autonomy all positively predicted teacher morale and teacher mental health (Marshall et al., Ch. 5). The authors further suggested that these variables could serve to increase teacher morale in the future. Finally, in line with the research conducted by Jones, Kramer and Broadbent (Chapter 4) these researchers also asserted the need to ensure that teachers receive appropriate compensation for their work.

Mosley et al. (Chapter 6) sought to investigate the positive effects of gratitude and teacher mentoring in their chapter entitled *Social Support and COVID-19: How U.S. K–12 Teachers Were Impacted by Gratitude and Mentoring During the COVID-19 Pandemic*. This study extended the prior research into teacher support using a modified grounded theory methodological approach. Results of multiple triangulation techniques showed three themes that suggested that social support, in particular mentoring and gratitude, were extremely helpful for teachers individually, at the classroom level and at the building level. The results of this study provide additional support for prior research into the numerous benefits of mul-

tiple forms of support (Cutrona & Russell, 1990) and yield implications for the importance of supporting teachers during the pandemic years and beyond.

In Chapter 7, *Teacher Self-Efficacy During COVID-19: A Qualitative Study on Experienced High School Teachers*, Conley (Chapter 7) conducted a qualitative study to investigate teachers' self-efficacy experiences during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Specifically, using a qualitative interview study, the researcher investigated how the four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion and physiological state (Usher & Pajares, 2006) affected the self-efficacy of teachers in the midst of the pandemic. The researcher concluded that all teachers experienced challenges related to all four sources of self-efficacy at some point during this challenging time. However, having a growth mindset served to help teachers to overcome some of these challenges. The researcher further concluded that these self-efficacy influences were dependent upon support from their school and their school leadership.

In Chapter 8, entitled *Impact of COVID-19 on Students with Special Needs and Parental Involvement*, Wood and Wood (Chapter 8), conducted a sequential mixed-methods study with special education teachers in an effort to study teachers' perceptions and concerns regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their students with Special Needs. Results of a thematic analysis revealed that these teachers were most concerned about: a lack of academic skills, a lack of available services such as the Internet, a lack of student attendance, and attention and socio-emotional stability since their students' socioemotional needs may not have been met during the global pandemic.

In *Researching the Entangled: Post COVID-19 Cognitive, Psychological and Motivational States*, Ayyildiz and Yilmaz (Chapter 9) conducted a combination design to assess high school students' and teachers', and university students' and teachers' cognitive changes, psychological states and motivational levels as the result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Results of their analyses of the high school teachers' data revealed that the teachers experienced depression, anxiety and a loss of motivation during the post COVID-19 pandemic period. Further, there was also a correlation between depression and generalized anxiety disorder amongst high school teachers. These findings led the researchers to conclude that the impact of the pandemic affected each teacher somewhat differently and that there is a need to deliver teacher education programs with an even greater emphasis on application in addition to content.

In Chapter 10, *K-12 Teacher Support During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, Menchaca and Garcia (Chapter 10), conducted an historical account to investigate how teachers felt about their preparation to teach in a distance learning format, and to describe the types of distance learning support that teachers received during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Grounded in a theoretical framework of social support systems, the study used a qualitative research design using focus group sessions as well as an online questionnaire. Results of the analyses revealed three themes. First, teachers indicated that they did not feel as if they had received

enough preparation for online teaching. Second, these teachers felt a need for additional and continued technological support. And third, teachers expressed a need for more social/emotional support from principals and peers to help them to navigate these challenging times.

In *Attachment, Attention and Achievement during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Conceptual Literature Review*, Banks, Campbell, Dillard and Torres (Chapter 11) synthesized the existing literature into attachment theory, cognitive load theory, and attention mechanisms to provide a theoretical framework to examine academic achievement under the stressful conditions of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Specifically, these authors sought to: provide an overview of attachment theory and related research, explore cognitive load theory and its implications for attention, and to assess the effects of attachment on attention and academic success during an especially challenging time, the COVID-19 global pandemic. The results of their review of the literature suggested that cognitive load theory may provide a framework to explain the relationships between attachment and attention during stressful times. Further this review suggested that marginalized groups may be more susceptible to cognitive load challenges when faced with highly challenging tasks and events.

CONCLUSION

In closing, we would like to thank the many researchers who came together in an effort to bring our vision to fruition and to further elucidate the instructional and emotional impacts of the COVID-19 global pandemic on K–12 teachers. In some ways, K–12 education as we know it will be forever changed as the result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. This collaborative effort resulted in a vast collection of research conducted in many diverse learning contexts. The present co-edited book presents both the challenges as well positive outcomes as the result of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Finally, this book will conclude with a thematic summary written by Dr. Daniel Wong and Dr. Lucy Wong Hernandez over all of the presented research as well as the implications for teachers during future crises in the K–12 classroom.

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