Soaring into the New Normal: Supporting Students in Rural Education

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MISSION STATEMENT

Teachers of West Tennessee, ranging from preschool to higher education, understand the unique educational opportunities and burdens facing students inside and outside of the rural classroom. Every day, these educators learn more about what it means to teach with purpose, as well as what it looks like for students to learn through engagement and empathy. The mission of West TN SoTL is to amplify the voices, practices, and experiences of teachers in the schools of rural West Tennessee and beyond.

As a journal for rural education, West TN SoTL aspires to provide teachers and students in the surrounding area a forum for sharing their ideas and research on teaching and learning. Rural practitioners and learners may not traditionally see themselves as contributors to ongoing scholarly conversations and publications. However, this journal sees them as vital resources of pedagogical insight as we all continue to discover what it truly means to teach and learn.

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The Principal & School Counselor: An Invaluable Relationship

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Abstract: During an informal conversation about how their preparation programs could better equip school counselor and instructional leadership candidates, the authors discussed the critical importance of the people in these fields while also sharing about the ongoing transformation of the roles and responsibilities of each position. From that initial conversation came a partnership between the two leaders of their programs to help ensure candidates understand the value of collaborative partnerships between principals and school counselors.

Serving in rural areas, educators experience a unique set of challenges and opportunities (Hayes, Flowers, and Williams, 2021). As a result, the relationship between the school counselor and the principal may look very different depending on the school and on the role expectations of the school counselor within the school. Rural school counselors and principals are often tasked with different responsibilities than those in urban and suburban schools. According to Wimberly and Brickman, rural schools often have less access to resources and fewer support staff, meaning that school counselors are often called to be in a leadership role (2014). "The school counselor in small town/rural school systems is uniquely situated to provide this leadership role through advocating, collaborating and coordinating services, consulting, and promoting systematic change" (Wimberly & Brickman, 2014, p. 3). In rural schools, school counselors and principals are often viewed as colleagues rather than as boss and employee. The relationship is a partnership rather than a workplace rank (Pearson & Sutton, 1999). However, in order for this relationship to become collegial, collaborative, and most effective, the principal and school counselor need to foster their working relationship and their relationship with one another.

If you were to ask a person the primary purpose of the school counselor, one might have said testing and the collection of college admissions materials. My earliest interactions with Mr. Guidance Counselor occurred in 4th & 7th grades when he came to our classroom to administer the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. That was the only time I, Amanda, ever saw him in my K-8 experience. In high school, the guidance counselor made daily announcements about which admission representatives would be visiting over the lunch period. My perception of the role of school counselors was distorted and vague. My perception has undergone a significant shift through my 20 years as teacher and principal beginning with my first year as a teacher. While setting up my first classroom, a kindergarten classroom in a rural west Tennessee school, the school counselor dropped by and sat down in my rocking chair. She asked some questions about me and asked what she could do to help me. I distinctly remember how she told me that she was not just at the school to support the students, she was there to support me, too. In the midst of my anxiety and fear of having a classroom of my own, I finally felt like I had been heard and my feelings of

uncertainty validated. Not only did the school counselor want our students to succeed, but she also wanted me to succeed.

Prior to becoming a school counselor, I, Tabitha, did not realize or recognize the necessity of a successful collaborative relationship between a school counselor and the school administration. I assumed that I would be a team of one, as the only school counselor in the building. What I did not realize was that I had a team, a team of administrators, who could help me, just as I could help them. In my first year, I knew I had a lot to offer students as a school counselor, but I did not realize how much I could offer administration and how much I could help achieve the overall goals of the school and the success of students, faculty, and administration. I also did not realize how much a supportive principal could help me as a school counselor. My principal was there to support me and to be a member of my school counseling team, as a helper, as an advisory member, and as a supporter. As I began working with my principal and having honest conversations about roles, strengths, and weaknesses, I learned that my principal wanted me to succeed, wanted my program to succeed, and needed me to be a member of her team just as much as I needed her to be a member of mine.

Transformation of Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of both the school counselor and principal have evolved as the expectations for our schools and students have changed. Once thought of as the building manager, the principal's role has transitioned to instructional leader focusing on the academic success and individual well-being of every student and faculty/staff member (NELP, 2018). The principal no longer merely manages the budget nor simply ensures a clean and safe building. Four interrelated areas of behaviors and practices have been identified to integrate instruction, people, and organizational skills, and to produce school outcomes: "engaging in instructionally focused interaction with teachers, building a productive climate, facilitating collaboration and professional learning communities, and strategically managing personnel and resources" (Grissom, Egalite, & Lindsay, 2021, p. 15). Principals serving rural schools

often exhibit behaviors and actions focusing on two distinct themes: leading with a people-centered focus and serving as change agents (Hayes, Flowers, and Williams, 2021).

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (2018) has divided the current roles and responsibilities of principal leadership into two leadership areas: culture and learning (NASSP, 2018). The influence of principals on a school's culture includes an intentional focus on student-centeredness, wellness, equity, relationships, communication, ethics, global-mindedness (NASSP, 2018). The principal intentionally develops connections between students, faculty, staff, and community, providing evidence that the students in his/her care are prepared for college, careers, and life (NELP, 2018).

As the leader of learning, the principal must also focus on the dimensions of vision and mission, collaborative leadership, result-orientation, curriculum, instruction, and assessments, innovation, human capital management, strategic management, and reflection and growth (NASSP, 2018). Neither of the areas work exclusive of each other, rather, the dimensions are intertwined and influence one another to ensure the growth, development, and success of the whole child (NASSP, 2018). The principal ensures the development of social capital, creates and nurtures a culture of culturally responsive practices, and implements policies and practices to ensure equity and social justice (NELP, 2018).

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, the responsibilities of principals have changed to include contact-tracing, enforcing health and safety requirements, and teaching classes for classes without substitute teachers (Clifford and Coggshall, 2021). Furthermore, supporting the emotional health of the faculty, staff, and students and implementing self-care were critical to meeting the needs of their stakeholders (Fisher, Frey, Smith, Hattie, 2021). Because of the vast responsibilities of the principal, those in building-level leadership positions must proactively practice collaborative leadership to support the learning and development of every student (NELP, 2018). Additionally, within the collaborative leadership team, the school counselor should be one of the key team members.

Speaking of school counselor, both the role and title of the position have evolved over the years. Once referred to as guidance counselors, but now known as school counselors, the duties of school

counselors have changed to be more proactive and data-informed, to be more of a leader in the building, and to be more comprehensive with programming linked to the school's goals, mission, and vision (ASCA, n.d.). Whereas guidance counselor once was the title of the position, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) now recognizes the title of the position as school counselor, with guidance being one of the delivery components of a school counseling program (ASCA, n.d.). The American School Counselor Association notes (n.d.), "School counselors work to maximize student success, promoting access and equity for all students. As vital members of the school leadership team, school counselors create a school culture of success for all" (p. 1). Adhering to the ASCA, the state, and the district standards and ethical codes, school counselors are leaders, consultants, collaborators, and advocates. While fulfilling these roles, school counselors create comprehensive school counseling programs based on the following categories: "define, deliver, manage, and assess" (ASCA, n.d., p. 2). To create appropriate and successful comprehensive school counseling programs, school counselors need the support of the administration. School administration should be of the most important team members on the school counseling team.

Although school counselors and principals typically share similar goals and passions and changing the lives of students for the better while making a difference, they each have different methods to accomplish the goals of overall student success (Goodman-Scott, Tillery, & Crane, 2021; Dollarhide, Smith, & Lemberger, 2007). Dollarhide et al. (2007) wrote the following about the difference in how school counselors and principals accomplish their goals, "Counselors look at the causes and issues that lead to negative behavior; principals look at the effects" (2007, p. 360). With the ever-evolving job responsibilities, one of the greatest obstacles to the collaborative partnership between the principal and school counselor is a gap in the understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a school counselor. The expectations of the school counselor and principal are frequently not clearly defined and the perceptions of one's duties are often assumed, or responsibilities continued due to tradition. A recent study found 65% of Kansas administrators were unaware that school counselors had a specific set of curricular standards and 89% of them were unfamiliar with the ASCA National Model (4th ed) (Lane et.al, 2020). A

similar study, conducted by Leuwerke, Walker, and Shi (2009) in Iowa, found that over half of all practicing school principals surveyed reported no understanding of the ASCA National Model, and just over 40% of participants reported little to some knowledge. Of the small number of counselors who reported knowledge of the ASCA National Model, the majority learned from a school counselor (Leuwerke et al., 2009).

Another obstacle to the development of collaborative principal and school counselor partnerships has its roots in the preparation of these educators. Leader preparation programs and school counselor programs are typically separate preparation programs, unfortunately with little crossover. In 2005, Ross and Herrington found that pre-service school counselors envisioned specific roles and duties for themselves, but pre-service principals viewed school counselors as another staff member who completes requests of the principal (as cited by Leuwerke, et al., 2009). Intentionally introducing future school counselors and educational leaders to the roles and standards from both the ASCA and the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Program Recognition Standards: Building Level would create a new understanding of the need for collaborative partnerships between the two disciplines. Alignment between the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors, ASCA School Counselor Competencies, and NELP Standards for Building-Level Leaders were completed by researchers from Ball State University resulting in six units of collaborative study for both future school counselors and principals (Boyland et al., 2019). Rather than training future school counselors and administrators in silos, preparation programs can intentionally cultivate partnerships between programs promoting collaboration, effective communication, teamwork, mutual understanding and respect (Boyland et al., 2019). Incorporating interrelated curricular collaborations between disciplines models the high priority of these collaborative partnerships at all levels of education (Boyland et al., 2019). If students cannot be trained together or included within the same coursework, professors from each preparation program can work together to create meaningful assignments to help future school counselors and principals better understand the roles of each other and to better understand how to build and foster a working relationship (Edwards et al., 2014).

Elements of Effective Relationships

Collaborating, as teammates, allows principals and school counselors to nurture mutual trust and maintain a student-centered focus while differentiating the roles (Odegard-Koester & Watkins, 2016). The creation of this partnership requires a mutual respect, a positive working relationship, a shared passion relating to the success of students, an open line of communication, honest conversations, and a shared responsibility in meeting school and school counseling program goals (Goodman-Scott, et al., 2021). As teammates, principals and school counselors must engage in tough, courageous conversations with one another and practice empathy in order to build trust (Brown, 2018).

As an anxious new principal in a rural elementary school, I, Amanda, was met the first day with a bright smile and a friendly greeting from our school counselor. While I understood the textbook definition of a school counselor, I had little understanding of the realities of her day-to-day role and responsibilities. Together, we became a team. This relationship developed over time, but with each intentional interaction beginning on day 1, we cultivated a collaborative team of mutual understanding and respect. Our partnership allowed us to have honest, reflective conversations where we challenged each other to grow outside of our comfort zone. Professionally, we continued learning together by sharing resources and opportunities. We developed a clear understanding of each other's priorities and responsibilities and supported one another in meeting the expectations. I looked for opportunities to protect her time to ensure 80% of it was focused on meeting the standards and expectations outlined in the ASCA National Model. We viewed our collaborations as learning experiences even when the outcomes looked much different than we anticipated.

As a young school counselor in a rural school district and the only one in my building, I, Tabitha, was scared that I would be isolated within the school building and within the district. I saw my principal as a leader and as a boss, but I did not realize that she was a member of the school counseling team. She was not only the school's leader, but she was also one of the most valuable partners I would work with in the school setting. To become an effective team, we needed to understand each other's roles, strengths, and weaknesses. We needed to understand how we could support one another, which involved honest and

reflective conversations. I needed to understand what the district required of me and what my principal expected from me and needed from me as a school counselor. My principal also needed to understand my role, which meant I had to educate her on the ASCA National Model and how we could merge the school's needs with the roles and responsibilities highlighted by the ASCA. To do this, we needed to create a supportive and collaborative partnership. A partnership built on trust and connection.

An effective relationship between a school counselor and principal impacts all students and the entire school climate (Dollarhide et al., 2007). After much research into successful collaboration between school counselors and principals, Greene and Stewart (2016) developed six components of creating an effective relationship. Those include:

- "An understanding of and respect for the professional roles and ethical responsibilities that accompany each position;
- Principals' knowledge about the ASCA National Model and how it guides the day-to-day work of counselors in schools;
- Time and resource allocation for school counseling professional development;
- Development of a shared school mission and vision that use data-driven action research to ensure high standards and equity for all students;
- Positive support for appropriate and effective school counseling and guidance programs; and
- Clear, identified pathways for frequent communication between the principal and the school counselor that allow for trust and collaboration" (pp. 5-7).

Based on the six components listed above, the following three strategies have been developed to help school counselors and principles create and nurture an authentic, collaborative partnership: (1.) to cultivate connections, (2.) to communicate effectively, (3.) and to be intentional.

Cultivate Connection.

At the root of authentic relationships is a mutual trust developed through connection and empathy. We must proactively seek out opportunities to connect with one another which requires us to practice what Dr. Brene Brown (2018) calls "daring leadership." (p. 12). To connect, leaders must embrace the strength of vulnerability, the emotion experienced during times of emotional exposure, risk, and uncertainty (Brown, 2018). Building trust cannot happen without vulnerability (Brown, 2018). To build this trust, school counselors and principals must address personal and cultural considerations with each other by understanding who they are as people outside of the school building (Goodman-Scott et al., 2021). School counselors and principals must also understand each other within the educational setting, learning more about passion, motivation, and goals for the students and the school (Goodman-Scott et al., 2021 Cultivating connection developed from numerous moments throughout the days, weeks, and years, where we practiced vulnerability and engaged in tough conversations. Through these individual moments, I (Amanda) became more self-aware of my leadership strengths and areas to strengthen. As a school counselor, I (Tabitha) became more aware of what I could offer the students and the administration and how they could help my program. I learned that I was part of a team, and I needed my team in order to succeed. I needed to understand their needs and their visions, just as they needed to understand mine. Together, we were able to create a culture that lived in our school's values and vision and modeled the expectation for other professional relationships (NASSP, 2018).

Communicate Effectively.

Mutual understanding occurs with effective communication. Begin an honest conversation where both partners listen to understand each other's perceptions of the duties of each position. While both the principal and school counselor have a student-centered focus, the responsibility and expectations each has for themselves and one another may not be clearly understood nor have they ever been clearly communicated. Too often assumptions are made, or traditional roles do not align with current standards and needs. Together, evaluate current responsibilities and practices to the ASCA National Model, the TN Instructional Leadership Standards (TILS), and the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders

(PSEL). Honest conversations such as these may require us to choose courage over comfort as conversations such as these can sometimes be tough. “Clear is kind; unclear is unkind” (Brown, 2018, p. 44). As difficult as it may be to engage in tough conversations, as leaders, our students deserve to have leaders who work together on their behalf and advocating for their needs. Because an effective school counselor-principal relationship requires consistent upkeep and care, these difficult conversations need to occur regularly, and frequency of the meetings make a difference (Dollarhide et al., 2007; Duslak & Geier, 2017). However, Duslak and Geier (2017) found that formal and structured meetings do not need to occur for the relationship to be effective, and they suggested that intentional, informal, frequent, and brief conversations are valuable and are important in effective communication. Furthermore, effective communication and a successful working relationship between school counselors and principals can help prevent burnout in each of these high-rate burnout professions (Duslak & Geier, 2017).

Be Intentional.

Relationships are at the core of what educators do. Relationships nurture a sense of belonging and a commitment of individuals to each other and to shared goals (NASSP, 2018). The collaborative partnership does not develop by accident. Both, the principal and school counselor, must be intentional about developing and fostering this relationship. One must intentionally be accessible and visible thereby encouraging impromptu and informal conversations (NASSP, 2018). Proactively engaging in behaviors to create collaborative partnerships aids in developing a strong school climate (Grissom, Egalite, & Lindsay, 2021). To help foster the relationship, the principal and school counselor can take the time to truly understand each other’s roles. School counselors are advocates and must share information about their roles and about the ASCA standards. However, principals also need to share their vision so the school counselor can work to align the counseling program to the vision of the principal and of the school (Duslak & Geier, 2017). Additionally, school counselors can serve principals by acting as a “sounding board” (Duslak & Geier, 2017). Kimber and Campbell completed a survey in 2013 highlighting differences in principals’ and school counselors’ interpretations of various ethical dilemmas and suggested that stronger and more intentional relationships could help the two parties more successfully

align goals and viewpoints for the success of students (as cited by Duslak & Geier, 2017). The principal should also include the school counselor on the school's leadership team or improvement team, providing them with opportunities to be leaders, to assist with overall school decision-making, and to share their program with stakeholders (Edwards et al., 2014). School counselors and principals must build upon the strengths and roles of one another, but they cannot do this without trust in each other and abilities to perform their own roles for the betterment of the students and of the school (Leuwerke et al., 2009). The relationship between the school counselor and principal should be one that complements one another and makes each stronger (Leuwerke et al., 2009).

Moving Forward

Among the many responsibilities of both principal and school counselor, at the heart, they both are practitioners of servant leaders because they both focus on the well-being and growth of the students, faculty, families, and communities to which they belong (Greenleaf, 2021). Beginning in preparation programs, instructional leadership faculty and school counseling faculty should collaborate on developing curriculum and clinical experience opportunities where candidates in each program develop a better understanding of the profession's roles and responsibilities. Through the initial conversations and collaborations between these two programs, candidates in the University of Tennessee at Martin's instructional leadership program are experiencing learning collaboratives like those in the school counseling program. Future plans include additional opportunities for candidates from both programs to collaborate together in ongoing professional learning opportunities hosted by faculty from both programs.

At a time when four out of ten principals expect to leave the profession in the next three years (NASSP, 2021), it is more critical than ever for principals to invest in developing a collaborative team to support one another. As learning opportunities are presented and connections are formed, this collaborative team can start at the graduate level, creating a foundation for both school counselors and principals as they begin their careers. This collaborative effort helps future school counselors and principals form a professional network and begin to create relationships. Investing in partnerships between principals and school counselors is an effective method of serving those in our school

communities, meeting them where they are, and maximizing their growth. “It’s only when diverse perspectives are included, respected, and valued that we can start to get a full picture of the world, who we serve, what they need, and how to successfully meet people where they are” (Brown, 2018, p. 144).

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The impact of Covid-19 on the technology integration skills of preservice teachers in a rural setting

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Abstract: Technology integration has long been researched and studied as a potential catalyst to help teachers better reach their students in the classroom. Both rural and urban educational preparation programs typically either have a stand-alone technology integration course to help train preservice teachers to properly integrate technology into their future classrooms or they have it interwoven throughout their program itself. When the Covid-19 pandemic hit the United States, it completely disrupted education as we know it. Schools and universities were left scrambling to try and handle the changes and still effectively educate students. This study evaluated how rural preservice teachers' technology integration at a rural university was potentially affected by changes in educational norms brought on by the Covid-19 Pandemic. The study found that there were significant differences among the participants in regards to their perceptions of TPACK readiness prior to, during and after the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Introduction

For years the use of technology in the classroom or the effects of technology integration has been a focal point of research for many seeking to find better ways to reach students as well as finding a way create a more motivating classroom for students to learn (Hartman, Townsend, & Jackson, 2019). As technology continues to evolve and more and more developments are made, many continue to look for ways that integrating technology can benefit students in the classroom. While many researchers and teachers already know the importance of technology integration in education, in today's ever-changing classrooms and educational landscape, it has become exponentially prevalent and necessary for teachers and students due to the Covid-19 pandemic. While the Covid-19 pandemic started in 2019, it really didn't appear to affect the educational landscape much if any until 2020. In 2019, most schools and universities conducted courses and classes as they had in 2018. However, in 2020, we began to learn more and more about the pandemic as the numbers of those affected started to rise while even the rural schools and universities began to feel the effects (Basilaia & Kvovadze, 2020; Kaden, 2020). State and local leaders, as well as school administrators and university presidents/chancellors, struggled to try and figure out exactly what to do to continue to keep the classrooms open while also providing a safe environment for students, faculty and staff (Dennis, 2021). In the spring of 2020, many schools and universities began to either shut down or go to a distance learning format. This shift to remote learning was a major hurdle for many teachers, professors and especially students (Karakose, 2021). Many faculty members were not adequately prepared to teach in this format, especially in rural areas (Fleming, 2021; Huck & Zhang, 2021). Many universities moved to an emergency remote teaching situation instead of an effective online learning program (Cameron-Standerford, et al., 2020). It was especially difficult in schools that were not 1:1 in terms of computer technology. The aforementioned hurdles and shift by schools and universities was even more problematic as many lacked access to quality internet in addition to poor infrastructure to support remote or hybrid learning (Wilcox, 2021). In many rural areas, resources for online learning were an even greater problem (Indrawati, Prihadi, & Siantoro, 2020). Internet providers struggled to handle the

massive load of new customers and increased volume of traffic utilizing their service at one time (Dahiya, Rokanas, Singh, Yang, & Peha, 2021).

Compounding the situation was the fact that even conducting necessary meetings to try and figure out exactly what to do or how to respond was a challenge for leaders and educators as physical distancing was paramount (Newbold, Finnoff, Thunstrom, Madison & Shogren, 2020). Many went to a virtual meeting format, such as ZOOM, to try and meet simply to work through the problems and issues that they and their students were facing. For some, it was the first time they had taught classes online and for some students it was the first online courses they had taken. It was very apparent that while our nation was in complete disarray due to this pandemic, our educational system was struggling to figure out what to do to try and maintain some type of normalcy (Dhawan, 2020).

This research focuses on rural preservice teachers enrolled in a required technology integration course at a small, rural public university. The course focused on preparing rural preservice teachers to integrate technology into their future classrooms based on the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) standards & Technology Pedagogy and Content Knowledge (TPACK), like many other technology integration courses in preparation programs (Terri, Cherup, Cunningham & Petrosino, 2003). Due to the connection of TPACK skills and ISTE standards, the course is based on such and utilized a TPACK survey to determine what skills they have acquired after having completed the course (Voithofer, Nelson, Han & Caines, 2019). In previous years, this research has focused on pre/post surveys to determine the effectiveness of the course itself in helping the preservice teachers acquire the skills needed to meet the ISTE Standards (Spaulding, 2016). While it has been found to be effective in helping preservice teachers meet the ISTE standards, the question that emerged was did the pandemic affect the rural preservice teachers' acquisition of TPACK skills in a technology integration course? Thus, this study sought to compare rural preservice teachers' acquisition of both TPACK & ISTE in years prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, during the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic when it first affected their educational structure and when they were fully into the changes in educational structure due to the pandemic.

The 5-point Likert scale survey used evaluated how prepared rural preservice teachers were to utilize technology in their content area and how prepared they felt to teach after completing a technology integration course. Specifically, were they prepared (to meet TPACK & ISTE standards) after completing the technology integration course prior to Covid-19, when Covid-19 first interrupted their educational experience and/or after the effects of Covid-19 had changed their educational norm. This research evaluated rural preservice teachers' survey results from 2019, 2020 and 2021 to determine if there were any differences in their perceived technology integration readiness due to the disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic. The technology integration course is taught both online and face-to-face typically. In previous years, there really hasn't been much if any difference in their acquisition of the technology integration skills or their ability to meet the ISTE standards regardless of the format they chose to take. However, when the Covid-19 pandemic hit, all students were completely disrupted in the teacher education program and all courses were forced to go online. This research attempted to analyze the surveys to see if there was any effect on their perceived readiness to integrate technology or meet ISTE standards based on these disruptions.

Literature Review

The need for technology in education has been researched and evaluated constantly over the last several years. The U.S. Department of Education developed a grant program, in 1999, called Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology (PT3). The program's goal was to locate schools with little to no technology and provide them with a variety of needed technologies (Dilworth et. al., 2012). These and other grants made it possible for these schools to purchase various software, smart boards, laptops and even iPads for their classrooms. Then, in 2007, the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) developed the National Educational Technology Standards (NETS) for both teachers and students which outlined the technology skills students and teachers should have (Roblyer, 2000).

Mishra and Koehlers' (2006) development of The Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) model created a model to help assess the skills. This model was instrumental in defining how technology, content knowledge and pedagogy are all connected. Schmidt et al. (2010)

developed a 75-item (Likert) survey instrument based on the TPACK model, that divided TPACK into seven domains. It focused on evaluating preservice teachers' TPACK development, while enrolled in a teacher education program. Soon, related studies began showing up that also utilized the TPACK model as a basis for developing preservice teachers in teacher education programs.

However, while TPACK was developed to help identify how technology, content knowledge and pedagogy are related, equally important is defining what technology skills are needed. As research shows, identifying what these skills are exactly has created a basis for much research. In fact, Nelson, Christopher and Mims (2009) pointed out that research now suggests that integration is much more involved than we first thought. In fact, Alkhayat, Ernest, and LaChenaye, (2020) points out that currently, Web 2.0 tools have become increasingly utilized as a main source of integration since they are often free, easily accessible and even assist in addressing educational and technology standards. Web 2.0 tools are defined as internet resources such as: podcasts, social networks, virtual environments, wikis and blogs (Alkhayat et. al., 2020; Liu, Kalk, Kinney & Orr, 2012; Nebel, Jamison, & Bennett, 2009). These tools have had very positive effects on student learning and transitioned the classroom from teacher to more learner-centered environments in many ways including increased collaboration (Alkhayat et. al., 2020; Hew & Cheung, 2013). Furthermore, research has also begun to look at how useful Web 2.0 tools are in the K-12 setting in terms of the classroom setting but also in the various lessons within different curriculum areas (Say & Yildirim, 2020). In fact, now, Web 2.0 tools have now become increasingly useful in Higher Education (Can, Gelmez-Burakgazi, & Celik, 2019).

With regards to TPACK, many research studies have focused on the self-efficacy of preservice teachers toward their own TPACK skills (Bustamante, 2020; Chai, Koh & Tsai, 2010; Esposito & Moroney, 2020; Oner, 2020). Other studies have focused on raising preservice teachers' perceptions of their technology competencies. Once such study found that by completing a technology integration course in an education program, preservice teachers had higher perceptions of their competencies (Chai et. al., 2010). Furthermore, to help bolster preservice teachers' self-efficacy and their perceptions of their own technology integrations skills, Newby and Cheng (2019) utilized 'digital badges' in their research. They

found that not only did the badges help create a sense of credibility to teachers that acquired certain technology integration skills, but it also helped improve their perceptions of their own skills. Other research has evaluated the use of the latest technology by infusing it through not only coursework but also field placements (Hager, 2020).

While technology and technology integration are ever-changing, there has never been any doubt that it could enhance the classroom if implemented properly and resources are available. However, the one consistent issue for years has been access to those resources (Tarman, Kilinc, & Aydin, (2019). In fact, research shows that rural areas are behind urban areas in terms of access to technology and resources (Statti & Torres, 2020; Wargo & Simmons, 2021). However, while lack of access does continue to be a consistent barrier, one study suggests that lack of time for educators has been a constant barrier (Francom, 2020). As Francom (2020) stated, even though the access to resources has increased through the years, the actual training, technical support and teacher beliefs have declined over time. One study even suggests that the barriers of technology integration that exist in higher education is because there are no consistent practices of how or what tools to use to integrate (Mercader & Gairín, 2020).

Still, studies continue to suggest that improving preservice teachers' technology integration skills and self-efficacy and eliminating barriers starts with taking a technology or technology integration course within the teacher education program (Alelaimat, Ihmeideh, & Alkhawaldeh, 2020). Consequently, studies have pointed to the need for more professional development to help with this issue (Shuster, Glazewski, & Villa, 2020). This was further supported through the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grant, which is a federally funded grant provided to various teacher education programs across the United States to improve teacher quality through professional development among other things (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

Current research continues to investigate various ways technology can help both preservice and inservice teachers become more comfortable using technology, become more effective teachers and better reach their diverse students by eliminating barriers (Atabek, 2020; Francom, 2020, Mercader & Gairín, 2020; Tarman et. al., 2019). However, studies do continue to indicate that not only do preservice teachers

feel better prepared, but their attitudes toward using technology also improved after taking a technology integration course in their teacher education program (Alelaimat et. al., 2020). Watson, Yu, Alamri, & Watson, (2020), also pointed to the beliefs and attitudes that preservice teachers have as a major factor in whether they choose to integrate technology into their future classrooms.

If these barriers weren't enough, in the middle of Spring 2020 a new barrier emerged as a major factor in the educational community on a worldwide level. Schools and universities were either forced to shut down or go fully online due to the world-wide Covid-19 pandemic. After some time, the pandemic began to reach even rural schools and universities as well (Mueller et al., 2021). While the pandemic has certainly had a profound effect in all areas, it has had a 'severely negative' effect on rural populations (Mueller et al., 2021). Many of the rural families simply couldn't afford the needed resources to provide their children adequate online learning environments at home (Indrawati et. al., 2020). Furthermore, Fleming (2021) found that teachers in rural areas didn't feel their students were as prepared during the pandemic for online learning. The study found that rural teachers weren't as trained and didn't feel they were provided the needed resources (Fleming, 2021). Fleming (2021) also found that based on teachers' responses, access to technology resources for online learning was more available to urban students than rural students, as was internet access.

This pandemic has continued to affect our schools and universities drastically, especially in rural areas (Indrawati et. al., 2020). While there has been research done in the urban areas, there has been less done in the rural areas (Mueller et al., 2021). As we continue to navigate these uncertain times, many universities have remained mostly online since the Fall 2020 semester (Neumann, Alvarado-Albertorio, & Ramu'irez-Salgado, 2020). Many professors and students are struggling to adapt and adjust to the various issues this has created (Arnett & Waite, 2020). This study was started in the Fall of 2019 before the onset of Covid-19. However, the preservice teachers in this study in the Spring of 2020 were affected tremendously as many of their courses were changed drastically in the middle of the semester and forced to go totally online. Then, in Spring 2021, the preservice students in this study were taught completely online the entire semester.

Methods

Preservice teachers at a small rural university were surveyed based on their perceptions of teaching with technology before, during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. Survey results were evaluated utilizing an instrument that was adapted from the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) model because of its reliability and validity. The internal consistency (alpha) ratings of the TPACK survey vary from .75 to .92 (Schmidt et al., 2010).

The TPACK survey has been widely used to evaluate TPACK readiness within the educational technology community. It consists of the following areas: technology knowledge (TK), content knowledge (CT), pedagogical knowledge (PK), pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), technological content knowledge (TCK), technological pedagogical knowledge (TPK) and technology pedagogy and content knowledge (TPACK). The instrument is based on a 5-part pre/post survey (Schmidt et al., 2010).

Respondents were preservice teachers enrolled in either an online or face-to-face format technology integration course within the teacher education program. The course involved creating technology-based lesson plans based on various Web 2.0 tools and technologies designed to help preservice teachers learn to integrate technology into their future classroom. Specific programs or Web 2.0 tools included Flipgrid, Promethean board, video/video editing, ActivInspire, wikis, blogs, web resources and apps. It also was designed to help teachers learn to use technology to improve standardized test scores. One of the main goals of the course was to teach students to learn to implement and integrate technology into their classroom to improve their students' acquisition of the content and blend it with their teaching philosophy. This is the foundation of TPACK. The face-to-face courses were taught in a traditional method but used Canvas for informational purposes while the online courses were taught exclusively online through Canvas. The courses were taught in fall 2019, spring 2020, fall 2020 and spring 2021 semesters at the same university by the same instructor. The face-to-face sections consisted of approximately 40 students while the online section consisted of approximately 20-25 students. Most of the students were in their sophomore year but there were a couple of juniors. The students in the course

were not yet admitted to the education preparation program. The students surveyed all had different emphasis areas including: secondary education, elementary education and special education. However, in spring 2020, the semester was disrupted by Covid-19 and all students finished the semester in the online format.

The research survey consisted of a 5-point Likert scale with ordinal data not normally distributed, thus the Mann-Whitney U and Wilcoxon Rank Sum tests were used to analyze the pre and post survey data. Since the same group of participants took both the pre and post survey, the Wilcoxon rank sum test was used to determine if significant differences exist in pre and post survey results. The survey consisted of 50-60 items in which students identified their perceptions on technology-enhanced, learner centered instruction. The survey was based on a 5-Likert scale with the following responses: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree or 5 = strongly agree.

The hypothesis for the study was that Covid-19 did have an effect on preservice teachers' preparedness to integrate technology into the classroom based on TPACK skills acquired in a technology integration course. The study sought to compare the effects of Covid-19 on the perceived preparedness of preservice teachers to integrate Web 2.0 technology into their content after completing a technology integration course.

Findings

Of the 8 total categories of questions in the survey, the study found significant differences within different years in 3 categories. Differences were found in technology knowledge, technological pedagogical knowledge and models of TPACK by faculty.

Table 1 (see appendix) shows individual mean scores for each pre and post survey question that had significant differences. *P*-values less than 0.05 indicate significant differences between respondents' pre- and post-course survey responses.

As shown in table 1, there were significant differences found in the category *Technology Knowledge* with regards to whether "they frequently played around with technology." There was a

significant difference in the mean score between years 2020 (3.94) and 2021 (3.41). There was also a significant difference in the mean score between years 2019 (3.76) and 2021 (3.20).

There were also significant differences found in the category *Technological Pedagogical Knowledge*. In response to the question "I am thinking critically about how to use technology in my classroom," differences were found in mean scores in years 2019 (4.28) and 2021 (3.96). In response to the question "I feel I can adapt the use of the technologies that I am learning about to different things," differences were found in mean scores in years 2020 (4.31) and 2021 (3.75). In response to the question "I can select technologies to use in my future classroom that enhance what I teach, how I teach and what students learn," differences were found in mean scores in years 2020 (4.29) and 2021 (3.94). In response to the question "I can provide leadership in helping others to coordinate the use of content, technologies and teaching approaches at my future school and/or district," differences were found in mean scores in years 2019 (4.15) and 2021 (3.77).

Lastly, there were significant differences found in the category *Models of TPACK* with regards to faculty modeling. In response to the question "In general, approximately what percentage of your teacher education professors have provided an effective model of combining content, technologies and teaching approaches in their teaching," differences were found in mean scores in years 2019 (4.04) and 2021 (3.69). In response to the question "In general, approximately what percentage of your professors outside teacher education have provided an effective model of combining content, technologies and teaching approaches in their teaching," differences were found in mean scores in years 2019 (4.47) and 2021 (3.80).

Limitations

This study was conducted at a small, rural university and future research would benefit from other universities with educator preparation programs to see if the results are consistent. Future research might also benefit from greater participation and a comparison to urban areas. When the Covid-19 Pandemic began affecting the university in the study, many students simply quit coming to class or didn't respond to the surveys. Thus, the survey participation was lower than expected as students struggled with a new

course format or interruptions to their educational experience. Another limitation was the lack of technological resources during this time. The Covid-19 pandemic caused a much greater need for internet usage and other virtual technologies that were often unavailable in the rural areas. The one consistent theme during this study was that there were many limitations due to the pure uniqueness and newness of this pandemic and the issues that were created by it.

Discussion

As shown in the findings above, there were significant differences found in 3 different categories of the TPACK survey. Within these differences, there were differences found in 7 of the survey responses between different years. As hypothesized, more students indicated that they "frequently played around with technology" in the years leading up to the pandemic or even when pandemic first arrived in 2020 than they did once the pandemic fully affected their coursework and the format of courses went to all online in 2021. This same was found when comparing student responses before the pandemic hit in 2019 to 2021.

Similarly, students in 2019 (prior to the pandemic) more often "thought critically about how to use technology in my classroom," than they did in 2021. Also, more students in year 2020 "felt they could adapt the use of the technologies that they were learning about to different things and select technologies to use in their future classroom that enhance what they teach, how they teach and what students learn," than did students in year 2021. Lastly, more students in 2019 felt they could "provide leadership in helping others to coordinate the use of content, technologies and teaching approaches at my future school and/or district," than did students in 2021.

Overall, this research has shown that at a small rural university and within certain categories, Covid-19 has influenced the educational setting for preservice students. It influenced the preservice students in a technology preparation course concerning how prepared they felt after completion. It is unclear whether this is due to the change in course format, the stress of the pandemic, simply the lack of focus that many students reported having, the rural location and potential lack of resources or other outside factors related to the pandemic. Universities in rural areas should ensure that their infrastructure

can handle remote or hybrid learning by surveying both faculty and staff to assess the need. They can collaborate with local, state, and regional stakeholders to provide quality internet access and devices to both faculty and staff. Educator preparation programs in rural areas should provide opportunities for teacher education candidates to learn more about conducting their classroom in a remote or hybrid setting by providing training in technologies such as Google Classroom. Regardless, the results of this study did discover that differences did occur and there needs to be more research or changes made to better help rural preservice teachers prepare for their future as educators in rural settings should this pandemic continue.

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Appendix

Table 1
Significant differences between years on post survey

Variable	Year1	Year2	Sig Diff
Technology Knowledge			
I frequently play around with technology.	2020	2021	.034
I frequently play around with technology.	2019	2021	.032
Technological Pedagogical Knowledge			
I am thinking critically about how to use technology in my classroom.	2019	2021	.043
I feel I can adapt the use of the technologies that I am learning about to different things.	2020	2021	.039
I can select technologies to use in my future classroom that enhance what I teach, how I teach and what students learn	2020	2021	.029
I can provide leadership in helping others to coordinate the use of content, technologies and teaching approaches at my future school and/or district.	2019	2021	.048
Models of TPACK (Faculty)			
In general, approximately what percentage of your teacher education professors have provided an effective model of combining content, technologies and teaching approaches in their teaching?	2019	2021	.026
In general, approximately what percentage of your professors outside teacher education have provided an effective model of combining content, technologies and teaching approaches in their teaching?	2020	2021	.012

$p < 0.05$

Title: Raising Awareness of Child Sexual Abuse Victimization During

COVID-19 in Rural School Settings

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the need to raise awareness and address child sexual abuse victimization in rural school settings. The discussion will start with a brief overview of COVID-19 and child sexual abuse and the role of rural school and clinical mental health counselors before recommending the best practices in reporting sexual abuse in rural school settings. Lastly, the authors will conclude with implications for future research.

Raising Awareness of Child Sexual Abuse Victimization During COVID-19 in Rural School Settings

Introduction

The essential roles school counselors perform in rural school settings cannot be overstated (Hann-Morrison, 2011). However, the dearth of school counselors in rural settings is an unsettling reality for the profession. In fact, 14% of rural school districts do not have a full-time school counselor on site (Civil Rights Data Collection, 2014, as cited in Quintero & Gu, 2019). Furthermore, rural school counselors face unique and stressful challenges because of geography, including feelings of isolation, boundary issues due to cultural assumptions of a rural setting, rural poverty, the lack of access to adequate mental health treatment outsourcing, and lack clinical supervisors (Bright, 2018; Wilson et al., 2015; Zalewski, 2022). This lack of structural support can lead to burnout, and more importantly, directly impacts services provided to students (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). The COVID-19 pandemic magnified this phenomenon creating additional barriers for school counselors to overcome as they strive to serve and protect their students.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA; 2016) and American Counseling Association (ACA; 2014) ethical standards dictate school counselors report suspected cases of abuse to the proper authorities. Moreover, school counselors and clinical mental health counselors are mandatory reporters under relevant state laws (Kenny et al., 2018). ACA, ASCA, and state legislative bodies established these ethical standards and laws for the well-being of students the profession serves (ACA, 2014; ASCA, 2016). There, however, exists a gap between best-practices and implementation of reporting sexual abuses in school settings (Esin et al., 2020; Kenny, 2018; Lambie, 2005). Khubchandani et al. (2012) found that 81.3% of school counselors did not have protocols or procedures to report dating violence, including sexual assault, in their schools. Further, 43% of respondents reported inadequate training related to addressing sexual abuse (Khubchandani et al., 2012).Likewise, school counselors were less likely to report cases of abuse because of concerns of overreactions by school administrators, child

protection services, and feeling their efforts to report the suspected cases of abuse would be in vain (Behun et al., 2019; Bryant & Baldwin, 2009; Esin et al., 2020).

When suspected cases of sexual abuse are reported by school counselors, the reasons for reporting vary. Behun et al. (2019) found that school counselors are more likely to report cases of suspected abuse when school counselors are more experienced, less concerned about negative consequences, and have attended mandated training workshops. Conversely, Behun et al. (2019) found a commitment to and understanding of mandated reporting laws, confidence in child protective services, and a concern about the consequences resulted in less awareness and reporting suspected cases.

In addressing suspected cases of child abuse, collaboration with other mental health professionals in the community is essential. Fruetel et al. (2022) found school counselors recognized the need for collaboration with other professionals in a rural community. However, the lack of resources posed as a barrier in properly addressing and following up with students after the crisis (Fruetel et al., 2022). Findings that reinforce the call by Bain et al. (2011) that rural school districts find alternative avenues to support the mental health well-being of their students, including collaboration with community mental health professionals.

School counselors serve an important role in schools by developing trusting relationships with the students they serve; a trust that can result in the students opening up to them about cases of abuse, and thus reporting higher incidences of suspected child abuse (Bryant, 2009). What is more, researchers, professional counseling associations, and legislators all agree on the importance of reporting suspected cases of abuse, the need for mandatory training and collaboration with other mental health professionals, clinical supervision, and the support from school administrators in what can be an emotional and challenging time for both the student and the school counselor (ACA, 2014; ASCA, 2016; Bell & Singh, 2016; Bright, 2019; Bryant & Baldwin, 2009; Kenny et al., 2022; Tuttle et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2015). Notwithstanding the consensus call to protect the youth of America from sexual abuse, there are still disparities surrounding the level of awareness and training school counselors have and need regarding this essential role in rural settings (Bright, 2018; Bryant & Baldwin, 2009). The purpose of this article is to

raise awareness of sexual abuse victimizations in rural school settings, how COVID-19 compounded the issues, the role of collaboration in this setting, and offer recommendation for best practices in reporting sexual abuse in rural school settings.

COVID-19 and Child Sexual Abuse

The COVID-19 pandemic has created widespread concern about students living in rural, economically disadvantaged communities (Keesler et al., 2021). Students isolated from school and other support systems often encounter escalated stress, increased risk for supervisory neglect, maltreatment, and adverse child experiences (ACEs; APA, 2020 and Thomas & Romano, 2020, as cited in Kern et al., 2021; Barrett et al., 2011; Humphreys et al., 2020; Keesler et al., 2021; Sinko et al., 2021; US Department of Health and Human Services, 2022). ACEs are traumatic events, including homelessness, poverty, exposure to household dysfunction, and physical, mental, and sexual abuse (Keesler et al., 2021; Crumb et al., 2021). An example of an ACE might be a student trapped at home with a sexually abusive family member or caretaker with no way to report the abuse or obtain essential mental health assistance. According to the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information (2005), as cited in Barrett et al., 2011, p. 88), "…the impact of maltreatment on the developing child can be profound, affecting both school-specific and broader life contexts, and may extend long after childhood has passed."

During the peak of COVID-19, stress was heightened due to loss of income, social isolation, and school and work closures, in particular for those in rural communities given less access to resources and stable internet connections for social connection (Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2020; Nicola et al., 2020). With the increase in stress from COVID-19 came an increase in risk for child abuse and neglect (CDC, 2020). However, the reported child abuse numbers during the peak of COVID-19 did not reflect the suspected increase. More specifically, for federal fiscal year (FFY) 2020, the US Department of Health and Human Services (2022) Administration of Children report titled Child Maltreatment revealed that approximately 618,000 children in the United States were reported victims of maltreatment. Included in that number were 2,307 reported victims of child sexual abuse who resided in Tennessee. The national number of victims for 2020 decreased by 8.7 percent from the 2016 national

report of 677,000 reported victims, which may be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2022). There was a noticeable drop in referrals to Child Protective Services (CPS) and the hotline during months when schools would have been in session (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2022). Additionally, there was a noticeable drop in emergency room visits for child victims of abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic than pre-pandemic emergency room visits (CDC, 2020).

However, of note, the numbers reflect reported and suspected abuse, not cases that went unreported. A potential reason for the decrease in reporting is that school personnel make up the majority of reporters, and since children were often not face to face with school personnel, reports went down because they did not have that same level of interaction (Tener et al., 2020). In fact, there seems to have been an increase in child sexual abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic (Tener et al., 2020). More specifically, children were home more during COVID-19 and around potential perpetrators, around a more stressful environment, and also, children were engaging more in online forums, which created more potential exposure to online perpetrators (Interpol, 2020). With the suspected increase in child sexual abuse, the impact of other forms of abuse, particularly in rural areas, and the impact of COVID-19 on education, Tennessee (TN) created a task force to assess its impact. The TN Department of Education Child Wellbeing Task Force Initial COVID-19 Impact (2020) report Communities in Schools of Tennessee identified child stress in the home (42%) as the number two need recognized in families residing in rural areas in Tennessee (TN Dept. of Ed. 2020). These data collectively reveal the urgent need for effective collaborative school and mental health support for children nationally and those living in rural communities (Crumb et al., 2021; Kern et al., 2021; Sinko et al., 2021). More specifically, the collaboration between rural clinical mental health counselors and rural school counselors and their support for children during COVID-19, particularly those who experienced child sexual abuse, will be explored.

Rural Clinical Mental Health Counselors

Access to any level of care (dental, medical, etc.) can be challenging in a rural setting, including access to mental health care (National Rural Health Association, 2015). More specifically, there are four main reasons as to why there seems to be a deficit of mental health care in rural areas. First, is lack of availability of mental health services (National Rural Health Association, 2015). This could be specific to staffing shortages or limited or no access to services (National Rural Health Association, 2015). Second is accessibility of mental health services (National Rural Health Association, 2015). This limitation includes when and where to be able to obtain mental health services and potential issues related to traveling for the services (National Rural Health Association, 2015) Third, is affordability of mental health services (National Rural Health Association, 2015). Given the costs associated with mental health care, and depending on the individual's insurance, it may serve as a hindrance for someone receiving mental health services (National Rural Health Association, 2015). Fourth, is acceptability of mental health services (National Rural Health Association, 2015). There is a stigma related to receiving mental health services, which can deter some from seeking treatment (National Rural Health Association, 2015). This carries particularly heavier weight in rural settings as someone may be concerned about their information getting out into the community (e.g., even their car being seen at the mental health center, etc.).

While there is an obvious lack of mental health resources in rural areas, that is not due to the lack of need for mental health services in rural areas (Human & Wasem, 1991; National Rural Health Association, 2015). In fact, research shows that approximately 20 percent of adults aged 55 and older that reside in rural communities have some sort of mental health disorder and there is also a higher suicide rate among rural adults and children in comparison to their urban counterparts (Mohatt et al., 2006; National Rural Health Association, 2015). However, individuals in rural areas may not seek mental health services for a myriad of reasons as mentioned above.

On the other hand, working in a rural setting can be challenging for a mental health counselor as well. Moreover, while there are various challenges for rural mental health counselors, there are three notable ones. First, there is cultural shock that the counselor may experience while working in a rural setting (Bowen & Caron, 2016; Rollins, 2010). This might entail learning the ins and outs of the

counselor's particular rural area including the resources (and lack of) in the area. Second, there is potential for ethical issues to arise more frequently than they might in a urban setting. For instance, the clinical mental health counselor may not know much about the client coming in to see them, but chances are, the counselor has heard something about the client or his/her family (Bowen & Caron, 2016; Rollins, 2010). This also ties into the ACA Code of Ethics Standard A.5.d. (2014) that states "Counselors are prohibited from engaging in counseling relationships with friends or family members with whom they have an inability to remain objective." There can be a fine line with this rural setting, as long as the counselor is remaining objective. Third, the rural mental health counselor may experience professional isolation (Bowen & Caron, 2016; Rollins, 2010). In a rural setting, the clinical mental health counselor may be the only one for a big area, and may not have anyone to collaborate with in the same field so often has to get creative in their professional network by reaching out to other helping disciplines in the area (e.g., general physicians, social workers) for consultation if needed (Bowen & Caron, 2016; Rollins, 2010).

Additionally, with these challenges clinical mental health counselors in rural areas face, this could also add an additional layer of complication if there is suspected child abuse or neglect brought to the counselor. Moreover, given the focus of the paper is on child sexual abuse, if child sexual abuse is reported to the rural counselor, the counselor is mandated to report it (Mandated Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect, 2019). While the abuse report can remain anonymous, in a smaller rural area, it is often not hard to figure out who reported it. Additionally, the report can cause ripple effects in the community (e.g., the family lashing out at the counselor and the counselor's family, etc.) and potentially impact the relationship the counselor has with the child survivor of the abuse (e.g., their family may not bring them back, they may be mad at you for reporting, etc.). While access to mental health care in rural areas is limited and the parent of a child may not opt to have their child in clinical mental health counseling, children may have access to a counselor in their rural school setting.

Rural School Counselors

Rural communities experience shortages of mental health counselors and professionals who provide specialized services to children related to maltreatment, trauma, and crisis (Carnes-Holt & Weatherford, 2013 and Jameson & Blank, 2007, as cited in Crumb et al., 2021). As a result, school counselors are the most accessible to rural students who need psychological support; and schools are the primary location for students to access and receive mental health services (Hann-Morrison, 2011).

Rural school counselors are trained to meet standards set by the American School Counseling Association (ASCA), Council of Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), and Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination. Comparable to mental health programs, school counselors who graduate from a CACREP accredited school counseling program complete many of the same classes, including theories and techniques, group work, human growth and development, multicultural, and assessments for diagnostic and intervention (Lambie et al., 2019; Stutey & Clemens, 2015).

Christian & Brown (2018) argue that school counselors are inadequately trained despite obtaining similar training to clinical mental health counselors. Time limitations and their role and responsibilities prevent them from meeting students' mental health needs.

The role of a school counselor in a crisis was summarized by Jackson-Cherry and Erford, 2015, as cited in Pincus et al., (2020):

> During times of crisis, the role of the professional counselor is critical. Counselors are expected to provide counseling for students, coordinate all counseling activities, communicate with faculty and parents, seek support from the crisis team, and contact neighboring schools. Counselors provide direct counseling services during intervention and postvention phases of the crisis. They are expected to serve students and personnel during times of crisis by providing individual and group interventions; to consult with administrators, faculty, parents, and professionals; and to coordinate services with the school and the community. (p. 409)

The ASCA National Model is one of the most utilized models for comprehensive school counseling (Lambie et al., 2019). In 2017, the Tennessee Board of Education implemented Policy 5.103-School Counseling Model and Standards, which align with the ASCA National Model and guides rural school counselors in developing and implementing a comprehensive school counseling program that removes barriers to learning (Lambie et al., 2019; ASCA, n.d.-b). Both models outline the scope of school counseling responsibilities that consist of appropriate and inappropriate tasks. Appropriate duties include advising and scheduling; providing short-term individual and small group mental health counseling; social-emotional classroom guidance lessons; and consultation and collaboration with administrators, teachers, parents, families, and community stakeholders (Appling et al., 2015; ASCA, n.d.-b; Lambie et al., 2019; Pincus et al., 2020; Stutey & Clemens, 2015). Noncounseling duties such as discipline, substitute teaching, test coordination, bus or lunch duty, or long-term counseling for students with psychological disorders or higher needs are deemed inappropriate (Lambie et al., 2019; Pincus et al., 2020).

Despite the differentiation between appropriate and inappropriate duties listed in the ASCA National Model, principals and administrators in rural schools continue to rely on rural school counselors to fulfill roles, tasks, and responsibilities outside of their scope of training (Grimes et al., 2014 and Johnson, 2020, as cited in Crumb et al., 2021; Hann-Morrison, 2011). Consequently, when rural school counselors administer or oversee noncounseling tasks, they become inaccessible to adequately serve their students and schools (Pincus et al., 2020). More specifically, they have less time to function as mandated reports who detect, report, and prevent child maltreatment, sexual abuse, and neglect.

Mandated Reporters

According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Ethical Standards (2016) and the American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics (2014), school counselors and clinical mental health counselors are mandated reporters of suspected maltreatment and child abuse. They must report to the appropriate authorities and protect students from harm under the Child Abuse and Treatment Act, Law 93-247. School counselor and clinical mental health counselors are trained in their perspective

counseling program on their duty to report suspected or reported child abuse and neglect (ACA, 2014; CACREP, 2016). However, there is no required training in counseling programs on identifying suspected abuse and neglect (Kenny & Abreu, 2015). Thus, both school and clinical mental health counselors are expected to report suspected and reported abuse and neglect, but often are not fully aware of the warning signs for identifying abuse and neglect in children (Kenny & Abreu, 2015). Thus, school counselors and clinical mental health counselors often seek out training in various other forums capacities on this topic. School counselors often seek and obtain comprehensive training in state, district, and school policies that consist of recognizing signs of child abuse, speaking to students about abuse, and reporting suspected abuse (Bryant, 2010, Lambie, 2005, Minard, 1993 as cited in Stutey & Clemens, 2015). Clinical mental health counselors often seek out conferences, continuing education, or workshops on the topic of recognizing child abuse, speaking to children about it, and on reporting suspected abuse (Kenny & Abreu, 2015). In 2016, an estimated 4.1 million reports involving 7.4 million children were referred to US child protective services. School and mental health counselors reported 5.9% of the cases (Children's Bureau, 2018, as cited in Kenny et al., 2018).

To adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic, Tennessee service providers decreased or canceled in-home services, and the state experienced delays in third-party vendors' provisional services (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2022). Unfortunately, the closures of support services and schools meant "the largest source of reports to CPS will disappear" (Humphreys et al., 2020, p.2) and led to decreased visibility and identification of child maltreatment (Humphreys et al., 2020; Kenny et al., 2018; Sinko et al., 2021; Sikes et al., 2010).

With the continued effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing ACEs, students would benefit from the collaboration of rural school counselors and rural clinical mental health counselors (Appling et al., 2020; Crumb et al., 2021; Moran & Bodenhorn, 2015). Particularly, the disadvantaged population, children who are being or have been sexually abused in rural populations, needs collaboration between rural school counselors (Barrett et al., 2011) and rural clinical mental health counselors.

Collaboration

As previously mentioned, given the lack of mental health resources in rural areas, it would be beneficial for school counselors and clinical mental health counselors to work together, particularly for those children who have experienced child sexual abuse. By collaborating, school counselors and clinical mental health counselors can effectively address the mental health needs of K-12 students (Appling et al., 2020; Moran & Bodenhorn, 2015). Combining resources and support offers a comprehensive picture of a student's situation and results in more successful outcomes (Moran & Bodenhorn, 2015). Friend and Cook, 2013, as cited in Appling et al. (2020), defined collaboration as the interaction between two parties working collectively to reach a common goal. A successful working alliance requires trust, respect, transparent communication, and active listening. Therefore, each party must be willing to share their knowledge and skills and work through any conflict.

Prior research indicates that collaboration between school counselors and clinical mental health counselors is often a challenge (Moran & Bodenhorn, 2015; Porter et al., 2000). In Moran and Bodenhorn's (2015) study, school counselors identified several barriers to collaborating with fellow community counselors. One obstacle was conflicting work schedules and/or times. School counselors typically work between 8:00 am and 3:00 pm during the day, while clinical mental health counselors may only work evenings. The difference in availability made it difficult to meet or talk via the telephone. Communicating solely through e-mail posed an ethical dilemma (Moran & Bodenhorn, 2015). In addition, some school counselors perceived that clinical mental health counselors did not understand their role, responsibilities, and clinical skills, nor did they provide feedback on their effort (Moran & Bodenhorn, 2015). Additionally, some clinical mental health counselors perceived that school counselors did not have enough training on mental health (Ryan & Warner, 2012).

Despite the barriers mentioned above, school counselors acknowledged that a team of support services in the community and school setting is vital (Moran & Bodenhorn, 2015). They were aware that with high student-to-counselor ratios, they could not meet the needs of all of their students without assistance (Lambie et al., 2019; Moran & Bodenhorn, 2015). Additionally, by collaborating, support services for students, particularly in rural areas, is increased (Moran & Bodenhorn, 2015). ASCA

recommends a 250-to-1 student-to-counselor ratio; however, the national average in the 2020-2021 school year was 415-to-1 (ASCA, n.d.-a).

Study participants believed collaboration allowed them to function as school counselors and decreased duplication of services, permitting better planning and effective use of time (Moran & Bodenhorn, 2015). Collaboration between school counselors and clinical mental health counselors can be a challenge. However, when they use their collective experiences and skillsets collaboratively, they can overcome barriers and better assist students who endure child sexual abuse (Moran & Bodenhorn, 2015; Porter et al., 2000).

Discussion and Best Practices

While working together between school counseling and clinical mental health disciplines will definitely help children who experience child sexual abuse, there are also some areas that should be highlighted as best practices for rural school and rural clinical mental health counselors in working with children who have experienced child sexual abuse. For the purposes of this paper and topic, four best practices will be discussed. First, in dealing with child sexual abuse in rural settings, it is important to consider your rural setting (Rural Health Information Hub, 2021). This is not to imply that you would not report in a rural setting, however, it does imply that you need to be a little more mindful of how you handle things with child sexual abuse in a rural setting versus an urban setting. More specifically, in a rural setting, you may know the perpetrator in question and/or the family of the victim. You may also realize that when you report the suspected abuse, that individuals in the community will probably piece together rather quickly who reported it, which in turn, could impact a variety of things in the rural community (e.g., how people perceive you as the reporter, how people treat the alleged perpetrator, how people view the victim, etc.). Thus, again, while it is imperative to report, in rural settings, one may have to be more cautious and thoughtful in how they are reporting and potential repercussions within the community. The counselor may need to have more access to consultants during that time and/or have their own access to mental health support during that time. Additionally, it is important to note that each

rural community will be different in its culture, so also being respectful of that when approaching reporting child sexual abuse.

Second, another best practice would be to raise awareness about the prevalence of child sexual abuse. Roughly 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys will experience child sexual abuse in the United States before their eighteenth birthdays (CDC, 2022). These numbers are considered conservative numbers given the underreporting of child sexual abuse (CDC, 2022). There is often a feel in small, rural areas that these numbers are a lot lower because everyone knows everyone and everyone protects everyone, but unfortunately, these numbers and instances still exist in rural areas. Additionally, child sexual abuse may be underreported in rural areas because people know each other more closely (Rural Health Information Hub, 2021). It is important to note that over 90% of child sexual abuse perpetrators are often someone the child or child's family knows and trusts (CDC, 2022). So it would be best practice to raise awareness of the prevalence of child sexual abuse within rural communities and also educate community members on signs of child sexual abuse as well as how to educate others on this topic.

Third, confidentialy in a rural setting poses unique challenges (Hann-Morrison, 2011). As with other professionals in rural settings, school counselors and clinical mental health counselors are intimately tied to the fabric of the community outside of structural boundaries of their perspective work environments. Grimes (2020, as cited in Boulden et al., 2022, p.8) found school and clinical mental health counselors' professional and personal identity as "blurred" because of the unique contexual familiar work environment in rural settings which creates potential ethical dilemmas for rural counselors (ACA, 2014; ASCA, 2016). Researchers cite the need for a stonger ethical framework and clinical supervision as means to navigate boundaries issues for rural school and clinical mental health counselors (Breen & Drew, 2012; Hann-Morrison, 2011; Fruetel et al., 2021; Wilson et al., 2018).

Lastly, both school counselors and clinical mental health counselors in rural communities need the support of and collaboration with other mental health professionals. Boulden et al. (2022) reported rural school and rural clinical mental health counselors having feelings of isolation because of geographics. Further, school counselors may not be in a position to provide long-term mental health care

due to the nature job and other responsibilities (McGowan, 2021). This paradigm forces school counselors to rely on other mental health professionals outside of the school setting; however, the scarcity of mental health resource in rural communities forces the hand of school counselors to provide longer-term treatment (Fruetel et al., 2021).School counselors need the knowledge and familiarity of community-based mental health professionals, such as clinical mental health counselors, as a referral source for longer-term treatment (Boulden et al., 2022; Cowan et al., 2019; Crumb et al., 2021; Tuttle et al., 2019). Additionally, school counselors and clinical mental health counselors in rural areas need to work together for the best interest of the child who has experienced sexual abuse.

Implications

Perhaps the biggest takeaway from this piece should be the importance of increasing awareness related to child sexual abuse in rural areas. As noted previously, while child sexual abuse numbers seemed to be down during the COVID-19 pandemic, this was due to the fact that children were not in their normal school environments, not because it was not happening. Moving forward, it is vital to continue to talk about the prevalence of child sexual abuse, the warning signs of child sexual abuse, and how to prevent child sexual abuse, particularly in rural, close-knit communities. The more people are aware, the more likely people will talk about it and look for it, which in turn, is more likely to decrease its prevalence.

In a similar vein, another takeaway would be related to advocacy. More education needs to be given not only to both rural and urban counselors in schools and clinical mental health settings, but also to teachers, parents, guardians, and children. Advocacy needs to be not only advocating for more education on this topic, but advocating for the safety of children. As a community, individuals need to come together to advocate on behalf of those who cannot yet advocate for themselves, the children. Particularly, advocacy should be at the forefront when children are at home more due to the COVID-19 pandemic and thinking of ways to monitor and care for those in potential harm.

Last, there needs to be continued research on the impact of COVID-19 on child sexual abuse, particularly in rural communities. While we are still in the midst of COVID-19, we are far enough into it

to realize the impact that staying at home may have on individuals, particularly children. More research needs to be done on how COVID-19 impacted child sexual abuse victimization, particularly within rural communities.

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The Significance of Growth Mindset in Addressing Underdeveloped Social-Emotional Skills to Raise Academic Performance of Young Schoolchildren

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Abstract: In addressing the severe learning loss that resulted from the implications to education of the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers and educators have proposed the strengthening of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) skills to better equip all students to overcome adverse situations that inevitably affect learning. This article will describe SEL as a tool to help schoolchildren develop SEL skills and will address the unique challenges from COVID-19 learning loss experienced by rural schoolchildren.

The Significance of Growth Mindset in Addressing Underdeveloped Social-Emotional

This article describes the value of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) as a classroom strategy that equips schoolchildren with necessary tools to cope with negative influences on their learning. In particular, SEL can foster growth mindset in schoolchildren, a quality that promotes "the belief that someone's ability and intelligence can be developed over time. Conversely, a fixed mindset is the belief that individuals are born with certain invariant characteristics, which cannot be altered by experience" (OECD, 2021, p. 13, What is a growth mindset? section, para. 1). A fixed mindset affects how an individual deals with negative influences. These negative influences include the COVID-19-caused learning loss that resulted from the upheaval to education that began in 2019-2020, as traditional face-to-face teaching and learning abruptly switched to online and virtual learning. Learning loss, or unfinished learning, refers to the "reality that students were not given the opportunity …to complete all the learning they would have completed in a typical year" (Dorn et al., 2021, What we learned about unfinished learning? section, para. 2). Research has also pointed to the need to include in the conversation rural schoolchildren who were challenged further due to the circumstances of rural education (Anderson, 2020, Transcript section, para. 3). This learning loss was experienced by the 15% of students in rural schools as seriously as other students, but too often rural education has not received the attention that larger urban and suburban school district received (Anderson, 2020). Rural residents are about 14% of the population," nearly 15 million Americans (Anderson, 2020;, para. 10; Tieken, 2014, para. 1). Challenges to rural schools that were exacerbated by the COVID-19 effects are the digital divide (unequal access to Internet technologies and equipment), transportation to and from schools (time and funding), meal programs that ensure children are fed, general funding issues which lead to tight budgets, if not closing, of schools, and, as with all school districts, the effects on student learning.

Burnette et al. (2017), in exploring the value of a growth mindset intervention in motivating rural, impoverished adolescent girls, found that growth mindset "indirectly increased motivation to learn, learning efficacy and grades via the shifts in growth mindsets" (Burnette et al., 2017, Results). "Students in the growth mindset, relative to control condition, also indirectly reported greater learning motivation and efficacy as well as higher end of semester grades" (Burnette et al., Discussion).

In addition to academic challenges, “schools located within rural communities have a particularly difficult time meeting the mental health needs of their students” (Zolkoski et al., 2021, p. 44), one aspect of student life that has been found to benefit from Social Emotional Learning programs, with rural parents reported to have supported “the implementation of SEL programs within their children’s schools” (Zolkoski et al., 2021, p. 44). With inequalities present at all levels and locations of schools, coping skills such as Social Emotional Learning can contribute to improving situations.

Social emotional learning (SEL) will be described in this article as one solution to the learning loss and other challenges resulting from the upheaval to education from COVID-19. Growth mindset is a quality that is upheld by Social Emotional Learning, and refers to Carol Dweck’s theory about an individual’s belief about becoming smarter through perseverance and working at the task at hand (Stanford SPARQ, n.d.; Dweck & Leggett, 1988). In contrast, a learner with a fixed mindset instead dreads failure and actions are more likely to stagnate. Studies of growth mindset have shown that Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs that focus on "emotional awareness, social skills, and interpersonal problem solving... can facilitate or impede children's academic engagement, commitment, and ultimate school success" (Elksnin and Elksnin, 2003, p. 64; Durlak et al., 2011). SEL skills can be employed to increase positive growth mindset in students that will result in an attitude that motivates the student to keep trying (Dweck, 2016), and ultimately leads to academic achievement.

One of the tragic outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2019 was the effect on schools as traditional classroom teaching and learning was abruptly changed from face-to-face to online and virtual teaching and learning. Extreme learning loss was experienced by many schoolchildren and was attributed to many causes such as health trauma, financial hardship, or challenges of inequity (Rowell, 2021), and, certainly, the loss of face-to-face personal attention from caring educators. Learning loss is the decline in academic growth in learning over a particular period. According to Kuhfield and Tarasawa (2020), the impact of school closures on the academic success of students across the country will have dire consequences as learning plummets. This is especially felt in the area of mathematics which has long been an area of concern in the United States. In addition, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and students with disabilities (SWD) are impacted most in the area of learning loss. Although some students were already involved in virtual learning, the

results of school closures mirror the effects of the familiar 'summer slide,' and many researchers are deeming this learning loss the 'COVID slide.'

In Tennessee, there was a "50% decrease in proficiency rates in 3rd grade reading and a projected 65% decrease in proficiency in math. This is about 2.5 times higher than the learning loss students can experience during a normal summer break" (Tennessee Office of the Governor, 2020, Paragraph 1). Learning loss among third graders, especially, is significant, because this grade 'lost' the learning from the first two years (Tarasawa, 2021) of school, and because the early years are crucial in laying the foundation for success in future years (Alexander, et al., 2007). Research has shown that the 3rd grade year is significant for long-range success in school. "Sixteen percent of children who are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade do not graduate from high school on time – a rate four times greater than that for proficient readers" (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2012, p. 4).

Although there is much debate about summer learning loss, prior research has suggested that summer breaks and vacations contribute to learning loss especially in students who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Kuhfeld, et al. (2020) postulate that effects of learning loss from COVID closures are representative of summer learning loss and may be considered as an extended summer break; thus this loss is determined by Kuhfeld, et al. (2020) to be "0.001 to 0.010 SDs per day of school missed across grades/ subjects" (p. 550). These numbers are the "drops in standard deviation units on mathematics and reading/English Language Arts assessments" (Kuhfeld, et al., 2020, Table 1, p. 551).

Among the population of young schoolchildren are the students with disabilities (SWD), who were also severely impacted by the 'COVID slide.' With the impact of COVID-19 that the nation has faced the past two years there is a growing concern for students with disabilities (SWD) and the impact that COVID has had on their social and emotional learning (SEL). It should be noted that SWD tend to have more issues with anxiety, mood disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, phobias, and psychotic disorders (National Center for Biotechnology Information, 2021). Students with disabilities struggled more than the general education population when it came to moving classes to an online learning environment. Needing consistency, and relying on stability in the classroom environment to help them with their daily routines, students with disabilities dealt more with social isolation than students without disabilities (Rood & Ashby,

2022) as a result of the shift to online learning. This resulted in many students dealing with confusion, wondering why they could not go to school and be with their friends and teachers. As a result, parents were forced to fill in the gap for SWD but could not meet all of their needs because of the necessary peer interaction that was missing (Rood & Ashby, 2022). In a study of growth mindset and students with learning disabilities, Hartmann (2013) described the difference between students with a growth mindset as opposed to a fixed mindset: "growth mindset is preferable and can be learned. People with a growth mindset believe their intelligence and abilities develop over time with practice. Some individuals with learning disabilities have compromised learning motivation and social skills. Many of these students have a fixed mindset. Yet other students, with [the] same disability, have a growth mindset and eventually become self directed in their learning" (Hartmann, 2013, pp. ii-iii).

Another component that has affected Social Emotional Learning (SEL) for SWD are the changes that have been made since the switch to face to face learning environments. SWD rely on hands-on learning to help teach them based on their guidelines through their Individual Education Plan (IEP). Since social distancing was put into effect, several SWD have struggled to make academic, social and transitional changes due to the lack of direct and guided learning from their teachers, teacher's assistants and peers (Prothero, 2020). This has caused a learning loss for SWD that is irreplaceable. SWD cannot just pick up where they left off. They must start from the beginning and build back up to the current expectations so that students can move forward in the learning process (Cipriano et al., 2020). This requires teachers to go back and re-teach skills previously taught but that are essential in the SEL process to make up for information lost (Prothero, 2020). As a result, with the need to re-teach students from the virtual world to the face-to-face world, time is critical so that loss can be regained. Teachers not only have to re-teach, but also teach new content that is expected in the classroom that year. This causes additional stressors that SWD do not deal well with because of the amount of information being shared with them, as well as the timeline given to learn a mass amount of content in a short amount of time. This again puts additional stressors on SWD whose SEL development is already fragile (Rood & Ashby, 2022). Teachers, administrators, and those in power to make changes in the schools must work to promote understanding of the unique needs of SWD, and to provide the healthy and caring relationships that students will trust and on which they can thrive.

Educators, administrators, policymakers, students, and parents are faced with an unprecedented educational crisis as we deal with learning loss from the effects of the COVID shutdown. We must ensure that our students now have access to high quality instruction in order to play "catch-up" and enable them to have the academic success that will help them to be able to compete in a global community. A high quality program of instruction includes "individualizing the instruction…[that] could elevate the learning for all students and could act to ameliorate the losses from prior closures by offering learning opportunities matched to each student" (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020, p. 6). Social Emotional Learning promotes such individualization, as it is the process that everyone must go through to "acquire and apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes which help develop healthy identities, manage emotions, and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions" (CASEL, n.d., para. 1).

CASEL (2021) has identified five core competencies of Social Emotional Learning:

Self-Awareness – awareness of one's core emotions, thoughts & values and how behavior is influenced by each.

Self-Management – ability to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors positively in all different situations so that goals can be achieved.

Social-Awareness – ability to recognize and appreciate different perspectives of people from diverse backgrounds.

Responsible Decision Making – ability to make competent choices about one's own behavior in different social interactions.

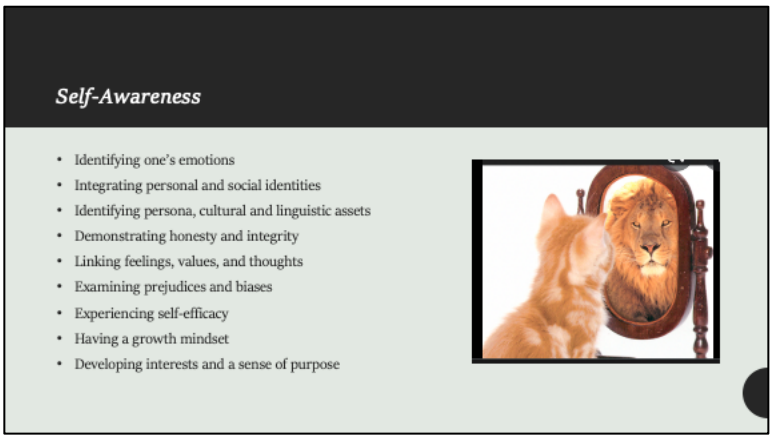
Relationship Skills – ability to establish productive and supportive relationships which can be maintained.

The five competencies mentioned above have their own skills sets which are described in the following paragraphs.

Self-Awareness (identifying one's emotions; integrating personal and social identities; identifying persona, cultural and linguistic assets; demonstrating honesty and integrity; linking feelings, values, and thoughts; examining prejudices and biases; experiencing self-efficacy; having a growth mindset; developing interests and a sense of purpose).

Figure A 1.1

Self-Awareness



Author. (2022). Social Emotional Learning and It's Use in the Classroom. Presentation for NSAA, Spring 2022.

Figure 1.1 (see Appendix A) showcases the skills which are developed within the first core competency of Self-Awareness. Self-Awareness encompasses a wide range of skills including emotion identification, linking feelings with values and thoughts, self-efficacy and developing a growth-mindset. Each skill helps individuals become aware of and deal productively with emotions. When one can be personally aware of how emotions affect feelings, biases, and prejudices, he or she is more likely to be able to self-reflect on areas of weakness and strengths and develop a growth mindset. "In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work – brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment" (Dweck, 2006). Having a growth mindset about emotions helps us to regulate feelings more effectively and experience more positive emotions. Having a growth mindset about social competence can assist us in developing a prosocial personality and becoming more willing to accept responsibility for personal mistakes, qualities which can lead to healthy relationships. A growth mindset

can also reduce biases and prejudices. This can lead to the ability to compromise and not stereotype others. Prejudices can be changed with awareness which allows for cross-group interactions.

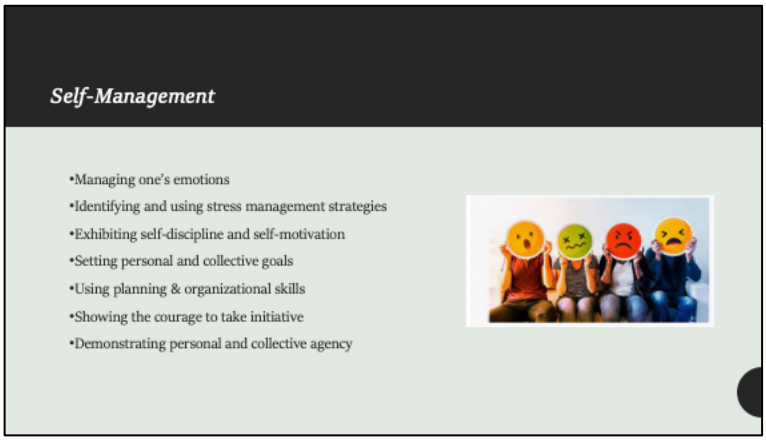
Growing Self-Awareness skills in a classroom promotes a mindset to set and achieve personal goals. They can also build the capacity toward strong self-efficacy about problem-solving, remaining calm and secure when stress or unexpected situations occur. As suggested by Dweck (2015), the Mindset Quiz (see Appendix F) can be utilized as a way to identify areas to work on in changing the way individuals think about growth and achievement.

When building a growth mindset, students learn that hard work really does pay off and focusing on progress over what is still left to do will help in the long run. Teachers who incorporate skills that grow self-awareness use techniques such as reflective activities, mood meters, and strengths and weaknesses profiles. They respond thoughtfully to students who struggle with fixed mindsets and encourage them to think positively about challenges, constructive feedback, effort and attitude and failure as opportunities to grow.

Self-Management (managing one's emotions; identifying and using stress management strategies; exhibiting self-discipline and self- motivation; setting personal and collective goals; using planning & organizational skills; showing the courage to take initiative; demonstrating personal and collective agency).

Figure B 1.2

Self-Management



As seen in Figure 1.2 (Appendix B), the skills for Self-Management focus on managing self in ways which include regulation of emotions and stress, self-control, motivation and setting and achieving both

personal and collective goals. Both students and teachers face a myriad of stressors in a school setting and bring with them into the classroom stressors from home and community. Learning how to regulate emotions and deal successfully with those stressors rather than misbehave, act out, or disrupt learning, students who learn self-control know how to turn challenging situations into positive situations. They also can reframe their own responses so that they address the situation appropriately.

Teachers can intentionally incorporate mindfulness activities into the curriculum to help students when stressors overwhelm the situation. Brach (2014) developed a meditation in which students and teachers can mindfully deal with feelings of insecurity and unworthiness. She uses the acronym RAIN as an easy to remember tool for practicing mindfulness and compassion:

R – Recognize what is going on;

A – Allow the experience to be there, just as it is;

I – Investigate with interest and care;

N – Nurture with self-compassion.

Along with mindfulness activities, teachers can incorporate strategies for students to use to develop challenging yet attainable goals. Some of those strategies include SODAS (situation, options, disadvantages, advantages and solution); POOCH (problem, options, outcomes and choose); Decision Wheel; Diagrams; or for teacher and older students the SWOT Analysis is a strategic way to analyze strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in decision making. These and other activities can be used in developing self-management skills.

Social Awareness (taking others' perspectives; recognizing strengths in others; demonstrating empathy and compassion; showing concern for the feelings of others; understanding and expressing gratitude; identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones; recognizing situational demands and opportunities; understanding the influences of organizations and systems on behavior).

Figure C 1.3

Social Awareness

Figure 1.3 (Appendix C) lists nine qualities of Social Awareness. Students and teachers must develop self-awareness and self-management skills before they can truly become socially aware. Social awareness includes skills which look outside oneself and see goodness and potential in others, even if they are different and have varying perspectives. Becoming socially aware means that students and teachers are able to show concern for and empathize with others. Another component of social awareness is cultural competence. Cultural competence is the ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with individuals across cultures. It also includes becoming aware of one's own environment and world, while developing positive attitudes towards cultural differences and developing knowledge of different cultural practices and world views.

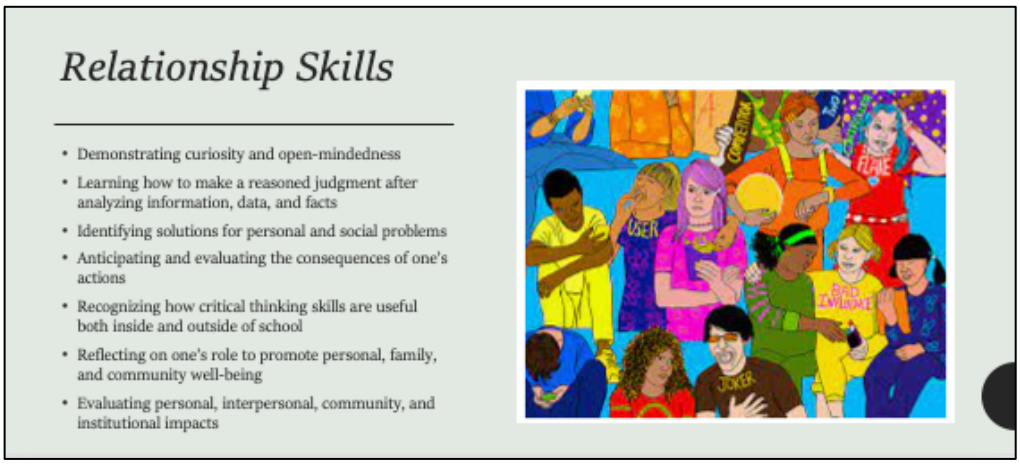
Teachers can carefully incorporate activities which help students become more aware and appreciative of diversity and equity for all. Activities that help students consider their own biases whether explicit or implicit and how they may cause discomfort to others will create a friendly atmosphere of cooperation in the classroom rather than divisiveness and discord. Teachers should consider their own biases and ways in which they create exclusive situations. Students are perceptive to the role model set by their teacher and need positive modeling of social awareness.

Relationship Skills (demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness; learning how to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, and facts; identifying solutions for personal and social problems; anticipating and evaluating the consequences of one's actions; recognizing how critical thinking

skills are useful both inside and outside of school; reflecting on one's role to promote personal, family, and community well-being; evaluating personal, interpersonal, community, and institutional impacts).

Figure D 1.4

Relationship Skills



Previous core competences (self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness) must be developed first to be able to engage in positive relationships. Figure 1.4 (Appendix D) depicts relationship skills which embody abilities such as communicating effectively, listening actively, cooperating, negotiating conflict effectively, and seeking and offering help when needed. Students and teachers who can develop these relationship skills are able to maintain healthy relationships. Empathetic students show tolerance and cooperation and are accepting of differing opinions. Consistently acting in socially acceptable ways (knowing when to be quiet, share, express thoughts in class etc.) builds relationships and fosters empathy.

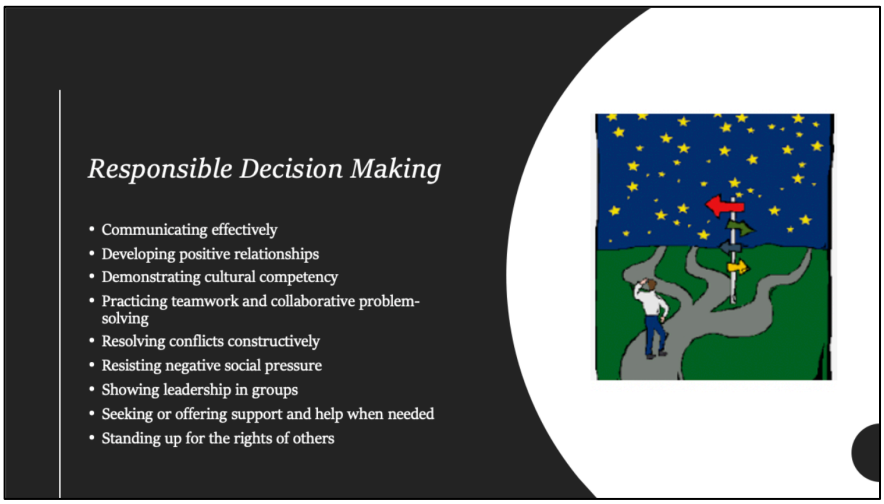
Teachers create an atmosphere of cooperation and safety in a classroom which has open discussions when there is conflict, and is intentionally structured to help students learn how to take ownership of feelings and actions. Learning how to listen actively and asking good questions are skills that can be grown in all students. Students and teachers alike benefit from a shared power environment where both feel valued, listened to and respected. Again, it is important to consider how the teacher's modeling of respect in a classroom will influence how students respect and behave in that setting.

Responsible Decision Making (communicating effectively; developing positive relationships; demonstrating cultural competency; practicing teamwork and collaborative problem-solving; resolving

conflicts constructively; resisting negative social pressure; showing leadership in groups; seeking or offering support and help when needed; standing up for the rights of others).

Figure E 1.5

Responsible Decision Making



Glenn (2017) listed decision making on a list of the global challenges facing humanity, pointing to the importance of the skills identified in Figure 1.5 (Appendix E) for Responsible Decision Making. Students and teachers are constantly required to make decisions that will impact themselves and others. Constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions will aid in problem solving. To make constructive choices, students and teachers need to consider the consequences of their behavior. Taking personal responsibility for one's own actions allows one to consider decisions before action and the effect of the decision and action on others.

Hammond et al.(1999) stated that "bad decisions can be often traced back to the way decisions were made – the alternatives were not clearly defined, the right information was not collected, or the costs and benefits were not accurately weighed." In fact, sometimes the fault does not lie in the process of making a decision but rather in the mind of the decision maker. Hammond et al. (1999) identify eight psychological traps that may interfere with decision making:

1) Bandwagon Effect Trap – making decisions based on what peers are deciding.

2) Overconfidence and Wishful Thinking Trap – making decisions based on what you want to happen without thought about other options.
3) Habitual Frame Trap – making decisions based on what you have always done in the past.
4) The Either / Or Trap – making decisions after only considering two choices.
5) The Procrastination Trap – Putting off making a decision.
6) The Sunk Cost Trap – Choosing to continue because of the effort/cost you have already put into the decision.
7) Living on Autopilot Trap – Not seeing that a decision needs to be made because you are just going with the flow.
8) Anchor Trap – Putting more weight on the first information we receive rather than continuing to consider other information.

Simply being aware of the traps will help both teachers and students consider ways in which decisions can be made and find more productive decision-making alternatives.

Turner (2018) suggests the use of HALT which means "stop" in German, to help students and teachers mindfully consider state of the body and mind before making decisions. Halt stands for hunger, anger, loneliness, and tiredness which must be addressed to be in good balance before making important decisions. This short internal assessment can address any needs that can cause poor decision making quickly. Teachers can deliberately teach strategies such as HALT, to empower students to make healthy and safe decisions.

While an equitable education that promotes growth mindset among all students is desirable, educators should remember that growth mindset is more effective among students who are less advantaged, or are struggling to achieve academically (OECD, 2021, p. 45). Teachers have the opportunity to turn the classroom into an emotionally safe and inviting environment where all students can thrive. Explicit teaching and modeling of the five core competencies of social-emotional learning will transform the classroom so that self-aware and self-managed students can experience the freedom to make mistakes without lasting judgement or ridicule and where they can engage in collaborative critical, honest, civil, and challenging

discussions about sensitive topics. Just as importantly, learners will approach learning tasks with a positive attitude that will impact their academic engagement, commitment, and ultimate school success.

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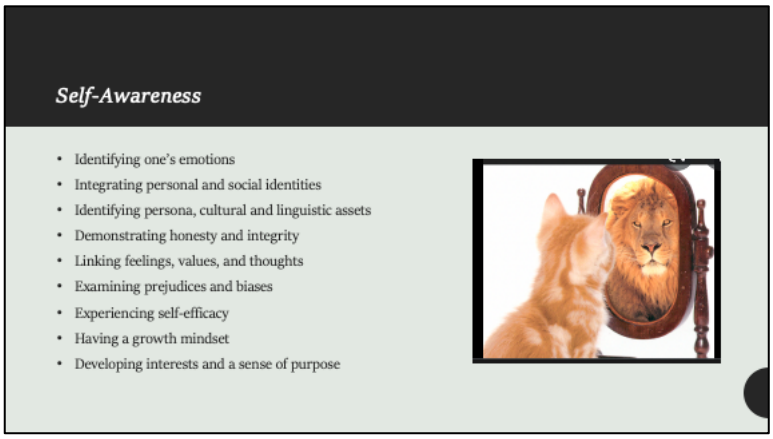
Appendices

Appendix A

Figure A 1.1

Self-Awareness



Identifying one's emotions

Integrating personal and social identities

Identifying persona, cultural and linguistic assets

Demonstrating honesty and integrity

Linking feelings, values, and thoughts

Examining prejudices and biases

Experiencing self-efficacy

Having a growth mindset

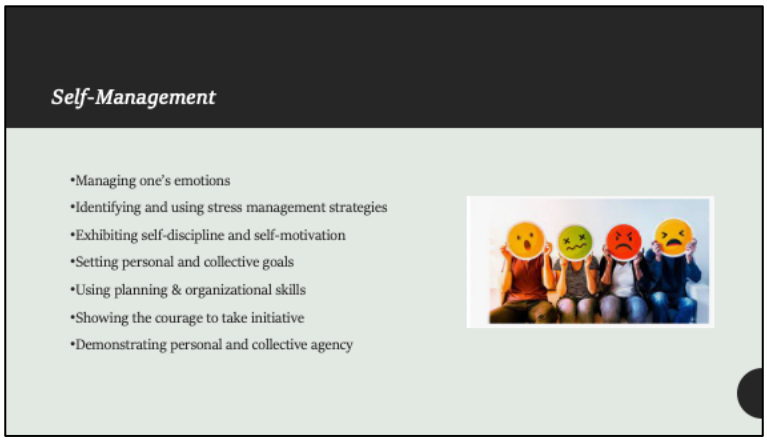
Developing interests and a sense of purpose

Author. (2022). Social Emotional Learning and It's Use in the Classroom. Presentation for NSAA, Spring 2022.

Appendix B

Figure B 1.2

Self-Management



Managing one's emotions

Identifying and using stress management strategies

Exhibiting self-discipline and self- motivation

Setting personal and collective goals

Using planning & organizational skills

Showing the courage to take initiative

Demonstrating personal and collective agency

Author. (2022). Social Emotional Learning and It's Use in the Classroom. Presentation for NSAA, Spring 2022.

Appendix C

Figure C 1.3

Social Awareness

Taking others' perspectives

Recognizing strengths in others

Demonstrating empathy and compassion

Showing concern for the feelings of others

Understanding and expressing gratitude

Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones

Recognizing situational demands and opportunities

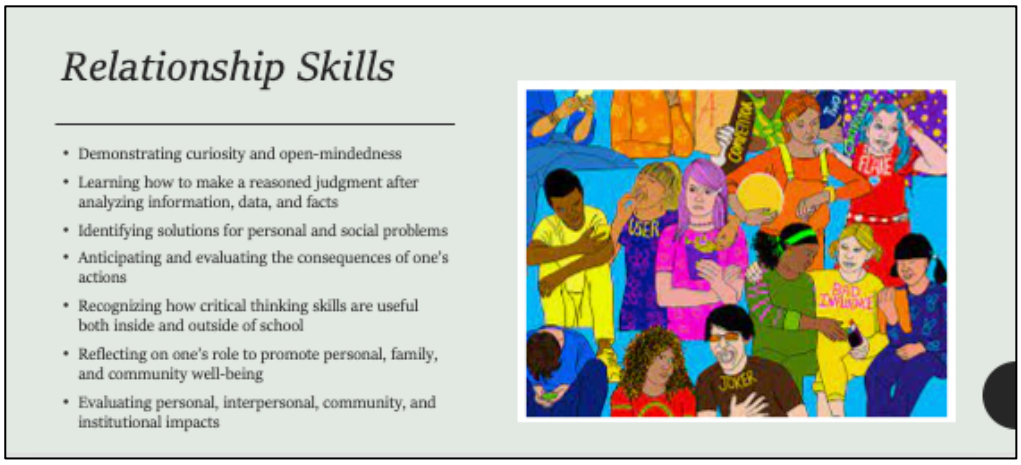
Understanding the influences of organizations and systems on behavior

Author. (2022). Social Emotional Learning and It's Use in the Classroom. Presentation for NSAA, Spring 2022.

Appendix D

Figure D 1.4

Relationship Skills



Demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness

Learning how to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, and facts

Identifying solutions for personal and social problems

Anticipating and evaluating the consequences of one’s actions

Recognizing how critical thinking skills are useful both inside and outside of school

Reflecting on one’s role to promote personal, family, and community well-being

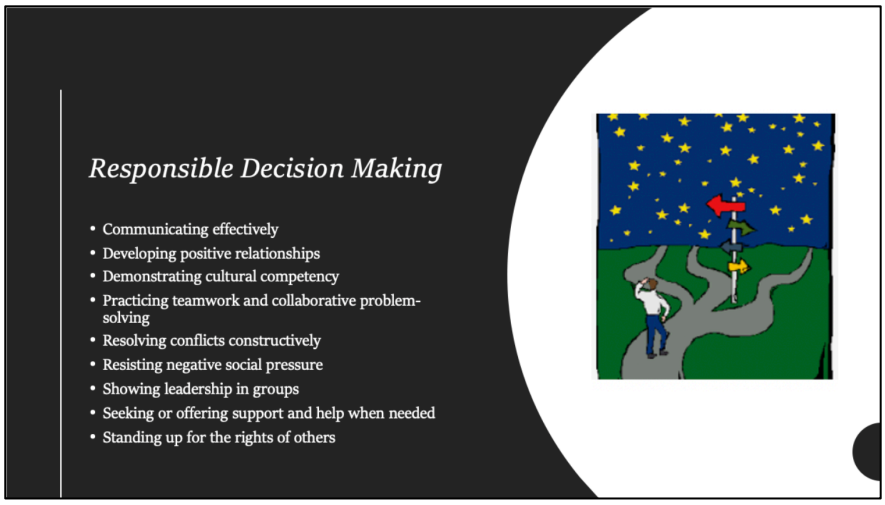
Evaluating personal, interpersonal, community, and institutional impacts

Author. (2022). Social Emotional Learning and It's Use in the Classroom. Presentation for NSAA, Spring 2022.

Appendix E

Figure E 1.5

Responsible Decision Making



Communicating effectively

Developing positive relationships

Demonstrating cultural competency

Practicing teamwork and collaborative problem-solving

Resolving conflicts constructively

Resisting negative social pressure

Showing leadership in groups

Seeking or offering support and help when needed

Standing up for the rights of others

Author. (2022). Social Emotional Learning and It's Use in the Classroom. Presentation for NSAA, Spring 2022.

Appendix F
Mindset Quiz - https://advising.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/341/2020/07/MINDSET-Quiz.pdf

MINDSET QUIZ

1. Circle the number for each question which best describes you
2. Total and record your score when you have completed each of the 10 questions
3. Using the SCORE chart, record your mindset

	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
Your intelligence is something very basic about you that you can't change very much	0	1	2	3
No matter how much intelligence you have, you can always change it quite a bit	3	2	1	0
Only a few people will be truly good at sports, you have to be born with the ability	0	1	2	3
The harder you work at something, the better you will be	3	2	1	0
I often get angry when I get feedback about my performance	0	1	2	3
I appreciate when people, parents, coaches or teachers give me feedback about my performance	3	2	1	0
Truly smart people do not need to try hard	0	1	2	3
You can always change how intelligent you are	3	2	1	0
You are a certain kind of person and there is not much that can be done to really change that	0	1	2	3
An important reason why I do my school work is that I enjoy learning new things	3	2	1	0

SCORE CHART
22-30 = Strong Growth Mindset
17-21 = Growth with some Fixed ideas
11-16 = Fixed with some growth ideas
0-10 = Strong fixed mindset

MY SCORE:

MY MINDSET:

Adapted from:
Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York: Random House Inc.

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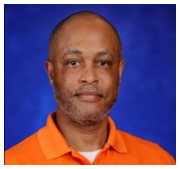

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