HISTORY MEETS A GLOBAL PANDEMIC AND TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES AND PREPARATION

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ABSTRACT

The global COVID-19 pandemic invited first-year teachers to a unique lens of university and local school learning experiences during their transition from student teaching to full time positions. Our study identified changes first-year teachers experienced while transitioning into full-time teacher positions after completing their education preparation programs during COVID-19. Participants (n=8) were from two states; one that incorporates evidence-based trauma-informed training and one that does not. Teachers who had worked in the state identified as an early adopter demonstrated knowledge specific to high-leverage trauma-informed practices while teachers who worked in the second state had little to no knowledge about trauma, the impact to the brain, and inherent connections to positive behavior practices. Recommendations identify guidance for educator preparation programs interested in expanding course content to include trauma-informed practices.

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly interconnected and digital age, COVID-19 required teacher educator preparation programs to revise student teaching and residency activities in an unprecedented season of change. Overnight many student teachers were supporting instruction through a virtual medium. As university faculty members, we wondered what lessons could be captured from student teachers who completed their student teaching and first-year teaching experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. To that end, we designed a qualitative study with participants in two states, located in the southern United States, to determine what changes student teachers experienced during the pandemic and as they transitioned into full time teacher positions the following year. This article highlights what we learned from their reflections and proposes recommendations for practice for educator preparation programs and school leaders supporting aspiring teachers in the field. Three themes emerged around teacher preparation experiences (1) trauma-informed practices and preparation, (2) school culture and discipline, and (3) the role of mentors. Trauma-informed practices are a part of an emerging body of research, and we found it insightful to identify and understand how to inform ideas to build capacity around high-leverage practices that support P-12 preparation programs and school leaders who serve as mentors.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

History Meets a Global Pandemic

There has been a long and rich history of intentional work to design rigorous educator preparation standards that guide institutions through the creation and design of curriculum grounded in research and high-leverage practices (Spring, 2011). The Council for the Accreditation

of Educator Preparation was created in 1954 under the title National Council for Accreditation for teacher education (NCATE) and founded as a non-profit, non-governmental accrediting body. The mission encompassed increasing the value of accreditation while building on the solid foundation of institutional knowledge. In 1997 the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) was established and dedicated their work to improving professional learning. NCATE and TEAC recognized the power of collaboration and in 2010 introduced an innovative idea to design a new accrediting body called the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). Since 2013 CAEP supported universities through the process of assessing and designing innovative learning experiences through their standards focused on the mission to ensure university educators are providing future teachers and administrators with knowledge and skills to advance the development of all students (CAEP, 2023).

Following the global crisis in the spring of 2020, many universities and school districts adjusted traditional school experiences to virtual learning experiences overnight (Glanz 2021; Superville, 2021). There was a clarion call in March from the World Health Organization (WHO), Director Grebreyesuss, who advised that governments and schools should consider all measures to limit the spread of a new virus known as COVID-19. Within the following month governors advised school districts to consider alternative environments to provide services (Ford, 2022; Superville, 2021). Principals, mentors, and student teachers found themselves learning and teaching in a new medium with unprecedented challenges to support both the emotional and physical welfare of students (Aguayo Chan et al., 2020).

Trauma-Informed Practices

In 2017, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) reported that 18 states were developing bills that references adverse childhood experiences (CHCS, 2023). The passage of Public Law 115-271 in 2018 allowed the authorization of $50 million to help state education agencies, school districts, and tribal governments increase evidence-based trauma support services and mental health care. That same year, Washington DC, Massachusetts, Tennessee, and Washington passed state laws to begin the process of helping people with trauma support services. In anticipation of and in line with PL115-271, Tennessee launched Building Strong Brains, TN Adverse Childhood Experiences, an evidence-based training program to provide intentional training and resources for school leaders and teachers focused on trauma-informed principles and practices for classrooms. Additionally, some university preparation programs-initiated conversations about expanding knowledge specific to the impact of trauma on the brain to strengthen pedagogy practices. The goals of the Build Strong Brains initiative in TN are to raise public knowledge about ACEs and support innovative ideas that refresh thinking and approaches to supporting students who have experiences toxic stress (TN.Gov, 2023). Consistent interventions with connections to school-wide instructional expectations grounded in a positive school culture provide high-leverage practices that mitigate toxic stressors and provide a continuum of resources over time to strengthen and heal the brain (Thomas & Vanderhaar, 2019).

Adverse childhood experiences refer to inherently disruptive experiences in childhood that produce significant and potentially damaging levels of stress and associated physical changes that can be detrimental to brain development and instructional developmental processes (Blodgett and Dorado, 2019). Due to toxic and constant stress, a child's brain development is directly impacted. Neuroscience highlighted that the brain responsible for language development and emotional regulation can be damaged by toxic and constant stress. School leaders in Tennessee were charged with a mandate to develop an evidence-based training program to train and establish a continuum of

resources for students who have experienced ACEs. Additionally, the Tennessee Trauma-Informed Law required school leaders incorporate discipline practices that included a process for the ACEs assessment, interventions, and intentional focus on creating a positive school culture (TN. Gov, 2023). Guidance to school leaders included attention to the following five precepts: (1) a balance between accountability with an awareness of the impact of trauma on behavior; (2) consistent attention to teaching school and classroom expectations and interventions for inappropriate behaviors; (3) adherence to positive behavior supports and minimizing disruptive behaviors; (4) creating and implementing consistent rules and expectations for consequences, and (5) personnel serving as a model and demonstrating respectful behaviors (Trackbill SB170 n.d.).

The Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration of the USA (SAMHSA) in collaboration with the Center for Preparedness and Response identified six principles universities and schools can connect to high-leverage practices. The six principles encompass: (1) safety; (2) trustworthiness and transparency; (3) peer support; (4) collaboration and mutuality; (5) empowerment, voice, and choice, and (6) cultural, historical, and gender issues (Centers for Disease Control, 2020). University professors recognized that schools required additional guidance to implement a PK-12 trauma-informed system and developed the Resilient Schools Framework that identified school culture and climate as essential to establishing vision and core values to guide positive behaviors in schools. The framework also identified seven high-leverage practices grounded in evidence-based connections to preparation programs and school improvement processes with intentional focus to include leadership and trauma-informed practices (Christian et al. 2022).

School Culture and Trauma-Informed Practices

On April 29, 2019, the Tennessee House of Representatives amended TCS Title 49 and passed House Bill No. 421 which required every TN local board of educations to create and adopt a policy that requires school leaders to investigate root causes of office discipline behavior referrals and complete an ACEs assessment. As school leaders started the process of creating policy and practices to support students and schools during the 2019-2020 school year, Covid 19 required principals and teachers to shift face-to face learning environments to a virtual continuum (Ford, 2022). Universities and schools, who had been providing intentional focus to expand awareness around trauma-informed practices, were required to immediately adjust their focus to teaching and learning through a global pandemic with a heightened focus on the emotional welfare of both teachers and students.

Students who are removed from class due to behavior disruptions demonstrate lower levels of academic proficiency (Benner et al., 2013). Learning organizations also recognize teachers have an important voice in the process of identifying how to implement high-leverage practices and systems such as School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) to support students who demonstrate behaviors associated with trauma (Jimerson et al. 2016; Sergiovanni, 2007). Iterations of SWPBIS can provide schools with a structure and blueprint for implementation of more proactive school-wide and individualized support for students and teachers. Intentional connections to professional learning for aspiring and practicing teachers and administrators is paramount to short- and long-term positive outcomes for students (Augustine et al., 2018; Fullan & Edwards, 2022). Most school districts depend on principals and supervisors to interpret regulations under both state laws and federal guidance specific to IDEA (2004) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Supervisors and principals are responsible to provide support to teachers to ensure all students receive a free and appropriate education via the delivery of evidence-based practices and services aimed at achieving positive outcomes (Bellamy & Iwaszuk, 2017; USDOE, 2010).

Principals and teacher leaders are uniquely positioned to communicate and create supportive cultures during seasons of dynamic change (Fullan & Edwards, 2022; Hoy & Miskel, 2013). Thomas et al., (2019) found that attention to trauma-informed care in the school setting with a focus to develop a change in both pre-service and teacher practices were paramount to respond to disruptive and/or disengaged behaviors resulting from traumatic experiences. Also, to lead sustainable change, school administrators play a critical role in the development and implementation of trauma-informed and restorative practices. Prior to the global pandemic, childhood trauma was identified as "America's hidden health crisis" and provided a unique lens to the importance of developing school cultures that championed evidence-based practices for adults and students (ACES Connection, 2016). Principals serve as instructional leaders and as such should be well versed in a variety of instructional activities (Fuller et al. 2018). The emerging concept of trauma-informed practices is often connected to discipline issues and the need to provide intentional mentor support to onboard new faculty during their transition to full-time teaching (Thomas et al, 2019). According to a 10-year study published by the National Association for Elementary School Principals, improving student and staff performance were the primary concerns for school leaders. The report highlighted the importance of creating and maintaining positive relationships in schools with teachers and that relationships are essential to the role of leadership with a direct connection to both teacher and student learning (Fuller et al., 2018). Intentional focus on school culture, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), trauma-informed, and restorative practices can provide resources for school leaders, teachers, students, and community stakeholders that promote resilience in the post-COVID-19 era of recovery (Fullan & Edwards, 2022; Lamie, 2022).

School Mentors

Providing assigned mentors to guide first year teachers is often paramount to long-term success through professional careers. Pirkle (2011) as cited by Callhan (2016) defined the role of a mentor as a "a master teacher, wiser and more experienced, who guides a new teacher through the probationary period and who observes and provides instructional support and feedback during the steep learning curve" (p. 8). Mentors are leaders, both administrators and teachers, who demonstrate the ability to guide first-year teachers to establish both long- and short-term goals, respond to classroom management issues, enhance pedagogy strategies, and contribute to a positive school culture. Additionally, effective mentors encourage mentees to develop reflective practices through dialogue and relationships built on a student centered and growth mindset. Principals are ultimately responsible to create proactive relationships with university partners and assign mentors during student-teaching and first year teaching experiences that establish and mentors who can cultivate a culture (Callahan, 2016; Fuller et al. 2018). Hughes (2012) noted that the role of mentor assignments to establish supportive relationships built on trust were paramount to teacher retention. Additionally, for mentors to advance knowledge specific to emerging research and high-leverage practices, principals are responsible to ensure that assigned mentor teachers are continually trained to enhance both adult learning practices commonly referred to as andragogy and student-centered pedogeological practices that enhance the whole child (Callahan, 2016).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to investigate first-year K-12 teacher perceptions following student-teaching experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, to better understand how teacher preparation shifts influenced readiness for job requirements during a global pandemic. Equipping aspiring teachers during a global pandemic with the experiences

necessary to lead a classroom effectively was an unprecedented challenge during the necessary transitions from virtual and face-to-face teaching and learning opportunities through the pandemic. This study examined the perceptions of first-year teachers in two states who completed student teaching experiences in the 2020-2021 school year during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research is part of a larger project investigating first-year teachers in relationship to their college teacher preparation programs and how COVID-19 may have impacted that preparation. From this larger study, we wanted to specifically understand first-year teachers' perceptions about trauma-informed practices. The following research questions guided this work:

☐ How did exposure to trauma informed practices during teacher preparation programs prepare graduates following student-teachers' transition to a full-time position during the pandemic?

☐ How did mentorship from building level administrators and teachers support first year teachers during the pandemic?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design was qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is used when a study's goals are to explore and become immersed in a phenomenon or issue in its natural setting to gain a deeper understanding of it (Creswell, 2014). The phenomenon under examination was to investigate first-year K-12 teacher perceptions following student-teaching experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, to better understand how teacher preparation shifts influenced readiness for job requirements during a global pandemic. A phenomenological approach was utilized as we explored several individuals and their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell, 2014).

Participants

This study took place in two different states in the southeastern United States. Participants represented four different universities with educator preparation programs. There were eight participants in total—six of the participants were female and two were male. There were six elementary teachers and two secondary teachers. Participants were interviewed in late spring of 2022.

Research Instrument

Because the research is a part of a larger study, the research instrument contained questions not discussed in this paper. For the purposes of this study, we are reporting on the following questions:

1. What experiences, during your preparation courses, prepared you for the job requirements in your first year as a full-time teacher?

2. Can you describe the office discipline referral process or behavior interventions you used as a first-year teacher?

3. Can you describe your exposure to trauma informed practices during your preparation Program?

4. How did trauma informed practices guide your classroom culture?

5. How would you describe the level of support you received from your principal when dealing with parents?

6. Could you describe the level of support and mentorship that you expected to receive from other faculty members at your school?

7. As a first-year teacher, can you describe the strategies you used to increase student engagement?

8. As a first-year teacher, how did your vision for teaching connect to job satisfaction on the job?

9. What were the primary challenges you experienced as a first-year teacher?

Data Collection

Purposeful sampling method was used to identify research participants that met the criteria for the study. The participants in this study were recruited from regional school district partners and data banks within each University of teacher candidates who completed student teaching during the 2020-2021 school year and whose first year of teaching occurred during the 2021-2022 academic year. Teachers were recruited and interviewed in late Spring 2022.

Data Analysis

The data collected through each interview was recorded and transcribed. Once all interviews were transcribed, the researchers coded each participant's interview to look for themes. This occurred in two phases. In the first phase, the coding scheme followed the order of the questions. During the second iteration of coding, the researchers looked within each question to determine the themes that addressed the two research questions for this study.

After the initial coding, the researcher wrote a summary profile for each participant. Participants in the study were given their summary profile for member checking to solicit their views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations (Creswell, 2014).

FINDINGS

Trauma-informed Practices and Preparation

An idea around the need for teachers to understand research and application of trauma-informed practices emerged as a key to establishing effective relationships. This was verified when four of the eight participants claimed they had not received any exposure to trauma-informed training. Candidate three, who had not received exposure to trauma-informed practices stated, "In all honesty, nothing could have prepared me for what I had to do this year. One of my kid's mom passed away. I had no idea of how to go about that. . . navigating the death of a child's parent and then having to explain that to 14 kids who are six or seven and explain death. . . I do wish that I would have had more of that in my prep course."

Similar to participant three, Participant seven stated, "[trauma-informed practices] is something I still need to learn more about because while I love my classroom management time and I learned so much through that and my special education course. . . but explicit, trauma-informed teaching practices I don't think were explicitly taught."

Participant five also mentioned not having experience with trauma-informed practices. "The biggest trauma information is the whole COVID-19 situation and having to adapt on the fly. . . and everybody had to adopt, adapt, and evolve to the situation and by the time I started in the fall, I guess that trauma was already gone because I already experienced it. I was still [in school] and kind of 'oh, this is the new normal.'"

In contrast, Participant four, who had undergone trauma-informed training stated, "It was great that I had that going on to look for signs and know what to do. . . Who do I call? What is the protocol if I have heard something or if I see bruises." Participant two discussed how trauma-informed professional development (PD) was the most helpful PD she had prior to her teaching position. She affirmed how important it was for her to navigate trauma in the classroom. "It has affected every decision I made; it has helped me to better reach students that I normally would see as a student with behavior and with different behavior accommodations or especially coming out of the pandemic. It is just really helped me navigate how to reach those students and how to better teach them." Participant four echoed this sentiment when stating, "I think learning about all the traumas that kids go through was really eye opening to make sure that I am just watching and making those connections. That way you know they do not leave my classroom without getting what they need."

When discussing her situation about her student whose mom passed away, participant three, who had not gone through trauma-informed training explained how she felt she was all alone when navigating the death of her student's parent. "I feel like I have navigated that mostly on my own. I definitely have the support of my administration and my counselor, but it was kind of a tricky situation."

School Culture and Discipline

All participants said they felt supported by their administration, but half did not mention a school-wide plan to guide discipline decisions. Of these four participants who do not have a school-wide plan, only one of the four participants discussed utilization of a team to help with discipline. Participant seven stated, "We have a freshman Academy within the school and so all of the freshmen teachers are very close. We know all the students and we also have lunch hour called Connect with them . . . we get really close with those students for that lunch hour for the whole year." The lack of a detailed, school-wide plan suggests that these four teachers were not in schools that utilized trauma-based interventions.

Although participant three did not receive trauma-informed practices training, she felt that the knowledge she learned about creating a classroom community from her behavior management course enabled her to see the importance of making sure her students were supportive and taken care of. "One of the biggest [takeaways] is building the classroom community and the culture within the classroom that we care for one another. So, when we did have the conversation with the kids to explain what happened [when the student's mom passed away], they were all so supportive and it was a learning opportunity for everybody and so I think without knowing and having that knowledge, my prep courses did prepare me for stabilizing that classroom community."

She continued to explain how much her behavior management class clarified the importance of creating a supportive learning environment that guided her as she navigated such an emotional situation. "We did have to have that hard conversation with the kids to explain what happened. They were all so supportive and it was a learning opportunity for everybody. I think knowing and

having that knowledge in my prep courses did prepare me for being able to stabilize that classroom community."

Participant five also discussed her behavior management course as being a beneficial course in establishing the classroom community. "Establishing those relationships and establishing a positive, inclusive, and welcoming environment for all my students and that I feel just kind of takes care of everything else."

Participant seven identified the unique challenges that COVID-19 invited, "Well, really, it's interesting because I began the teaching program in the fall of 2019 and so really that semester was truly my most formative semester that I had. I was at a High School, and I think I was in classroom management and Ed Psychology, but the classroom management class really prepared me. . . After that I had about four weeks in middle and got to teach one class there and then we locked down for COVID. And then every all-field experience was cancelled until I did my internship. So truly my main teaching, like what prepared me, came outside of the education program. It really came from being a teaching assistant."

These snapshots of the teacher's perspectives help us to see the need and the benefits of training university faculty, pre-service teachers, and practicing educators in trauma-informed practices. Because of the nature of establishing community and culture in the classroom, teacher preparation programs could provide intentional connections to trauma-informed practices through redesigning courses that focus on behavior management or creating new courses through interdisciplinary collaborations.

The Role of Mentors

The first-year teachers highlighted how valuable mentors were with the struggles they identified. Common challenges that arose include comfortability calling parents when a student was having discipline issues, meeting all the individual needs of all their learners, understanding the pacing of their curriculum, and knowing what to teach within their curriculum. Several of the participants mentioned they were not prepared to handle the daily juggle of all the responsibilities of a teacher in the classroom and several participants mentioned having difficulty with managing their time as a teacher.

Participant seven stated, "The primary challenge is the magnitude of it. Figuring out my curriculum, my standards, and my content that I am teaching and making it all happen. Learning how to accommodate different learners. You cannot do everything in theory." Participant three echoed this sentiment, "I have to lesson plan, I have to teach all day from bell to bell, but also, I have all the paperwork that I have to do with all these other things that I have to do while also having kids in my room. So, I have given a lot of my personal time. . . It is not a job that you can just go and leave it at school when you are done. You always have something to do, and you think about it when you go home because you are building relationships with the kids. I have 14 little six- and seven-year-olds that I am responsible for and feeling the weight of the responsibility of that is a lot heavier than what I thought it would be."

Participant three also highlighted the challenges with learning how to incorporate a behavior plan. She explained, "My partner teacher had a behavior plan that was already set so when I came in, I just had to learn her behavior plan and integrate that into my room. I did not fully understand the behavior plan and I would say it was two months or so into my placement that I was

comfortable with it and three to four months before I was comfortable following through with it." Participant four also mentioned the importance of mentor teachers. "They always took care of me."

The teachers also highlighted unique opportunities to learn during the pandemic, stating that the season of quarantine provided more time to work with their mentor teacher during student teaching. Participant two stated, "I experienced a fifth grade and kindergarten classroom throughout the pandemic, so I saw teachers and administrators, making decisions in the moment and saw the good and bad side of that. I feel like it prepared me for how flexible you need to be as a teacher. Participant two also commented on the unique opportunities that COVID-19 brought to the classroom. She discussed how, because there were no students in the building due to COVID-19 in the beginning of the year, she received more guidance from her mentor teacher. "I got more out of the mentorship than a normal year . . . I had a lot of personal downtime to hear from my mentor teacher because there were no students around."

Other participants throughout the interviews mentioned the many "hats" teachers wear daily without the additional stressors experienced during the pandemic. Our findings highlight the importance of providing intentional blocks of time during student teaching and during the first year of a full-time position. This would provide uninterrupted opportunities to leverage mentor expertise to support the transition to teaching.

Despite being overwhelmed with curriculum, diversity of students, handling discipline and the multiple responsibilities of a teacher, most participants agreed that their vision for teaching connected to their satisfaction on the job, with two of the participants saying it far exceeded expectations. Participant three stated her vision for teaching was to help her students learn, but the biggest thing was to love the kids and "let them know that they have someone that supported them." She talked about how as she reflects on this school year; she can see the fruits of her labor and she knows her students know that they are loved and they know they have her, which has solidified the field of teaching as a career for her.

Participant 5, who rated his experience as far exceeding expectations, entered the teaching field as a second profession. He discussed trying to find himself after almost ten years, and then a seed was planted for teaching. "At the end of the day I do not want to just have a paycheck. I want to at least feel like I am leaving a legacy for the future. That is ultimately what got me into this profession. And, you know, the love that I got from my students and how much they enjoyed having me and how much they miss me. . . it makes it all worth it. I could be the worst content history teacher out there. . . The amount of love and appreciation I got for my students. That proves to me that I made an impact on them."

DISCUSSION

The first research question of our study was, "How did exposure to trauma informed practices during teacher preparation programs prepare graduates following student-teachers' transition to a full-time position during the pandemic?" All participants identified classroom culture and setting expectations as foundational to establishing positive relationships with students. We found teachers who had worked in one of the states identified as an early adopter demonstrated knowledge specific to high-leverage trauma-informed practices while apprentice teachers who worked in the second state had little to no knowledge about trauma, the impact to the brain, and inherent connections to positive behavior practices in their classrooms. Students who did not have training in trauma-

informed practices stated the knowledge they gained from classroom management and behavior courses enabled the participants to establish a classroom community that was supportive and nurturing, which helped participants such as Participant 3 navigate the death of a parent within her classroom. If Participant 3 was introduced to trauma informed practices, she would be equipped with a Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators that would provide basic information about working with traumatized children in the school system (Blodgett & Joyce, 2019).

CAEP standards are robust and ensure educator preparation programs provide intentional focus to both Learner and Learning and Instructional Practices that include behavior management techniques (CAEP, 2023). The emerging research specific to brain development and trauma-informed practices indicates that preparation programs can create connections to existing behavior management classes with explicit instruction around ACEs and interventions. Educator Preparation programs could also consider designing new courses to weave neuroscience and trauma-information practices through an interdisciplinary lens and leverage expertise of applications to practice in all educator preparation concentrations.

The Building Strong Brains Tennessee ACEs initiative has developed a bridge to practice in educator preparation programs and required TN Educator Preparation Programs to incorporate trauma-informed practices (TN.Gov, 2023). Many university preparation programs provide intentional and specific connections to trauma-informed practices during the educator preparation process. Participants in the state noted as an early adaptor demonstrated knowledge and application to deescalate students. Participants 4 captured the value of learning through her preparation program, "So I think learning about all the traumas that kids go through was really eye opening to make sure that I am you know really just watching and making those connections. That way they don't leave my classroom without getting the help they need. We have used a peace corner and definitely had some kids with a lot of anxiety at the beginning of the year." Participants who demonstrated knowledge of practices noted use of a peace corner or the ability to view student behavior through a different lens, stating, "especially coming out of the pandemic it has really helped me."

In addition, our study found that participants who had gone through trauma-informed training in their new school felt it was the most helpful professional development they have had to date. In contrast, participants who had not gone through trauma-informed practices felt they were not prepared to handle various situations that could occur in individual classrooms. Pandemics and epidemics related to infectious diseases like COVID-19 are often traumatizing for individuals and could lead to post-traumatic stress and ongoing psychological distress (Boyraz & Legros, 2020). Many front-line workers, like healthcare professionals, college campus employees, and PK-12 educators all worked to address many COVID-19 related challenges. Many teacher candidates were working along the front lines to ensure the emotional, physical, and psychological well-being of their students. Therefore, not only is it important to instruct our students about trauma-informed practices, but it is also just as important to ensure learning communities provide a supportive foundation for teacher candidates as they navigate the numerous challenges a typical semester brings. It is suggested that to build a trauma-informed learning community for our teacher candidates, colleges should provide mental health support, help candidates develop pedagogical problem –solving skills, and implement an online community (Hoppey et al., 2021).

Our second research question asked, "How did mentorship from building level administrators and teachers support first year teachers during the pandemic?" Our participants were faced with many different challenges during their first-year teaching, and they all expressed how important mentors and administrators have been in supporting their inaugural year. Interestingly,

due to the differences that COVID-19 brought to the classroom with remote learning and hybrid days for students, our participants found they had more time to receive mentorship due to more one-on-one time that was available due to the differences in remote learning. Despite this, the participants mentioned the desire to have more of a variety of mentor teachers, since many of their field experiences were cut short or changed drastically due to the fallbacks of COVID-19.

Participant 7 noted significant challenges with the transition to full time teaching and explained, "the magnitude of it, figuring out my curriculum, my standards... learning how to accommodate different learners. It's a big challenge...the day in and day out, lesson planning and making sure that it can be done." While another participant captured opportunities, "I think that, yes, it was definitely a great year and a lot of a lot of doors open the right way, I think, especially for me this year and that helped. I was able to work with my mentor teacher …. They were like my moms they always took care of me." Several participants expressed the unique opportunity Covid provided to have individual coaching support from their student teaching mentor during seasons of virtual instruction. The adaptation from normal operating scheduled during the pandemic invited a unique lens for mentor teachers to provide additional support while students were working virtually. The finding supported what Callahan (2016) identified as a critical component to providing intentional mentor support for first-year teachers to ensure a culture of care is communicated through the onboarding process and throughout the year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, we have the following recommendations for teacher preparation programs interested in capturing lessons learned through a global pandemic. First participants in the current study involved in trauma-based practices felt equipped to support implementation of trauma-informed practices in their teaching experience. It is important to note the Tennessee State Board of Education implemented the Literacy Learning Act in alignment with Building Strong Brains and required Educator Preparation programs for teachers and aspiring administrators to provide evidence of Trauma-informed practices in course content (TN State Board of Education, 2023). Teacher preparation programs should consider requiring faculty members to complete the Level 1 Trauma-Informed Training and review early adaptor state updated laws and policy to guide necessary modifications in current curricular (TN. Gov, 2023). Programs can consider providing intentional connections to trauma-informed practices and redesigning learning activities that connect behavior management strategies to neuroscience and child development. Additionally, incorporating SAMSHA's six pillars in designated courses could provide a continuum of knowledge and pedagogy strategies to mitigate the effects of toxic stress on the brain (CDC, 2022). It is also important to note that providing professional learning to administrators and teachers who serve in a mentor role will expand both knowledge and application of high-leverage strategies that can result in a decrease of office discipline referrals (Fuller et al., 2018). Additionally, university preparation programs seeking to expand pedagogy specific to trauma-informed practices in PK-12 educator preparations programs should collaborate with early adaptors to review course content, asynchronous training modules, and evaluate implementation through both quantitative and qualitative studies.

Another crucial factor to consider is the abundance of research around the role of a mentor and guided support during the first year of a teacher's professional transition. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2022), approximately 8% of teachers leave their profession each year. Prior to student teaching placement, universities should investigate the partner school

placements' policies specific to school-wide discipline practices and connections to MTSS. To ensure schools retain the quality teachers needed, school leaders should initiate intentional times for onboarding student teachers into the assigned school and identify assigned days for the mentor to support the student teacher away from normal teaching responsibilities. In a similar approach, to ensure schools recruit and retain the high-quality teachers, administrators should initiate intentional times for onboarding fist year teachers into the assigned school and identify assigned days for the mentor to support the teachers away from normal teaching responsibilities (Callahan, 2016; Fuller et al., 2018). School leaders should ensure that times are scheduled each grading period for mentors and mentees to work without interruptions to reflect upon instructional activities and design proactive resources to provide ongoing professional learning that aligns with the school's vision and core values to align to the success of each student and aspiring teacher.

Finally, faculty are encouraged to establish partnerships with institutions who are emerging in these conversations and are in the early adoption phases of trauma informed practices to collaborate and learn from colleagues who are leading and implementing innovative work to create positive school cultures through proactive leadership practices.

CONCLUSION

Trauma-informed practices are a part of an emerging body of research, and we found it insightful to identify and understand how to inform ideas to build capacity around high-leverage practices that support P-12 preparation programs and school leaders who serve as mentors. The themes identified around teacher preparation experiences and the transition to inaugural positions provided a unique lens to capture lessons learned through an unprecedented season of change during the COVID-19 pandemic. We learned that some practices should be considered COVID-19 keepers as we continue to navigate the post-pandemic season of change. The experiences the participants highlighted while student teaching during COVID-19 affirmed time invested in relationships grounded on emerging research specific to trauma-informed practices provide new strategies that encourage positive outcomes for our future generation of teachers and transform classrooms from crisis to hope.

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