“O-M-G THIS HAS REALLY AFFECTED US”: THE PANDEMIC EXPERIENCES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD AND PRIMARY GRADE INTERVENTIONISTS

by

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To Miranda, Harrison and Quinn

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Adam LeRoy

ABSTRACT

"O-M-G THIS HAS REALLY AFFECTED US": THE PANDEMIC EXPERIENCES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD AND PRIMARY GRADE INTERVENTIONISTS

by

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The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in wide disruptions to in-person schooling which have exacerbated conditions in the public-school system. While creating chaos in general, these disruptions have also affected the assessment of children and the delivery of instructional interventions, processes which are crucial to the implementation of Response to Intervention, in which children receive increased academic support at progressive tiers of intervention.

The current study used a qualitative design aligned to the classic cultural-historical methods used by Vygotsky. Specifically, this study examined the experiences of Birth to 3-years-old and Kindergarten to Grade Three interventionists, who provided intervention to children during the pandemic.

Nine participants, four Birth to 3-years-old interventionists and five Kindergarten to Grade Three interventionists, participated in a series of focus groups in which research questions were presented as tools for analysis. All sessions were audio and video recorded. The data were transcribed and analyzed using in-vivo codes, subcategories, dominant categories and themes.

Five themes emerged from the data analysis. The first two themes related to alterations of service but remained distinct on the basis of whether the alteration was in relationship to a social need or of material necessity. The next two themes were primarily characterized by verbal responses that indicated emotions or feelings. The final theme was a distinct set of verbal responses about future orientation and characterized by concerns about educational practice and children's experiences. The study's findings capture how interventionists altered services for children during the pandemic, the experience of providing intervention during the pandemic and expectations about intervention in subsequent school years.

The methodology developed for this study suggests the potential to align modern methods to classical cultural-historical methods. The data also reveal specific alterations that interventionists implemented, perspectives on their experience and concerns. These verbal responses serve as rich vignettes of the COVID-19 pandemic and have implications for District-level, and other public policy decisions. These findings underscore the importance of conducting studies within a methodological framework that emerges on a clear theoretical basis and may inform future research of Response to Intervention.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
WWC	What Works Clearinghouse
SEL	Social Emotional Learning
CPS	Child Protective Services
EBT	Electronic Benefits Transfer
MMSE	Michigan Mandatory Special Education
ISD	Intermediate School District
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
LLI	Leveled Literacy Instruction

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

What does it mean for a child to be successful in school? In some cases, success might be narrowly defined, like acquiring a certain set of academic skills and 'showing' or demonstrating acquisition of these skills on an assessment. More complex views of success in school might begin to incorporate a child's social and emotional needs, the need to feel good about themselves and others. At another level, we might begin to consider the complex interactions between families and schools as factors to success. Going further, we could note these relationships interact with broader social and political factors. And, in doing so, we arrive at a meta-category of culture and history.

But such considerations are meaningless, if we do not also ask: How do we help children who are not successful in school, however defined? Over the years, a number of approaches have been developed to address these needs, with 'need' most often understood as lower performance on some type of academic assessment. Going back to the previous paragraph, such an understanding excludes a meta-category of culture and history. These approaches rely on a traditional definition of success, does an assessment indicate acquisition of the skill? One such approach, Response to Intervention, is a way to provide children with supports during school. There are three tiers of intervention, and at each progressive tier, children receive increasing support, based on need, as defined in the traditional sense. In this way, Response to Intervention is remarkably similar to a triage model used within the medical system. Adults assess and categorize academic need, presumably based on the urgency of the need.

As I began my work as a special education teacher, a major issue in the field was determining which children needed special education support. When I began working in the early 2000s, many determinations began with what were called Child Study Teams. Basically, if a teacher or parent had a concern about a child, they were referred to the Child Study Team. The team would make some kind of recommendations to the teacher (or parent) and monitor the results. This was done to determine if a child needed the support of special education services or if there was something that could be changed in the classroom, like where the child sat or how much time they were given to complete their work.

Writing out such a description seems a bit like describing the functions of a sorting machine. Of course, in practice, the implementation of the approach was *never* approximately close to being that mechanical, and truly, only worked when it was subverted. The model necessitated social relationships—and all the considerations and ramifications of human interaction. So, we bypassed certain protocols to provide children with support more quickly, usually on the basis of intuition. At other times, we cut deals, allowing 'this' child to have 'this' certain privilege, even though there was not a document stating its necessity. Such things were not really given to mechanical processes.

And, as it was, when I began my Education Specialist degree, Child Study Teams were being phased out. In their place, was to come Response to Intervention, the improved method of diagnosing need and identifying children who required the support of special education services. It was a new development, and we all began attending training sessions so we could implement it well.

At this same time as these changes were happening, I was reading more of Vygotsky's collected works and, most importantly, the work of Aaro Toomela and his development of epistemology, the understanding of knowledge. I will discuss those topics with greater depth in the next chapter. The point here is that I had learned something new and the information from the trainings did not make sense. Not from this new framework provided by Toomela and Vygotsky. The underlying ideas of these trainings did not correspond to the actual experiences of people, as they tried to implement these different interventions. I was not sure why, but something felt amiss. It felt as though Response to Intervention was supposed to function on the basis of good intentions. As I progressed in my studies, it seemed the issue pertained to was the design of research and a simplified understanding of these complex relationships.

Then, as I began preparing for my dissertation, an awful thing happened. The global pandemic struck, casting education into chaos and, even as I write this, new COVID-19 strains have emerged at a great loss to life. I realized all of these factors related back to my earlier concerns about Response to Intervention and the implications of the research conducted by Vygotsky and Toomela. The pandemic presented an opportunity to explore the contradictions of Response to Intervention in greater depth. Specifically, I became interested in whether Response to Intervention could be re-formulated.

This study used a qualitative research design, aligned to classical cultural-historical methods, to examine changes to intervention and the experiences of interventionists during the pandemic. I conducted focus groups and interviews with early-childhood interventionists to answer one meta-level and two sub-level research questions.

The aims of the focus groups were to determine the types of intervention that the interventionists reported they had employed prior to and during the pandemic. The meta-level research question sought to examine the verbal responses of the participants that indicated areas of change in their practice. The sub-level research questions sought to understand in what ways, if any, the interventionists perceived that the experience of delivering instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic differed from pre-pandemic instruction The research included examination of how the interventionists perceived that their instructional practice had changed and how they perceived it to be effective or ineffective.

Background

The structure of the current special education system extends from landmark legislation and legal decisions throughout the latter half of the 20th century. These were monumental efforts to protect the civil rights of children. Nonetheless, these efforts did not decrease disproportionality. Some children were still disproportionally identified or over-identified, that is the tendency for too many children, often Black children from low-income families, to be identified for special education support. At the same time, researchers worried that it was taking too long to get children the help they needed. Some of the language that would come to codify Response to Intervention began with Fletcher et al. (1998), Gresham (1991), and Vellutino et al. (1996). Early studies of intervention that could be used within this framework indicated statistically significant positive effects for this type of intervention (for examples of research related to reading intervention, see Allor & McCarthren, 2004, Blachman et al., 2004; Velluntino & Scanlon, 2002), which in turn culminated in seminars and summits on the subject (Al Otaiba et al., 2014). Then,

specific language related to Response to Intervention and the identification of a child with disabilities was added to the Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 2004.

This emergence of Response to Intervention has led some people in the special education field to consider it a new development. As I cover in the next chapter, the model was not actually 'new.' To me, the word 'new' implies something that has been thought of relatively recently. But that was not true of Response to Intervention. As I analyzed the research base, various incarnations of the approach were evident, certainly going back to the late 1960s. The other odd thing was that by the time I began the PhD program, Response to Intervention had been generalized to the entire formalized education system. It was no longer about *just* improving the process of identifying children for special education services in a very specific disability category, as had been outlined in the Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 2004. The limited language that had been included in the reauthorization necessitated much broader reforms. Now, in some way, all children were encountering Response to Intervention. However, the proposed benefits of Response to Intervention did not emerge (Al Otaiba et al., 2014; Gersten et al., 2017a). In the next chapter, I reference these characteristics in relationship to certain principles introduced by Vygotsky to develop a hypothesis leading to my research questions.

Key Terms

A few terms appear frequently in this dissertation, so I will give these definitions up front. *Culture* is defined as a category of things or events (e.g., family activities), dependent on symbols (e.g., mother, brother), and acted upon within a social group

(Toomela, 2016). Throughout this dissertation, I use the term 'contradiction' in keeping with the definition of a dialectical contradiction, which is the presence of opposing forces within an object (e.g., education system) and leads to a new, emergent quality (Kemorova, 1998). Qualitative change is a dialectical transformation and quantitative change is a reconfiguration. To elaborate, during the pupa stage, in the development of a butterfly, cellular reconfiguration within the cocoon is considered a *quantitative change*. The emergence of the butterfly, differently structured than the caterpillar, is considered a *qualitative change* (Veresov & Mok, 2018). Unless otherwise noted, language refers to a number of things that characterize human communication: vocalized speech, gestures, signs, and so on. For example, making a gesture like a "thumbs-up" can symbolize the vocalization "I agree."

Statement of the Problem

Despite well-intentioned efforts to address children's difficulties in school, the promise of Response to Intervention to improve children's performance has not materialized. As I discuss in the next chapter, various arguments have been offered as to why this is so. However, based on my readings of Vygotsky and Toomela, I argue that I do not think that the promise of Response to Intervention can ever come to fruition. Response to Intervention asserts a formulation of science that cannot function effectively. The research is not rooted in a strong theory of development and study designs do not adequately address the complexity of the experience of providing or receiving intervention (LeRoy, 2019). Efforts to make it function, as it is currently constructed, will not be effective in delivering successful outcomes for children. The ongoing constraints of the pandemic have exacerbated staffing issues, disrupted schooling for children with

significant needs, and revealed underlying issues in an over-reliance on certain types of assessments.

Nevertheless, I think it is imperative that Response to Intervention is re-formulated, rather than be totally rejected. Foremost, all States have incorporated Response to Intervention, and implementation has been so extensive that we are essentially at a point of no return. Also, I have asserted that the very basis of scientific endeavor related to Response to Intervention is flawed. Making such a claim, without offering an alternative pathway, is unacceptable. Another course of study must be developed. Later, I argue that a new course or pathway lies in an alternate direction for research, revealed in the function of Response to Intervention as a complex activity and tool. In this study, I specifically examined whether interventionists' practice changed during the pandemic, their experiences, and areas of change.

Research Questions

I was interested in how the pandemic had impacted intervention. I developed one meta-level research question and two sub-level research questions. The meta-level research question is: When asked to analyze research questions, about the type of intervention used during the pandemic, do the verbal responses of participants indicate areas of change in their practice? The sub-level research questions are: How was the experience of delivering instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic different from pre-pandemic instruction? And how did instructional practice change and how was it effective or ineffective?

Significance of the Study

Results from prior research suggested the potential for Response to Intervention to address children's difficulties in school. However, these results have not materialized. Previous research has not explored alternate research paradigms that might address these failures. By implementing focus groups aligned to classical cultural-historical methods, I was able to capture a more complete picture of the experience of providing intervention during the pandemic. The findings of this study deepen the understanding of intervention, the experience of interventionists working during the pandemic and the potential to re-formulate Response to Intervention.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The structure for this chapter moves from theory to epistemology, to research on Response to Intervention. On the basis of this structure, I develop a hypothesis and research question at the end of the chapter. To be clear, there are many theoretical and epistemological concepts to elaborate but, for clarity, I have only focused on those that directly relate to the hypothesis and research question.

The articles included in this review were found in peer reviewed, scholarly journals using Oakland University's Library OneSearch. I used descriptors such as: "Response to Intervention"; "perceptions of Response to Intervention"; "prereferral child intervention"; and "cultural historical theory." In some instances, I broadened my search to specific titles so that I could locate books that were referenced in other publications and that were no longer in publication (e.g., Luria, 1963).

Cultural-Historical Theory

Many authors have defined cultural-historical theory in several different ways (for diversity of interpretations, see Valsiner, 2012). The common factor within these approaches is the identification of Vygotsky (himself influenced by other theorists of the time) as the originator of cultural-historical theory. However, I agree with Toomela (2003, 2015) that cultural-historical theory is best understood as a theory that explains the development of higher psychological functions—the merger of thought, language, sensory experience, emotion and memory. Really, within that theoretical view, development becomes a structural phenomenon, more detail is provided in the next

section. First, I think it is useful to define what *non-structural* view might be. Such a view is apparent in the Western adoption of Vygotsky in the West. The original theory became fragmented, and particular ideas were isolated from the structure or focus on higher psychological functions. Ideas related to a zone of proximal development, the development of private speech and the role of play in the development of self-regulation are attributed to Vygotsky but presented as the sum of his extensive research. I agree with Toomela (2015) and Veresov (2010) that this fragmentation resulted in a theory that lacked coherence. It is fundamentally non-structural.

Those factors I have just discussed are relevant to the extent that they confuse the object of inquiry and prevent its study. I will clarify the prior statement with an example. In the case of human development, Toomela (2016) has provided the analogy of a group of scientists who decide they will study cars. However, they realize a car is a very complex machine. The scientists decide to focus on an element of the car that is easily observed: it has wheels. As a consequence, they begin studying many things that are not cars—trains, children on bicycles, and so on. Soon conclusions are reached about the development of cars, but none of it is based in material reality. Nothing of value is gained.

To elaborate on Toomela's (2016) example, two areas of cultural-historical theory are most relevant to the current study. First, I discuss Vygotsky's understanding of structural development. These ideas are important to the epistemological conclusions that I review later. I also discuss Vygotsky's general law of development.

Structural Development

To arrive at principles of higher psychological functions, Vygotsky relied on a structural understanding of development: a complex whole, which is characterized by certain parts, which are in certain relationships. The classic example used by Vygotsky (1987a) was the water molecule. Water is, of course, comprised of hydrogen and oxygen. However, those same elements can be put in entirely different relationships to create a highly explosive gas.

To be clear, Vygotsky did not think of humans as identical to water molecules. This was an analogy, and it was meant to function as a pivot—a way to establish that research is needed to focus on the whole. The parts of that whole and relationships within it are distinguishable, but they are not separable. At the point of merger, both the whole and their parts are qualitatively changed. In short, we cannot study the whole or its parts in isolation from each other.

Because of what I have just discussed in the previous paragraph, certain epistemological assumptions emerge: specifically, differences in the understanding of causality (e.g., cause→ effect relationships) and the approach to selecting methods for a study. These differences in the understanding of causality and the selection of methods are discussed at length later in the chapter, during the critical analysis of research on Response to Intervention.

The General Law of Development

In describing the underlying principle for the proposed General Law of Development, Vygotsky (1987b) famously noted that development first appears on the social plane and then as an inter-psychological category (i.e., within the mind):

> [...] any function in the child's cultural development appears on stage twice, that is, on two planes. It firstly appears on the social plane and then on a psychological plane. Firstly it appears among people as an inter-psychological category, and then within the child as an intra-psychological category. This is equally true with regard to voluntary attention, logical memory, the formation of concepts and the development of volition. (p. 106)

In the rest of this section, I discuss what is meant by this quote. First, I think it is useful to begin with what is *not* meant, as the Western translation of the above quote has been criticized by both Toomela (2015, 2016) and Veresov (2010). For example, for some American sociocultural theorists, the quote appeared to imply that the social environment was an efficient mechanism of development. That is, it reduced the role of an individual person in the refraction of the experience. This is not so. The social environment is *one source* of development, not the *only* source of development. There is also a world (i.e., geographical environment) available to the senses (i.e., sensory environment) to which individuals relate.

A full understanding of the law also requires an understanding of the use of the term *category*. In the original Russian text, Vygotsky (1987b) uses the term (i.e., category) to refer to a dramatic collision between two people or entities—the relationship between the event and drama (Veresov, 2010). Such a collision is not reflected, it is refracted. That is, a person must interpret the event, not just reflect on it. The interpretation is a refraction (as opposed to a reflection) because a singular event can be interpreted differently by different people, in many ways. Nonetheless, the event is internalized. As the process of internalization is characterized by a person's refraction of the dramatic collision, another characteristic can be inferred—the social situation requires

tension, in the process of internalization, which is resolved in the emergence of an inter-psychological category (Veresov & Mok, 2018).

For example, when playing with toddlers, it is common for parents to ask their child to get certain things (i.e., can you find the ball?) and the child finds the thing that corresponds to the words and brings it over. As this game develops, other words might be introduced by the parent to make it more interesting, like, "Can you find the *red* ball?". In a situation where there is more than one ball, and each is of a different color, this creates tension. A new word, a symbol, must be introduced and enter into the toddler's thinking to resolve the dramatic collision. Basically, something like "red" or "not red" allows the game to keep going. Within a structural understanding, researchers do not see such an activity as creating cause → effect relationships. For example, the parents request does not *create* a new category; the child's language is sublimated into thought and qualitatively different categories emerge.

Language, as a tool, is another characteristic of the general law of development. As a system of signs, language serves internal and external functions. Also, language is developmental as the role of language in the child's development changes over time. As in the previous example, such signs (i.e., color to designate a certain shape) can be used to organize internal thinking during acts of social cooperation (Toomela, 2016). Here, I think two important points emerge. The importance of the sign, in the general law of development, reveals the dynamic nature of the process of internalization. It cannot be a mere cause → effect relationship. Refraction in the individual occurs because signs also serve an internal function and are used to reorganize thinking within a social situation. Second, it should be noted that, dramatic collision (Vygotsky, 1987b) does not imply

some negative quality (e.g., a parent dying) (Versov & Mok, 2018). Dramatic events have negative and positive qualities that lead development.

So, although the statement in the above quote by Vygotksy is only a few sentences, those few sentences are dependent on underlying principles: the process of internalization; whereby new functions are introduced as acts of psychological cooperation to resolve a dramatic collision. In this way, higher psychological functions, those dynamic functions characterized as being mediated by language and used in cooperation with others, to anticipate changes in the environment, are developed on the basis of earlier psychological function (Toomela, 2015). Studies of humans, of which children are a category, must emerge on the basis of the developmental characteristics I have just explained in this section. Later, I will refer back to the discussion in this section to explore other characteristics of Response to Intervention, namely characteristics relating to activity and tool use.

Structural-Systemic Epistemology

Structural-systemic epistemology is a term coined by Toomela and represents an approach distinct from quantitative and qualitative methods. Across several papers, but most notably in *The Psychology of Scientific Inquiry*, Toomela (2019) details the issues that arise from studying human development in modern quantitative and qualitative approaches. Although these ideas have appeared in variation in some of his other papers, unless otherwise noted, *The Psychology of Scientific Inquiry* (Toomela, 2019) has been the primary source for this section. For clarity and brevity, I will outline four basic assumptions and discuss one specific experimental method.

Four Assumptions

There are four basic assumptions to the epistemology: (1) there is an external world, (2) the external world is organized, (3) we can know the external world beyond appearances and (4) the world is material. Some of these assumptions will seem obvious so I will only highlight the third assumption as it helps to elaborate the differences between two categories of science: *paradigmatic* and *meta-paradigmatic*. Paradigmatic science does not accept the second portion of our third assumption. Researchers in paradigmatic science assume the external world can be known, but not beyond the observable appearances. There are many reasons for this, but the important consequence is that by rejecting knowledge beyond appearances, the researcher cannot arrive at an underlying principle because "we cannot go beyond senses and we can know only correlations" (Toomela, 2019, p. 24). So, paradigmatic research has been restricted to studying potential relationships within researcher defined variables.

Meta-paradigmatic research accepts both components of the third supposition. We can know the external world and we can be known it beyond appearances. For the reader, an obvious distinction might be observing the rising of the Sun and associating it with observations of other planetary bodies (i.e., paradigmatic) or observing the rising of the Sun and arriving at principles of heliocentrism (i.e., meta-paradigm). In this way, within the meta-paradigm, we can arrive at certain principles, like the General Law of Development and then extend these principles to a full approach, to the development of knowledge (i.e., epistemology) and other aspects of human development. I point this out now because it will be referenced when arriving at the dialectical negation of Response to Intervention.

Experimental Methods

Coincidentally, there are also *four experimental methods* that arise from structural-systemic epistemology. They are (1) descriptive observations, (2) observations in constrained settings, (3) cause-effect experiments, and (4) constructive experiments (Toomela, 2012). I narrow our focus on the second item, observations in constrained settings, and discuss a few characteristics. Later, I expand on this approach in the discussion of method. For now, I want to emphasize how these items align to the four assumptions discussed in the prior section and the aspects of cultural-historical theory that I discussed earlier.

During observations in a constrained setting, the researcher places certain constraints into the experiment to study qualitative changes to behavior. These are not controls as they would be applied in modern interpretations of an experiment (Toomela, 2012). In any paradigm, the researcher is always an instrumental part of the situation or scenario. The researcher is very interested in how behavior qualitatively changes during the course of development to achieve some new, qualitatively different outcome. A classic example is the Vygotsky-Sakharov block experiment. The participant is shown blocks of different shapes and dimensions and asked to arrange the blocks into categories and is given four nonsense words: cev, bik, mur, and lag. Although nonsense words are attached to these blocks, they refer to true dimensional characteristics (height and diameter) of the blocks. Cev refers to blocks which are small and short; bik refers to blocks which are large and short; mur refers to blocks which are small and tall; and lag refers to blocks which are large and tall. After arranging the blocks, the participant is asked to explain their rationale and then receives some amount of correction from the

researcher. For example, the researcher might move an incorrectly placed block into the correct category and observe how the new information is sublimated by the child to achieve future activity in the experiment. That is, does the child incorporate the new information into future decision making about block placement? Or, can the nonsense words be abstracted to a qualitatively different situation? (Towsey & MacDonald, 2009). The focus is on studying the whole situation, to study certain parts in certain relationships. Although certain constraints are placed into the setting, these are for the purpose of observing qualitative change—not isolating a singular cause. And this is done to arrive at a principle. Observations of the Block experiment informed Vygotsky's (1987a) principles of conceptual development, which elaborated on characteristics of higher psychological function. Toomela (2020) introduced certain constraints to study qualitative changes related to word meaning structure. Similarly, Veresov (2019) introduced certain tools (finger puppets) to aide recall during a 'Show and Tell' activity. All of this is to say, observations in a constrained setting incorporate the earlier theoretical and epistemological principles: the principles of structural development, the general law of development, assumptions, and methods.

Response to Intervention

Response to Intervention is a tiered approach meant to provide children with intervention in school (see Figure 2.1). During Tier I intervention, all children receive instruction intended to achieve certain outcomes. For example, instruction might teach that "characters" can be "people in a story."

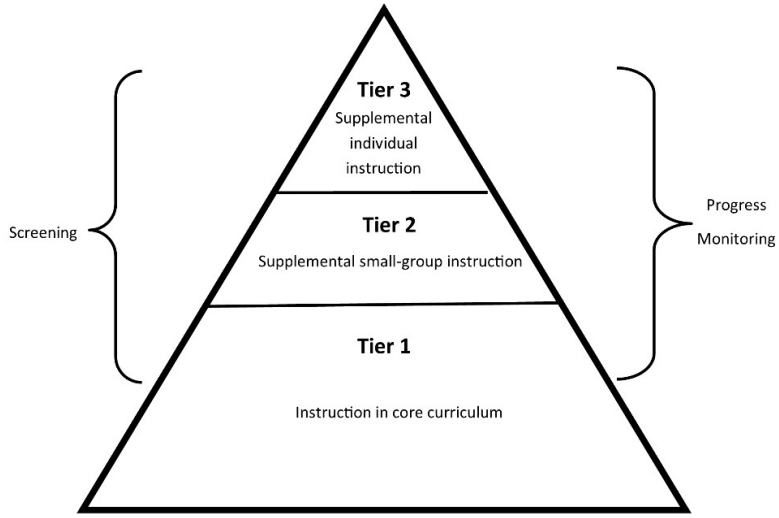

Figure 2.1 Example of Response to Intervention Model. This figure shows an example of different tiers of intervention and other protocols.

Based on *screening*, or assessment intended to reveal underlying, weak skills, school staff assign children to tiers of supplemental intervention. Using the former example, a child unable to identify "characters" could be identified as needing additional intervention. Typically, Tier 2 interventions provide supplemental instruction in small groups. Tier 3 interventions may involve supplemental, one-to-one intervention. Throughout, school staff evaluate children via *progress monitoring*, which utilizes assessments to measure a child's skill acquisition and inform assignment to a tier of intervention.

The focus of this section is on research conducted within Response to Intervention. I begin with a general review of the studies and then explore general characteristics in the context of cultural-historical theory and structural-systemic

epistemology to establish that current research is paradigmatic. I conclude with a proposed study that aligns to meta-paradigmatic research, focused on the experience of interventionists during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the purpose of this review, I examined only studies that focused on reading interventions, that assessed whether or not the intervention led to improvement in children's reading skills, and studies conducted within early primary grades—kindergarten through third grade. Such constraints lead me to the review conducted by Gersten et al. (2017b). The authors reviewed studies using What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) protocols and WWC-certified reviewers to analyze studies published between 2004 and 2014 and that were determined to be Tier 2 interventions with an experimental or quasi-experimental design that included random assignment to either a treatment or control group (i.e., children who received typical school support).

To focus on interventions that benefitted children, only those studies with confirmed, positive effects are included for discussion in this chapter (see Table 2.1). The format of the next section follows the same general structure. In each paragraph, I give an overview of the grade level of the children involved in the study, the primary characteristics of the intervention they were provided, and the areas that were reported to have a statistically significant impact. Then, I move onto a critical analysis of these studies.

Interventions with Children in Early Elementary

Allor and McCarthen (2004) conducted a study on reading intervention (implemented by college students) for children in Grade 1. Some children received a minimum of 2 hours of intervention, and some received up to 10 to 15 hours of

Table 2.1. Reading Interventions with Confirmed Positive Effects.

Authors	Word & Pseudoword Reading	Reading Comprehension	Passage Reading Fluency
Allor & McCarthren, 2004	X	X	
Blachman et al., 2004	X	X	X
Denton et al., 2010	X	X	
Denton et al., 2014	X	X	
Gunn et al., 2005	X	X	
Jenkins et al., 2004	X	X	
Lane, Pullen, Hudson, & Konold, 2009	X		
O'Connor et al., 2010	X		X
Scanlon et al., 2005	X	X	
Schwartz, 2005	X		
Vadasy & Sanders, 2011	X		X
Velluntino & Scanlon, 2002	X		

intervention per week. The intervention used: "a game to teach phonemic awareness and letter-sound correspondence, structured word-study activities, reading of leveled books, and simple comprehension strategies" (p. 116). The authors reported a statistically significant impact of the intervention for phonemic awareness and reading nonsense words.

In their study on reading intervention, Blachman et al. (2004) provided children in Grade 2 and Grade 3 with an intervention five days per week for 50 minutes, for five

months. Lessons included a review of cards emphasizing sound and letter correspondences; work with letters printed on tiles to create words (e.g., fan to fin); regular and irregular (e.g., said) word practice; reading a book; and writing singular words. The authors reported statistically significant effects for word and pseudoword (e.g., laip or mheet) reading, reading rate, passage reading, and spelling. The authors reported that gains were maintained one-year later, but—at follow-up—growth curves were similar to the control group.

To assess Responsive Reading Intervention, Denton et al. (2010) conducted their study to determine the effectiveness for children in Grade 1. The intervention consisted of five components, delivered in 40-minutes over a period of 35 to 40 weeks, which included a period of instruction for "phonemic awareness, letter-sound correspondence, sight word recognition, phonemic decoding, and spelling" (p. 399); modeling of fluent reading and repeated or partner reading; reading of increasingly difficult texts; and writing a sentence. The authors reported a statistically significant impact for word reading, phonemic decoding, spelling, fluency, and reading comprehension when compared to the control group.

Denton et al. (2014) conducted a study of two interventions, Guided Reading and Explicit Intervention, with mostly children in Grade 2 (a small sample of children in Grade 1 were also included). Both interventions were provided for "45min, 4 days per week, for 23 to 25 weeks" for "84 to 90 days" (p. 274). For the Guided Reading intervention, teachers introduced a new book, then children read the book either individually or using choral reading, afterward, teachers praised certain observed strategies children used, and the teacher and children discussed the book. Afterward, the

teacher conducted an assessment. The Explicit Intervention included activities from another intervention, modeling, and teacher observation of comprehension strategies during reading. The authors reported no statistically significant differences between the intervention groups and statistically significant effects for both groups in phonemic decoding and a measure of comprehension when compared to the control group.

Similarly, Gunn et al. (2005) conducted a two-year study of two reading interventions (Reading Mastery and Corrective Reading) for children in Grade 1 through Grade 4. The authors assigned children in early grades to Reading Mastery. Children in third and fourth grade were assigned to Corrective Reading. Children received intervention five days per week for 30 minutes for two years. Each intervention included components focused on phonemic awareness and practice reading decodable books. The authors reported statistically significant effects for word attack, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary.

Using an intervention based on decodable texts, Jenkins et al. (2004) conducted a study with children in Grade 1. The intervention was provided 4 days per week for 25 weeks. The intervention included a component emphasizing letter-sound relationships, decodable words, spelling decodable words, and text reading. The authors reported a statistically significant impact for decoding, word and passage reading, and comprehension when compared to the control group.

Lane et al. (2009) used the University of Florida Reading Initiative with children in Grade 1 to examine components of reading intervention. Approximately 40 sessions of reading intervention were carried out for approximately 10 weeks. The intervention began with children reading a familiar text, a measure of the child's progress from the

previous session, writing a sentence about the text, then reading a more challenging text and exploring a text from another genre (e.g., a newspaper or non-fiction book) to develop awareness of text structures (e.g., headlines or table of contents). The authors reported a statistically significant impact for phonemic awareness, sight words, word attack, and decoding when compared to the control group.

In another study comparing interventions, O'Connor et al. (2010) examined an intervention where children read at their independent reading level and an intervention where children read books at a more difficult level. The intervention occurred for 15 minutes, three times per week, for 30 weeks. In one intervention, children read books on which they had a high level of accuracy and, in the other intervention, read books on which they had a lower level of accuracy. The authors reported five findings,

> (a) Fluency improved for students in treatments relative to students in the control condition; (b) no significant differences were found between grade levels; (c) no significant differences were found between treatments; (d) practice reading aloud had no impact on improvement in decoding or vocabulary; and (e) fluency growth moderated changes in comprehension. (p. 13)

To evaluate an intervention for children with persistent struggles in reading, Scanlon et al. (2005) conducted a study with children in Grade 1 who received intervention during kindergarten. Intervention occurred twice per week, for 30 minutes, and lasted approximately eight months. During intervention, children read and re-read familiar books, practiced phonemic awareness and sight words, and practiced writing. However, the authors created two treatment conditions that emphasized either book reading or phonemic awareness. The authors reported statistically significant improvement for children in both treatment groups and the control group.

Schwartz (2005) conducted a study to investigate the effectiveness of Reading Recovery for children in first grade. During Reading Recovery, children received daily, individualized intervention for 30 minutes, utilizing a set lesson framework. Intervention lasted until children met criteria to terminate intervention or for 20-weeks. During the intervention, children re-read familiar books, did word work with magnetic letters, wrote a story, constructed a story from cut-up elements and read a new book. The author reported statistically significant effects for reading level and a variety of standardized reading assessments when compared to the control group.

In their study, Vadasy and Sanders (2010) measured the effectiveness of a phonics-based intervention for children in kindergarten. Intervention occurred four days per week, for 30 minutes, and lasted for 18-weeks. The intervention included scripted lessons that covered "phonics instruction, including letter–sound correspondences, phonemic decoding, spelling, and assisted oral reading practice in decodable texts" (p. 789). The authors reported statistically significant effects for letter identification, word reading, spelling, fluency, and comprehension.

Vellutino and Scanlon (2002) conducted a study on implementation of a first-grade reading intervention, Interactive Strategies. The intervention was provided for 30 minutes per day over a period of "one to two school semesters" (p. 592). Interactive strategies consisted of re-reading books, phonemic awareness activities, reading new books, word recognition, and writing. Reporting of findings in this study differ slightly from the others. That is, the authors primarily focused on children still requiring intervention after intensive intervention. The authors reported statistically significant effects for one-on-one intervention to reduce need for further intervention (as measured

by performance at the 30th percentile on a standardized assessment). Gersten et al. (2017b) confirmed statistically significant effects for word and pseudoword reading.

Critical Analysis of Research Studies

It may seem evident, but the research that constitutes Response to Intervention is antithetical to the theory and epistemology I outlined earlier. How so? By making assumptions about what can be 'controlled' and the measurement of an 'effect,' the authors implicitly reject a view of structural development and the underlying principle of the general law of development. Also, their studies do not focus on qualitative change but quantitative measurement of certain behaviors; the speed at which a child reads, an assessment of phonemic awareness in which children try to pronounce nonsense or pseudowords and so on. In this way, it is possible to observe that Response to Intervention, falls into the category of paradigmatic science. The researchers observe appearances but do not establish (or attempt to establish) principles of development.

Such a criticism could be deemed as unfair because, so far, it boils down to, "You didn't use the theory I like." Further interrogation is required because it might be that these authors had a different theory and a justification for their methods. Interestingly, this is not the case. Of the twelve studies discussed in the previous section, seven contained no mention of any specific theory. What they do contain is what I would term 'the theory of early intervention.' Basically, such a theory assumes that early intervention is worthwhile because it can improve later reading, which is necessary for full societal participation. Allor and McCarthen (2004) begin by noting "students considered at risk for reading difficulties need to be provided with consistent

opportunities to develop and apply critical literacy skills" (p. 116). Schwartz (2005) notes:

> large-scale intervention programs that can close this achievement gap for at-risk students would increase educational opportunities for many of these students and reduce the number of students who need long-term literacy support, allowing the design of more effective services for this latter group. (pp. 257-258)

In fact, "because our society assigns such significance to reading abilities, educators have an obligation to children to employ the most effective methods available during beginning reading instruction" (Lane et al., 2009, p. 278). All of this is to say that, or at least as my analysis of these studies suggests, the authors are basing assumptions on a well-intentioned, altruistic theory of literacy and social responsibility—but not any specific theory of development.

Five exceptions, those studies which mention a theory, are presented in Table 2.2. Both Ehri's theory (as cited in Blachman et al., 2004) and capacity theory (as cited in O'Connor et al., 2010) are essentially cognitivist, in which the brain functions as a kind of a computer and intervention assists information processing. The theory of 'fluency as prerequisite' (as in Denton et al., 2010; Gunn et al., 2005) is essentially a theory of unidirectional reinforcement: the child's comprehension is built on fluency which is built on word recall. In this theoretical framework, intervention must focus on these ordinal skills.

Table 2.2. Theories Cited by Authors.

Authors	Theory or Theoretical Framework
Blachman et al., 2004	Ehri's Theory
Denton et al., 2010; Gunn et al., 2005	Fluency as prerequisite skill for comprehension
O'Connor et al., 2010	Capacity Theory
Velluntino & Scanlon, 2002	Framework of cognitive skills, related to Ehri's Theory

An exception is Velluntino and Scanlon (2002), who developed a separate theoretical model on cognitive skills that correspond to reading. However, the authors cite Ehri's theory prominently and develop an essentially cognitivist theory to arrive at the assumptions that intervention assists information processing.

Importantly, these are typically brief mentions of theory. The authors mention the theory in passing during the discussion, as a justification for statistical change. So, it is a similar situation as the other four studies. The study itself did not emerge on the basis of any particular developmental theory.

Perhaps even this argument is a bit unfair because we can observe that even without strong theoretical grounding, the interventions had a statistically positive effect (in some areas) for groups of children. However, that is a moot point. Consistently positive effects for children's reading skill have not emerged in the formalized education system. This reality is most apparent in the report by Balu et al. (2015). In their review of

146 elementary schools implementing Response to Intervention, they found no statistical effect on measures of reading for children after being assigned to intervention in Grade 2 to or Grade 3 and found a negative effect for children in Grade 1.

So far, the critical analysis could be summarized as: researchers with a well-intentioned understanding of intervention found positive statistical effects for certain interventions that have not manifested when applied to the broader, formalized education system. And, a reasonable conclusion might be to focus on certain technical aspects. Such an argument would note that Response to Intervention began with the Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 2004, and that more time is needed for implementation. These are precisely the types of arguments offered by Arden et al. (2017), Fuchs and Fuchs (2017) and Gersten et al. (2017a).

However, given cultural historical theory and structural-systemic epistemology, another conclusion is possible. Briefly, we must establish that Response to Intervention did not begin in 2004 and is, in fact, a historical development. Response to Intervention emerged based on arguments made by Gresham (1991, 2002); Fuchs and Deno (1991); and Fuchs and Fuchs (2007). Their arguments were an ontological development of Deno and Mirkin, (1977) Graden et al. (1985) and Heller et al. (1982). These authors were heavily cited in the early papers to justify a tiered system, primarily as a way to address certain legislative mandates to improve identification of children for special education.

Heller et al.'s (1982) assertion "that assessment should be linked to instruction—that it should discriminate among children who can profit from different modes of instruction or who require different forms of intervention before conventional instruction can work" (p. 68) emerged on the basis of surveys conducted by the Office of Civil

Rights. Similarly, the rationales for research given by Deno and Merkin (1977) and Graden et al. (1985) are also based on particular legal decisions of their given historical moment in the latter part of the 20th century

In short, the early proponents of Response to Intervention sought to develop a system that adequately introduced these reforms and then they employed similar rationales. Basically, an idea was generalized to a particular setting, then generalized to the special education system, and, finally, generalized to the broader education system as a whole. This process occurred over approximately 30 years, before achieving dominance with the passage of the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 2004. That is, the idea gained dominance and was a historical development over time.

These details are important because, in his analysis of paradigmatic science, Vygotsky (1987c) also outlines five stages in which a significant idea is generalized to other areas of study, gains dominance, and then enters "a stage of struggle and negation" (pp. 241-242). Already, critical analysis has established that Response to Intervention is a paradigmatic science and entered a stage of dominance. Worryingly, there is evidence that coincides with a period of struggle and negation. Although they use different terminology, Barth et al. (2008) identified severe errors with the paradigm that had been generalized within Response to Intervention. The methods of data collection and analysis used to identify children for intervention did not accurately categorize children. Children might be over identified or under identified.

I argue this marks the period of struggle, and the period of negation can be marked by the report by Balu et al. (2015), in which the benefits of Response to Intervention did not manifest when generalized to the formalized education system.

Negation will accelerate as Response to Intervention is generalized into other developments in the education system. And none of these developments can systematically address the very real learning challenges that teachers are trying to address. As stated at the beginning, Response to Intervention represents a formulation of paradigmatic science that, by its nature, is given to dysfunction. Moving forward, a new construction must emerge through a dialectical understanding:

> The development of scientific ideas and views proceeds dialectically. Opposite ideas concerning one and the same subject replace each other in the process of development of scientific knowledge and a new theory is often not a direct continuation of the preceding one but its negation, a dialectical negation, however. It includes all the positive achievements of its predecessor which have stood the test of time, but it itself strives in its constructions and conclusions to transcend its predecessor's boundaries and to conquer new and deeper layers of phenomena. (Vygotsky, 1987c, p. 175)

So, ideas proceed dialectically, they sublimate the prior idea (though not as a direct continuation) and in doing so incorporate the positive qualities and, in doing so, *move beyond*. Within the contradiction, there is a tension and the resolution of the tension can characterize the dialectical negation. Response to Intervention has never undergone such a process. The researchers involved in its undertaking have not dialectically considered its ontology. Although these researchers have referenced the past, they have viewed it as a linear progression. The approach is fundamentally adialectical and cannot transcend the boundaries of any other approach to intervention that has come before.

In the next section, I outline a meta-paradigmatic research agenda designed around dialectical negation. More specifically, I develop a hypothesis and corresponding research questions. These were used to develop a study, methods, and so on.

Meta-Paradigmatic Dissertation Research

First, there are a few side points to explore that will add clarity on the process of transformation. Researchers focused on Response to Intervention rely on a well-intentioned, altruistic theory of literacy and social responsibility. Such intentions must be preserved while transitioning to research within a meta-paradigmatic science. Those qualities that must be eschewed are those that correspond to paradigmatic theory and method. In LeRoy (2019), I outlined stipulations to dialectically negate (and resolve) such contradictions: "in collaboration with children, and within a mutual, theoretical framework, researchers can focus on personal experience and exclude variables meant to be a proxy for experience" (p. 137). Based on these stipulations, I conducted a pilot study, as an observation in a constrained setting, with four adolescents to assess whether these stipulations allowed for observable, qualitative change.

The research question guiding the pilot study was: what are the characteristics of older children's language when asked to analyze research questions? During the first focus group, I asked the adolescents to consider two research questions I was considering for future research: what do kids think about during reading class? If a kid is having a tough time reading and focusing, what things would they do to help themselves?

Next to these questions, I wrote two additional questions separated by a line. Is this a question kids could help an adult answer? And is there a better question an adult could ask? These were the questions I wanted the adolescents to answer, in relation to the other questions. In the second focus group, we discussed their experience of participating in the first focus group. In the final focus group, the adolescents completed

the Vygotsky-Sakharov Block experiment and analyzed whether the experiment would be enjoyable for younger children.

The research questions which participants analyzed were introduced as a tool, as was the analysis of certain materials in the third focus group. I highlight these particular characteristics of the study design because I will reference them for the study in the third chapter. But, first, there is an observation that emerged in the analysis of the transcripts that is particularly relevant. For the adolescents, in the pilot study, intervention was not a benign thing. They discussed intervention as an experience, into which other life events were brought, in relationship to future goals. For example, as the group made points about difficulty focusing, these difficulties were related to other interests, parents arguing or a death in the family, and future goals about caring for their families. Moreover, the Block experiment was seen to be fun for younger children because they could play with the blocks and get 'hints' about the correct solution, in cooperation with another person.

Here, it seems evident that intervention, for the people actively participating in it, is a complex activity. The behaviors that occur during it, like difficulty focusing, can be related to emotional events that have already occurred or events that are anticipated to occur. Furthermore, the intervention functions as tool, at the same time. For example, it mediates a relationship between people, as in the case of the Block experiment.

Theoretically, given the general law of development, such characteristics are to be expected. As previously noted, the social relationship is internalized as an inter-psychological category, in the course of some kind of dramatic collision. Such an observation is interesting for two reasons. First, Response to Intervention functions on the principle of the general law of development in that we can observe the characteristics of

internalization, during a social situation, which resolves tension (e.g., a request by the teacher to attend to a task that is not of interest to the child). Given this, a reasonable conclusion is that the current intervention research does not adequately incorporate this principle and only arrives at it by accident. Second, we discover other interesting things about Response to Intervention. Externally, we can observe that there are tiers, and these tiers exist to provide support to children. But, internally, there are more interesting categories. There is a category of activity, the actual intervention, the scheduling of which child to which place, all the complexities of life that this carries and so on. Then, there is the category of 'tool,' the actual things that are introduced during the course of intervention. What is even more interesting is that Response to Intervention, by virtue of its design, bundles together *both* of these categories. It is, simultaneously, the activity and the tool.

Both of these points are critical. The first point is particularly relevant to future courses of study on the design of intervention, *what* interventionists and children do and *why* they do it during intervention. However, I do not think this can be done without addressing the second point because the second point, the relationship between the activity and tool, provides a very significant idea for how we can arrive at a meta-paradigmatic research design, necessitated by the first point regarding the principles of Response to Intervention.

That is, based on theoretical and epistemological assumptions, I expect that qualitative changes to parts and relationships also results in qualitative changes to the whole. In this way, the hypothesis emerges that Response to Intervention functions as both a complex activity and a tool, and that new relationships will emerge—if the tool is

qualitatively altered, too. The confirmation or rejection of this hypothesis would suggest a future course of study, based on the malleability of intervention as a tool. That is, the feasibility of the first point.

Given the current historical moment, there are events that make it possible to more easily examine such changes: the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. At some point, all schools shifted their delivery of instruction to a virtual setting. Theoretically, quantitative and qualitative changes should be observable in the experiences of people delivering instruction during this time. I am primarily interested in the characteristics of qualitative change, but the research question should acknowledge both types will be observable. On this basis, my research question is: when asked to analyze research questions, about the type of intervention used during the pandemic, do the verbal responses of interventionists indicate areas of change in their practice?

Analysis of these questions could reveal certain relationships between quantitative and qualitative change, and the pertinence of altering the tools used during intervention, the means of transformation. So, it may be that introducing a qualitatively different intervention would alter all the activities that correspond to Response to Intervention. These interventions could be more sensitive to the conditions created by the pandemic and the experiences of interventionists and children that are actually engaged in intervention.

Conclusion

Before going on, I would like to summarize everything that has been discussed so far, and how it leads to the research question. As discussed at the beginning of the chapter, the initial theoretical and epistemological assumptions suggest certain, universal

characteristics of development. Then, specifically during the critical analysis, I noted Response to Intervention research has not relied on these assumptions, resulting in a paradigmatic science, that is given to certain stages that result in negation, as in Vygotsky (1987c). The contradiction might be resolved by designing meta-paradigmatic research. Toward this end, I developed certain stipulations and a pilot study on the feasibility of these stipulations, which suggest aspects of intervention that correspond to both an activity and a tool. I hypothesize that Response to Intervention functions as both a complex activity and a tool, and that new relationships will emerge—if the tool is qualitatively altered, too. To test this hypothesis, a question must be asked about a particular situation, that resulted in broader changes, to analyze whether (and how) new relationships emerged. So, my meta-level research question is: when asked to analyze research questions, about the type of intervention used during the pandemic, do the verbal responses of participants indicate areas of change in their practice? Two sub-level questions emerge from the meta-level question: How was the experience of delivering instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic different from pre-pandemic instruction? And how did instructional practice change and how was it effective or ineffective?

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I outline the dissertation study. I begin by giving an overview of the research design, conceptual model and my role in the research. Then, I provide details on participants and focus group procedures. Finally, I discuss the process used to analyze focus group transcripts and arrive at codes, subcategories, dominant categories, and themes.

Again, I hypothesize that Response to Intervention functions as both a complex activity and a tool, and that new relationships will emerge—if the tool is qualitatively altered, too. The *meta-level research* question:

When asked to analyze research questions, about the type of intervention used during the pandemic, do the verbal responses of participants indicate areas of change in their practice? The sub-level research questions are:

How was the experience of delivering instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic different from pre-pandemic instruction?

And how did instructional practice change and how was it effective or ineffective?

Research Design

I employed a qualitative research design, modified to align to the classical cultural-historical method of observations in a constrained setting. As discussed in the previous chapter, in this method, the researcher places certain constraints into the research setting to study qualitative changes and identify principles of development.

These are not ‘controls’ as they would be applied in modern interpretations of an experiment (Toomela, 2012). The researcher is an instrumental part of the scenario, interested in qualitative changes during the course of development to achieve some new, qualitatively different outcome. So, I modified the traditional focus group structure in which participants might be asked several direct questions. Instead, I introduced the sub-level research questions as a tool for participant analysis meant to (a) elaborate certain qualitative changes that emerged from providing intervention during the pandemic, and (b) the relationships that characterized the qualitative change. Within this structure, participants were presented with a research question and then asked, “Is this a question that interventionists could help a researcher answer? And is there a better question for a researcher to ask?” So, in contrast to the traditional focus group format, participants were responding to whether they thought the sub-level research questions were appropriate research questions. They were not directly responding to the sub-level research questions but instead revealing what they thought was relevant to other interventionists.

That is, the constraints placed on the setting, analyzing research questions as opposed to the traditional approach to focus group design, became a tool that guided thinking, while simultaneously exploring a research question that was the current area of focus and a future course of study**,** providing intervention during the pandemic and the earlier hypothesis that qualitative changes in intervention have a broader impact on Response to Intervention.

I audio and video recorded the focus group sessions, which were conducted virtually on Zoom, an online video conferencing application. The ‘start’ of the focus groups formally began when I provided an overview of the purpose of the group. Focus

group sessions lasted from approximately 35 minutes to 1 hour. On average, sessions lasted 45 minutes and 37 seconds.

Conceptual Model

My dissertation study was intended to reveal potential relationships that might suggest pathways for a dialectical negation of Response to Intervention, namely the potential to alter interventions and lead to qualitatively different experiences for children and interventionists. The current historical moment, characterized by the pandemic, allowed for the opportunity to conduct research at a point when all teachers and children were required to transfer to virtual learning.

Based on Vygotsky's General Law of Development (1987b), I expected that development first appears on the social plane and then as an inter-psychological category. These categories refer to a dramatic collision between two people or entities—the relationship between the event and drama (Veresov, 2010). In the context of this study, such categories are the pandemic and requisite changes to how interventionists performed their jobs.

As previously noted, these collisions are *refracted* as the person must interpret the event during the process of internalization. The present study addressed this through the use of focus groups and semi-structured interviews. That is, participants were able to describe their specific situation and, in the course of discussion, explore and refine perspectives of providing intervention during the pandemic.

Researcher Role

As in the classical use of observation in a constrained setting, I was present and active throughout the focus groups. Typically, the groups began with me outlining a general purpose and then asking an opening question. At some points, I shared certain experiences (e.g., assisting my own children with virtual instruction) to lead into prompts for other questions. At other points, I moderated discussions by asking a question that brought up a different topic. And, at other times, I affirmed a participant's response (i.e., Wow, that would be frustrating).

Conversation occurred freely. In relationship to the questions, participants discussed their backgrounds, work histories, families and asked questions of each other. Certainly, and as can be seen in the transcripts, these discussions were important factors in the flow of conversation and led to rich conversations. Verbal responses among the participants revealed their areas of similarity, differences and generated diverse and divergent conversations.

Given a conceptual framework rooted in cultural-historical theory, these interactions were quite important. We cannot study the whole or its parts in isolation. That is, participant responses were not qualities that could be isolated. They occurred as a complex whole, characterized by certain parts, in certain relationships. Although I recognize such a perspective (or view of the researcher) may be absent in some fields or constructed differently, the approach I have outlined is consistent with the classical cultural-historical approach described in Chapter Two.

Setting

All meetings were conducted on Zoom in May and June of 2021. On average, sessions lasted approximately 46 minutes. The sessions were audio and video recorded and initial transcripts were produced using the Zoom automatic transcription service. To schedule sessions, I sent out a Google form with a poll which included different dates and times. Participants self-selected the dates and times that were most convenient to them. On this basis, and is outlined later, I arranged participants into different groups.

Study Participants

Selection and Recruitment of Study Participants

To recruit participants, I used purposeful sampling, which focuses on specific characteristics of participants to determine the criteria for recruitment. I contacted coordinators at Oakland Intermediate School District who forwarded a recruitment letter to supervisors and principals via e-mail. I also used District listings for schools in Oakland and Macomb county and directly e-mailed recruitment letters to interventionists. Additionally, the recruitment letter was shared with the EarlyOn Michigan listserv. EarlyOn is a statewide program that offers intervention services for infants and toddlers with developmental disabilities from Birth to 3-years-old. The listserv is an e-mail list used to disseminate information to interventionists throughout Michigan.

Initial recruitment led to 10 interested participants: five Birth to 3-years-old (Birth to Three) interventionists and five kindergarten to Grade 3 (K-3) interventionists. One of the Birth to Three interventionists did not attend the first session and did not respond to subsequent communications to reschedule, leaving four Birth to Three interventionists

and five K-3 interventionists who participated in the study. Participants received a $20 Amazon gift card at the conclusion of all focus groups.

Participant Characteristics

The participants of this study were two groups of interventionists: Birth to Three and K-3 interventionists. It was important to include both groups because they work with children in different ways. Birth to Three interventionists primarily works with families, within their homes and K-3 interventionists primarily work with specific children in a school building. Furthermore, these interventionists are engaged in Response to Intervention in very different ways. For example, K-3 interventionists are more closely involved with the processes associated with Response to Intervention (e.g., progress monitoring, Tier 2 intervention). However, Birth to Three interventionists might be involved with similar, albeit differently titled processes. For example, they assess children's growth but might not use the term 'progress monitoring.' To be clear, by interventionists I do not mean classroom teachers. Interventionists have a very specific focus to their role, typically only working with a few children from a given group, that have been identified for additional support.

As part of recruitment, participants indicated they provided intervention for children between birth and Grade 3, had provided intervention during the pandemic, and had been an interventionist for at least two years. I used a Google form to collect demographic information about participants. To create pseudonyms, I began with the first focus group, and the first participant to speak. They became Participant 1 and I maintained this ordering for clarity, although later participants were present in different groups. So, even though Participant 3 was present in a separate group, they did not

become Participant 1 of that group. Later in this section, I clarify the exact focus group structure and how these groups were labeled with identifiers.

All of the participants were female and worked as interventionists in either Southeastern or Western Michigan. The professional titles of participants tended to include either the words 'special education' or 'intervention.' On average participants had worked in education for an average of 17 years (see Table 3.1). The longest 'years of service' was 27 years and the shortest was five years.

I divided the participants into two separate groupings: a group of Birth to Three interventionists and a group of K-3 interventionists (see figure 3.1). This grouping procedure was used to create cohesion. That is, it maintained the focus of the research questions to reveal areas of change. Mixing participants might have confused *what* qualitatively changed. Birth to Three interventionists and K-3 interventionists engage children and families in very different intervention activities. So, mixing participants might have led to verbal responses that were actually centered around the overall difference in intervention activities and not from delivery during the pandemic. Finally, due to scheduling issues, each group was also subdivided. So, the four participants from the Birth to Three group participated in two separate groups, as did the five participants from the K-3 group.

To arrive at focus group codes, I began by distinguishing whether the group was conducted with either Birth to Three or K-3 interventionists (for specific codes and length of sessions see Table 3.2). Groups with Birth to Three interventionists were designated as 'B3' and groups with K-3 interventionists were designated as 'K3.'

Table 3.1. Participant Information.

Participant Code	Position Title	Years of Service
Participant 1 (P1)	Early On Speech & Language Pathologist	23
Participant 2 (P2)	Early Childhood Special Education Teacher	27
Participant 3 (P3)	Early Childhood Special Education Teacher	27
Participant 4 (P4)	Early On Special Education Teacher	5
Participant 5 (P5)	Reading Interventionist	16
Participant 6 (P6)	Title 1/31a Teacher	22
Participant 7 (P7)	Reading Specialist	6
Participant 8 (P8)	Intervention Specialist	20
Participant 9 (P9)	Kindergarten Reading Interventionist	10

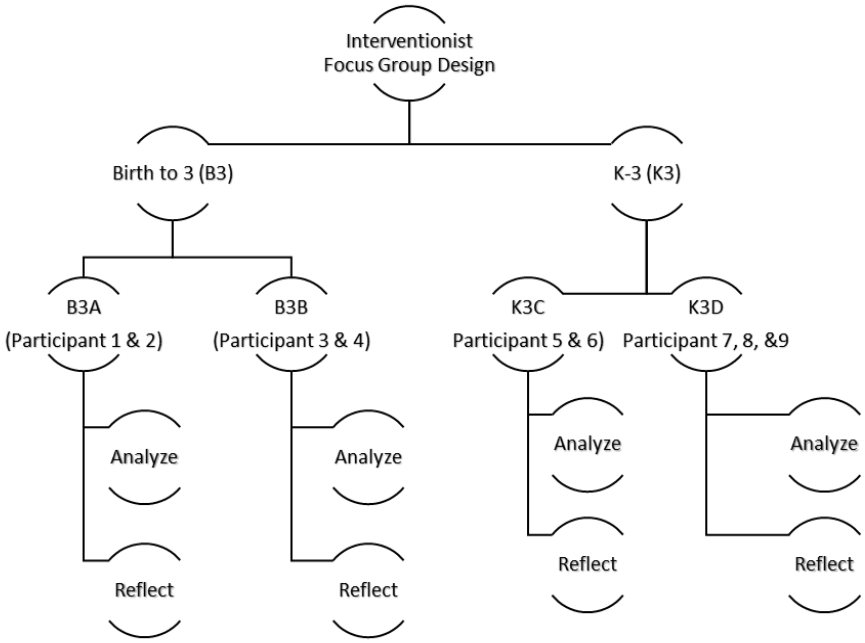

Figure 3.1. Design of the study. This figure shows how participants were grouped and assigned into focus group sessions.

Next, I considered which group was conducted first. So, the first 'B3' group became 'B3A' and the next became 'B3B.' The same was done for the groups designated 'K3' which became, respectively, 'K3C' and 'K3D.' Finally, I considered whether this was the first or second meeting of the group and added a numeral to indicate which meeting was taking place. The first meeting of 'B3A' became 'B3A1' and the second meeting became 'B3A2.' I used the same process to establish codes for the subsequent 'B3' and 'K3' groups. Two participants from the first K-3 group needed to complete the second session as an interview, so I added another sub-letter to distinguish these groups. The separate interviews are labeled as 'K3C2a' and 'K3C2b.'

Table 3.2. Focus Group Details.

Focus Group Codes	Length
Birth to 3 A1 (B3A1)	44 min 13 sec
Birth to 3 A2 (B3A2)	49 min 23 sec
Birth to 3 B1 (B3B1)	42 min 56 sec
Birth to 3 B2 (B3B2)	44 min 51 sec
K to 3 C1 (K3C1)	35 min 24 sec
K to 3 C2a (K3C2a)	42 min 50 sec
K to 3 C2b (K3C2b)	1 hr 3 min
K to 3 D1 (K3D1)	45 min 59 sec
K to 3 D2 (K3D2)	43 min 11 sec

For the remainder of this chapter, and throughout Chapter 5, focus group codes and participant codes are used to identify specific verbal responses. For example, a response by Participant 1 during the first session of the first Birth to Three focus group is identified as 'P1, B3A1.' If a response was given by Participant 8 in the second session of the second K-3 group, the response is identified as 'P8, K3D2.' If a response was given by Participant 5 during the interview of the first K-3 group, then it is labelled 'P5, K3C2b.' For clarity and brevity, these identifiers are placed at the end of the quote.

Data Collection Instruments

To collect data, as noted earlier, the sessions were audio and video recorded via Zoom. Participants logged in via a Zoom account and recording began automatically when I began the session. During the first focus group, all groups were presented with questions and prompts (see Table 3.3). The focus groups used a semi-structured format. That is, after presenting the group with the questions and prompts in Table 3.3, participants discussed their experiences and ideas about the question freely.

In subsequent groups, I used the same format but asked more general questions. For example, in the second focus group, I asked participants what they thought of participating in the first group? I also asked if there were additional things they would like to share or that they had time to reflect on?

Follow up questions, in each focus group, delved deeper into certain responses. For example, participants in each group discussed certain interactions with administrators so I asked them to clarify how beneficial they thought these interactions were.

Table 3.3. Questions and Prompts for the First Focus Group.

Questions and Prompts for the Focus Groups	
How was the experience of delivering instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic different from pre-pandemic instruction?	Is this a question that interventionists could help a researcher answer? Is there a better question a researcher should ask?
How did instructional practice change and how was it effective or ineffective?	Is this a question that interventionists could help a researcher answer? Is there a better question a researcher should ask?

As a number of participants in the first group also brought up concerns about administering assessments and the reliability of assessments results, we also discussed any difficulties that might arise from this lack of reliability and how these difficulties might be addressed.

Data Collection Procedures

I obtained IRB approval from Oakland University to conduct this study titled: Response to Intervention as an Activity and Tool (project ID number IRB-FY2021-322). The IRB approval letter is included in Appendix A. Focus group sessions were completed in May and June of 2021. All participants completed informed consent forms indicating their participation was voluntary, that they could stop participating at any time and that sessions would be audio and video recorded. Focus group sessions were audio and video recorded, via Zoom, and lasted for a minimum of 35 minutes and maximum of 1 hour.

Coding and Analysis

After receiving initial transcripts from Zoom, I reviewed the transcripts while reviewing the video recordings to ensure accuracy. Next, I reviewed the transcripts while listening to audio recordings, to further ensure accuracy. Finally, I conducted a line by line reading of the transcripts and coded participant responses in using in vivo coding, which uses verbatim statements from participants as initial codes (Saldana, 2015; Watzlawik & Valsiner, 2012). In this way, the process of coding was intended to retain the original character of the verbal responses and group them based on areas of similarity, at successive levels of analysis. At the same time, the process is recursive and requires returning to original responses to ensure appropriate grouping in the later stages of analysis.

Process of In Vivo Coding

The process of identifying in vivo codes began with reviewing the transcripts and coding statements in Dedoose, an online software application used to analyze qualitative and quantitative data. I selected Dedoose based on my familiarity with the program. First, I downloaded transcriptions generated automatically by Zoom and exported transcripts into Microsoft Word. Then, I checked the transcripts for accuracy within Microsoft Word by listening to the audio recordings and watching the video recordings. Then, these files were uploaded to Dedoose and the subsequent process of line by line readings began.

To clarify how these line-by-line readings led to In-Vivo codes, I begin with this example:

> We did get a budget to buy things because we were, we did briefly go back, of course couldn't take anything in the home that was going to come back out with you, because we had a whole sanitizing protocol and couldn't. Even with food grade sanitized blocks and certain form boards. And so we literally bought thousands of blocks and every family got bags of blocks and everybody got their form board, and everybody got to keep, you know, so maybe it was helpful that some of the families had access to things they might not have. [P3, B3B1]

This statement was coded as 'we got a budget to buy things for each home, sanitizing protocols, thousands of blocks, a form board, it gave them access to things they might not have.' So, the in vivo code preserves specific portions of the original statement: the receipt of a budget, the reason, the materials that were purchased and the benefit of the purchase.

Similarly, another participant noted:

> So, I had a very different perspective, even just geographically. Because I could find you know 'XYZ' and there was three food banks in all of X county for them versus how many there in Y on a given week. Even now, you know. So, it was one of those that I had to become more aware, which my ISD did great with letting us know, like here's your food pantry list, here's where they're at, you know, here's a pop up one. Getting that information to us, so we could give it to families but knowing what resources were available. [P4, B3B2]

This statement was coded as 'difference geographically, had to become more aware of food pantries, ISD did great, give to families' available resources.' Again, I pulled out keywords from the initial statement to preserve the overall meaning: the geographic differences, the provision of food pantry lists by the ISD, and the need to know about these resources to assist families. In Table 3.4, I have included additional examples of this process.

Table 3.4. Selected Examples of Abbreviated Quotes and In-Vivo Codes.

Abbreviated Quote	In-Vivo Code
" […] some of the families were so desperate for somebody to talk to or somebody to help or to reach out […] or I was ghosted because, they just had too much stuff going on	Some were desperate to talk, some ghosted
" […]we kind of could work on some of the same activities and mom could be coached […] I think it stretched the parents a little bit."	We could work on some activities together, I think it stretched the parents
" […] When your life gets turn upside down, you can talk about it and elaborate on that."	When life gets turned upside down, you can elaborate

Identifying Subcategories

Ultimately, after coding all nine transcripts, this entire process resulted in 279 in vivo codes. After reviewing these codes, I exported a Microsoft Excel file from Dedoose and began the process of sorting codes into subcategories, which began by referring to the meta-research question:

When asked to analyze research questions, about the type of intervention used during the pandemic, do the verbal responses of participants indicate areas of change in their practice? And the sub-research questions used in the focus group: how was the

experience of delivering instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic different from pre-pandemic instruction? And how did instructional practice change and how was it effective or ineffective?

So, as I began to develop sub-categories, I focused on whether areas of change were present in these verbal responses. For example, the area of change in the in vivo code 'we got a budget to buy things for each home, sanitizing protocols, thousands of blocks, a form board, it gave them access to things they might not have' was placed into the subcategory 'change in materials at the home.' I placed the in vivo code 'difference geographically, had to become more aware of food pantries, ISD did great, give to families available resources' into a separate subcategory 'change in resources offered to families.' The In-Vivo code 'some were desperate to talk, some ghosted' was placed into a subcategory 'change in who received services' and the in-vivo code 'We could work on some activities together, I think it stretched the parents' was placed into the subcategory 'change in family support' (see Table 3.5 for additional examples).

Table 3.5. Selected Examples of In-Vivo Codes and Sub-Categories.

In-Vivo Code	Sub-Category
Some were desperate to talk, some ghosted	Change in services provided
We could work on some activities together, I think it stretched the parents	Change in intervention
Life gets turned upside down, you can elaborate	Change in circumstance

Additional subcategories also emerged as it was not possible for every in-vivo code to be assigned to subcategories defined by change. A total of three subcategories emerged that, through the course of analysis, could only be described as verbal responses about feelings. These tended to cluster around feelings about instructional delivery, feelings about administration and feelings about their job.

> I've literally been in tears fighting for some of these kids because it's--when you've been doing it long enough that you know what child needs more support than you're able to give them and now then now there's another reason to not--and I'm not quick to want to label kids--but if a kid needs more support then they need it. It's been a bit of a nightmare for me this year. [P7, K3D1]

Certainly, this statement does relate to the 'change in service delivery' and the concern that children are not receiving enough support. However, the context primarily relates to their feelings about this change, in that 'it's been a bit of a nightmare' and they have 'literally been in tears fighting for some of these kids.' The participant had a certain feeling about the supports that children received and that such supports did not provided adequate support. Therefore, this statement was placed in the subcategory 'feelings about instructional delivery.'

> So, I mean I think we're at a tipping point with us. Teachers aren't made--overall, our psyche isn't "I'm just going to throw this out there, and I'll just throw this information up there and see if it sticks. And if it doesn't, oh well. If you don't want to listen. Okay." I don't think that's the mentality of a teacher, you know. We were just so--I don't know, at least, I am. I think a lot of my colleagues are. Like we want to be effective, we want the kids to learn, we know the consequences of them not learning. We know the cumulative effect for our low students. So, it's almost alarming, at least to me. I just think, if you continue like for year after year after year, to not making growth you're almost doomed to never be successful. [P5, K3C2b]

In this case, the emotional characteristics emerged in the feeling of being 'at a tipping point' because expectations do not align with 'our psyche' which creates a

concern that children might be ‘almost doomed.’ Although these sentiments do relate to the change in instructional delivery, ultimately, they relate back to the teaching profession in general and the ability to teach in a manner that promotes growth. Therefore, the statement was placed into the subcategory ‘feelings about job.’

> Other factors were specific to administrative decisions or lack of decision making. So, we're just kind of in a pickle because the district, and when I say the district, our leadership, has not taken a firm stance or a commitment to our program and to lead us and guide us. It's like we're doing it all by ourselves. [P2, B3A2]

In this instance, I created a separate subcategory ‘feelings about administration.’ Although, the participant is describing their ‘feelings about job’ these feelings were specific to administration. A total of 22 other in vivo codes were also specific to things that administrators did, so I kept this as a distinct subcategory whereas ‘feelings about job’ was kept as a distinct subcategory for feelings about teaching in general.

Grouping Subcategories

As subcategories emerged in relationship to other in vivo codes, I began to organize these into common areas. In this way, the subcategories ‘change in materials at home’ and ‘change in resources offered to families’, were grouped into the sub-category ‘change in family support.’ After analysis, it was clear each of these codes centered around the ways in which family support changed during the pandemic. In some cases, the materials that were provided to families changed and in other cases resources changed but both of these changes were, ultimately, about providing more support to families.

Similarly, a number of subcategories emerged that were specific to the switch to virtual instruction. For example, the subcategory ‘change to coaching model’ was merged with the category ‘change to intervention’ because the in-vivo code primarily focused on

changes to activities that could be completed on Zoom. However, a number of subcategories also included in-vivo codes that related to intervention but focused on a change in the quality of interaction. In some cases, these related to difficulties maintaining student attention, and conversely, improvements in parent interaction. After further analysis, it became clear that both subcategories contained a level of the other and were merged to create a larger subcategory coded as 'change to intervention & interaction.' Table 3.6 includes additional examples of how subcategories were merged.

Table 3.6. Selected Examples of Grouping Subcategories.

Subcategories	Combined Subcategory
Change in instructional time	Change in instruction
Change to instructional materials	
Change in instructional strategies	
Change in work hours	Change in schedule & location of services
Change in location	
Change to shortened day	
Change in professional development	Change in practices & procedures
Change in IEP meetings	
Change in retention	

Sorting Subcategories into Dominant Categories

At this point, I began the process of defining dominant categories. For those subcategories that focused on change, I focused on *what* the area of change was in relationship to. For example, the subcategory 'change in family support' was coded into the dominant category 'related to the material shortage of others.' That is, in the two earlier examples, the change in 'family support' emerged on the basis of a lack of educational materials and access to food.

The process of assignment was recursive. So, to ensure appropriate assignment, I would refer back to the in-vivo code and transcripts to assist in the process. As a result, similar subcategories were sometimes assigned to a different dominant category. For example, two other quotes were assigned to the subcategory 'change in family support' but placed into a different dominant category because the underlying explanation for alteration was based on different rationales. That is, in some cases the change in family support related to the need to provide emotional support:

> And through a lot of the pandemic it's been a lot of these phone calls. At one time, out of desperation, she took a job to deliver for Amazon. So, she would pack her kids in the car with her, to go, and so we would do phone calls. And so, she goes, I just feel really bad because I feel like, you know, maybe we've even—we've crossed the boundary kind of between friendship and professional. So, I said, she said, "I feel like we blurred lines, I just don't want to get you in trouble. Like you're not doing your job". And I said "No, actually, I am doing my job because whatever helps that child function better, that's my job". And if the family's functioning better, than I'm doing, you know--and I understand she's a person who needs somebody to talk to, I really feel like I'm the therapist through this pandemic for a lot of the families. [P3, B3B2]

A similar discussion on the provision of emotional support was evident in this response:

> Because, if you think about it, like, yes, there's the medical scares of COVID and stuff. But it was more that social emotional stuff where you're not supposed to leave your house, you need to stay home, you need to have masks—da-ta-da-ta-

> da. That's more mental because, like, I have a parent who has high, horrible depression, anxiety. And for her, I mean, it was a daily phone conversation for a good three months because she's like 'I can't do it. I just need someone' And I'm like, 'I'm here,' you know. She's talking to her therapist as well but, she's like 'I don't know what.' And that's what makes me really—9/11 changed us in a global perspective. But COVID changed us social emotionally. [P4, B3B2]

So, during the process of coding and combining subcategories, both statements were assigned to the sub-category 'change in family support' as both verbal responses center on how the type of supports that were provided to families changed but placed into the dominant category 'related to social emotional learning' (SEL).

Again, the process of developing these categories was recursive. After identifying, subcategories it was not always possible to compare the commonalities and create a dominant category. Instead, it was necessary to return to the original in vivo code and verbal responses to identify *what* the change related to. Coding in this manner ensured that the development of dominant categories still related back to the original verbal response. As a result, it was necessary to assign similar subcategories to more diverse dominant categories to properly capture the relationship.

For example, the subcategory 'change in family support' was assigned to the dominant categories: related to needs of family, related to material shortages of others, related to online delivery and pandemic rules, and related to SEL. Despite similarities between these dominant categories, analysis of the in-vivo codes revealed the dominant categories refracted distinct comments. Although 'material shortages of others' seemed to fit into 'needs of families', the in vivo codes within 'material shortages of others' were about specific activities undertaken to get families food. Codes within 'needs of family' related to adaptations in coaching and planning.

To maintain this distinction, I did not merge the dominant categories. Overall, a total of 20 subcategories and 18 dominant categories were identified. Table 3.7 includes the total number of In-Vivo codes (i.e., frequency) that were grouped into the sub-categories or dominant categories. In Table 3.8, I have included additional examples of how subcategories were placed into dominant categories.

Identification of Themes

The process of identifying themes followed the same recursive process of sorting outlined earlier. To begin, I reviewed dominant categories in relationship to the subcategory to detect similarities and differences. For example, the dominant categories 'related to SEL' and 'related to online delivery and pandemic rules' were both characterized by the subcategory 'change in service delivery.' In-vivo codes connected to these statements implied a different rationale for the change. In the first instance, the change in practice was driven by a social-emotional need and, in the case of the latter, the change was driven by the material necessity of delivering instruction online. So, these were placed in two distinctive groupings (see Table 3.9).

Another distinct grouping emerged around emotional, verbal responses, which were eventually narrowed into three distinct themes. A subset was related to personal feelings about providing intervention during the pandemic. But the inverse was also apparent. That is, the changes in intervention related to a very specific set of feelings. Namely, feelings about children's behavior and effectiveness at providing intervention. Again, these formed another set of groupings.

Table 3.7. Final Sub-Categories & Dominant Categories.

Sub-categories	Frequency	Dominant category	Frequency
Change in intervention & interaction	63	Related to online delivery & pandemic rules	42
Change in practice & procedures	30	Related to concern about reliability & identification	40
Change in service delivery	24	Related to interventionist & family/child's experiences	29
Feelings about administration	23	Feelings about effectiveness	24
Change in circumstance	19	Related to SEL	16
Change in perception	19	Feelings about child behavior	15
Change to family support	18	Related to support	14
Change in assessment practice	15	Related to concern for future	14
Change in assessment scores	13	Related to needs of child	14
Change in schedule & location of services	12	Related to needs of family	11
Feelings about instructional delivery	11	Related to effectiveness	9
Feelings about job	10	Related to enjoyment	9
Change in staffing	8	Feelings about job	9
Change in instructional need	5	Related to material shortages of others	8
Change in all areas	2	Related to instruction	8
Change in role	2	Related to social perception	7
Change in health	2	Feelings about support	4
Change in biology	1	Related to assessment	1
		Related to student attention	1
		Feelings about relationships	1

Finally, another subset did reflect a change in practice, but primarily related to concerns about the future. This was a distinct theme because although it involved feelings (e.g., concerns) related to interventionists future orientation, long-term concerns or immediate plans to address children's needs. Long-term concerns related to identifying children for support and socialization concerns. More immediate planning involved adaptations, and difficulties in adapting intervention within the coming school year.

As these five stable groupings developed, I began looking for commonalities in the phrasing of dominant categories, sub-categories and in-vivo codes. This process was done so that the wording in the theme was developed on the basis of participants' original verbal responses and the language formed in the development of subcategories and dominant categories. Table 3.10 includes the final wording for each theme.

Conclusion

In conclusion, analysis resulted in five distinct groupings of verbal responses in relationship to the meta-level and sub-level research questions. Specifically, it was possible to observe changes that occurred during the pandemic, the perception of these changes and expectations of areas of future need. In Chapter 4, I discuss characteristics of each theme in the context of participants verbal responses.

Table 3.8. Additional Selected Examples of Grouping Sub-Categories.

Sub-Categories	Dominant Category
Change in schedule & location of services	
Change in family support	Related to needs of family
Change in service delivery	
Change in role	
Change in schedule & location of services	Related to online delivery & pandemic rules
Change in service delivery	
Feelings about administration	
Feelings about delivery	Related to effectiveness
Feelings about instructional delivery	

Table 3.9 Example of Two Initial Groupings

Group 1: Social Relationships	Group 2: Material Necessity
Related to SEL	Related to online delivery & pandemic rules
Related to need of family	Related to instruction
Related to needs of child	Related to assessment
Related to material shortages of others	

Table 3.10. Themes

Themes
1. Alterations to intervention on the basis of qualitatively different social relationships
2. Alterations to intervention on the basis of qualitatively different material conditions
3. The conditions of the pandemic, in relationship to earlier professional experience, are internalized in current perceptions of professionalism
4. Vocalized responses about emotions are characterized by the conditions of the pandemic in relationship to alterations of intervention
5. Future orientation is characterized by concerns about educational practice and children's experiences

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I discuss the major characteristics of themes and provide quotes from transcripts as support. During analysis, five major themes emerged:

1. Alterations to intervention on the basis of qualitatively different social relationships;
2. Alterations to intervention on the basis of qualitatively different material conditions;
3. Conditions of the pandemic, in relationship to earlier professional experience, as internalized in current perceptions of professionalism;
4. Vocalized responses about emotions characterized by the conditions of the pandemic in relationship to alterations of intervention;
5. Future orientation is characterized by concerns about educational practice and children's experiences.

These themes capture the basis for alterations to service, the experience of providing intervention during the pandemic and expectations about intervention in subsequent school years.

To better understand each of these themes, I discuss the characteristics and the verbal responses (i.e., quotes) that supported my conclusions. The presentation of each theme follows the same general structure. First, I present the subcategories and dominant categories included in each theme. Then, I provide quotes from the transcripts that exemplified the theme to highlight certain characteristics and discuss qualitative

similarities and differences between groups. To recapitulate, qualitative change is a dialectical transformation. To elaborate, during the pupa stage, in the development of a butterfly, a number of cellular reconfigurations take place within the cocoon. The emergence of the butterfly, differently structured than the caterpillar, is considered a *qualitative change* (Veresov & Mok, 2018).

To maintain the original wording of participants' verbal responses I present full quotes from the transcripts. As a result of these verbatim transcripts, quotations maintain the participant's grammatical speech rhythm and occasional omitted words. I have added clarifiers where it seemed these factors hampered understanding. Again, for brevity I use the identifier codes outlined in Chapter Three. For example, a response by Participant 1 during the first session of the first Birth to Three focus group is identified as 'P1, B3A1.' If a response was given by Participant 8 in the second session of the second K-3 group, the response is identified as 'P8, K3D2.'

Themes

Theme One: Alterations to Intervention on the Basis of Qualitatively Different Social Relationships

In Table 4.1, the subcategories, dominant categories, and frequency of the categories included in this theme are listed. Overall, the theme was characterized by changes to the intervention that emerged from the adverse social conditions of the pandemic. A majority of these changes entailed providing social emotional support or changes in intervention based on some need of the family or child:

> And, you know, there was times I was on the phone until, seven eight o'clock at night and--Okay, but then I'm like, wait--did I really get to shut off and enjoy my family? No. As well as I had a lot of CPS [Child Protective Services] involvement during COVID. Which is not fun. But you all know this, um, but it was--how can

> I support my families in this moment? And, you know, I kind of--at that time like we weren't in person--we could do outdoor door drops, things like that. And I'm like I'm a little island because I can't get you the support that you need. [P3, B3B2]

In this instance, the verbal response highlights a shift in working hours, decreased time with family, and increased efforts to provide family and children support, both in contacting Child Protective Services and conducting "door drops" (i.e., leaving materials at the home to provide access while avoiding in-person contact). These alterations occurred in relationship to a desire to best support families. However, these alterations were constrained in their perceived effectiveness because "I'm like I'm a little island because I can't get you the support that you need." The verbal response is also emblematic of the nuance in social relationships that participants discussed. For example, when discussing alterations to intervention, the participants were discussing experiences that involved families and children that reached out for more support and families and children that began to no longer attend interventions or return communications to attempt to reschedule support. As one participant described, "it was one of two ways, it was either a deeper connection or I was ghosted because, they just had too much stuff going on" [P3, B3B1].

Participants addressed these factors, like family participation, in different ways. At certain points, these alterations occurred in contradiction to administrative decisions and certain pandemic guidelines.

> And we have done some in person, like this Spring we started, we just took it upon ourselves and said 'We're gonna meet at the park.' We didn't care what the school [said] because we had a new administrator and everything, she…everything--we kept what we knew was right to do. She just didn't know. She just like 'Well, let me check with so and so.' So, in order to, you know, keep

> our families, you know motivated, and in our program, and coming back to us, week after week, we had to switch it up amongst ourselves. [P2, B3A2]

So, the location of intervention was altered to maintain family engagement and increase perceived effectiveness. Again, these actions were undertaken on the basis of the qualitatively different social relationships that emerged from the constraints of the pandemic. As one participant described:

> We have strong opinions, for lack of better words. And more than once we're like, 'Well I know it says this but I'm going to do it anyway.' With our Amish and stuff, we're working on trying to get one of them glasses. Well, they don't have transportation. So, one of my co-workers takes a day off. So they're 'not working' and we'll transport them [the glasses] but that's against the policy. Cuz it's, you know. She's like, 'Well it's my day off, I can do, what I want.' So, yeah, we're a little, you know, open minded. [P3, B3B2]

Table 4.1. Frequency of Subcategories and Categories for Theme One.

Subcategory	Frequency	Dominant Category	Frequency
change to family support	18	related to SEL	16
change in intervention & interaction	11	related to needs of family	11
change in service delivery	9	related to needs of child	10
change in schedule & location of services	7	related to material shortages of others	8
change in perception	5	related to online delivery & pandemic rules	6
change in assessment practice	1		

These types of alterations tended to characterize the types of activity conducted by Birth to Three interventionists. Prior to the pandemic, their interventions were delivered in the home and involved either direct intervention with the child or parent coaching. As one participant explained, “You can't not be impacted by the families you work with” [P4, B3B2]. In this sense, participants described qualitatively different changes in family support when compared to verbal responses by K-3 interventionists. For example, changes to parent coaching, family support and communal support were described in this way:

> Well, and with that, Michigan did the EBT [electronic benefits transfer] cards for school aged kids and, I don't know if you experienced this P3--a few of my Early On kids got it. Have no rhyme or reason as to how they got it. They were not my MMSE [Michigan Mandatory Special Education] kids. They were Early On kids. And like one of my parents is like, they got the mail and they were walking in from the mailbox, and she opened it and she goes ‘What's this?’ And I’m like ‘No, that's a pandemic EBT card.’ And she's like, ‘Is it because they’re in Early On?’ And I’m like ‘I have no idea.’ Well, a few of them [other parents] would text me and go, ‘Hey I got this food card for them. Is it because they're with you?’ and I said, ‘No, because we're not connected to a local school district.’ Like that was one of the requirements. We’re at the ISD [Intermediate School District] level. So, I’m like, ‘I have no idea how you got it, but if you got it use it.’ And, you know, and some of my family's really needed it and one of them’s like, ‘I really don't need it, what can I do?’ And I said, ‘Well, pretty much they're not going to really take it back […] Either stock up or, you know, go find a family in need down the road and say, Okay what groceries do you need?’ [P4, B3B2]

In short, these alterations led to qualitatively different types of intervention and were related to these qualitatively different social relationships. Intervention focused on emotional support through acts of caring, by acting as a therapist or providing support that might run counter to pandemic and district procedures or assisting in navigating government programs.

Qualitative Differences Between Groups

As I previously noted, these alterations necessarily involved the types of activities typically conducted by the interventionist and Birth to Three and K-3 interventionists. So, there were qualitatively different changes in family support when compared to verbal responses by K-3 interventionists. Despite this difference, the alterations to service still emerged but were based on qualitatively different social relationships, as can be seen in these exchanges from one the K-3 focus groups:

> P7: I mean, I think that social emotional piece was more important than ever. And it just sort of really changed my teaching, practice in general. How I work with the families and it's really opened my eyes to a lot of things um, I think, for the good.
>
> P9: I think it made families more aware of where their child is academically because often parents were sitting right there, and after we would do something, the parent would come on and say 'Oh my gosh, you know, I'm sorry they don't know this, what can I do to help them?' Whereas before they were just like at school and it was your situation to deal with. So, it was kind of nice to have the parents involved and hearing what was going on and wanting to be more involved.
>
> P7: To a point. I feel like it's messaging me all day, every day. It was excessive at times. I've never talked to this many parents in my life about reading intervention. But it is nice that they actually realized what it meant for your child to be in a reading group. And why does my child actually need this extra support?
>
> P9: And there's the flip side, where the child is there and the parent is like--you could hear, 'I'm not helping you! I'm out here doing adult things!' We had that happen, you know. So then you're like--okay, now I understand more of where the child is coming from and the home life. So, when they are in person you get a little bit more too--from understanding. [K3D1]

Similar to the Birth to Three interventionists, the alteration to service is still in relationship to support through acts of caring—increased parent communication or understanding of situations in the home. Again, it is interesting to note that a constraint of this is the *type* of activity the interventionist is engaged in. For the K-3 interventionists

the alteration was characterized by the particular reading intervention. Parents reached out for support related to academics and interventionists provided emotional support. For Birth to Three interventionists, a similar process occurred but around the structure of home visits. That is to say that while characterized by certain homogenous qualities, the activities that characterize the theme are simultaneously heterogenous and in relationship to the prior types of support the interventionist provided. For K-3 interventionists, altering interventions to provide emotional support most often occurred with children. Some examples are included below:

> P7: When they're at home and I see what's going on in their backgrounds it brings up a whole other can of worms and they need to tell me what's going on and that becomes half of the time. So that was a huge impact for those kids that have been virtual the entire year.

> P9: And the kids at school they can walk up to the teacher at random times of the day, and tell them something like 'Hey you know, this is what we did last night,' And teacher can say, 'yes', but when you're in a Zoom they can't just do that. They don't get that interaction and the conversation and so at the beginning of our Zooms we spend five sometimes 10 minutes talking about what they did last night, what they did over the weekend, what they just did and making those connections. And we wrapped up our Zooms yesterday, with our virtual groups. And two of the kids were, you know, 'Tell me your favorite part about first grade?' said 'Coming to this, coming to this intervention.' And I thought you know that was really good because they needed extra help. But I think it was nice, because it was just our little group of the five kids and myself. And they would say, 'Can we stay on with you?' 'Sure, we can stay on and talk for a few minutes.' I mean, how do you say no to them? You know, and just end the meeting on them. I think it's important to be able to do that with the kids and give them that social emotional.

> P8: I one hundred percent agree. I do the same thing. Sometimes I felt like we really didn't get through what I wanted to get through because we did spend five to 10 minutes talking about the weekend. You know, even the kids getting a chance to kind of like chat with each other in a small group. I mean, they had their breakout room groups with their teacher in math and reading but it's not--they're trying to get work done, we are too, but it's just good community building and just a chance to let everyone know kind of what was going on with them. Or like, you

know, we have pets. I mean we had so many days, where it was like here's my cat, here's my dog. But kind of make do…make the best of it, right? [K3D2]

Qualitative Similarities Between Groups

Again, as in the Birth to Three focus groups, the alteration of intervention to provide emotional support was based on qualitatively different social relationships. As a result of virtual instruction, interventionists were "seeing what goes on in the background" and that "brings up a whole other can of worms" (see Figure 4.1). In this sense, the alteration to intervention was about providing direct support in a stressful situation. The social-emotional support was about 'making those connections' and altering intervention to share parts of life, like pets. In this sense, the connection was made by sharing aspects of life that were important and interesting to both the interventionist and the child.

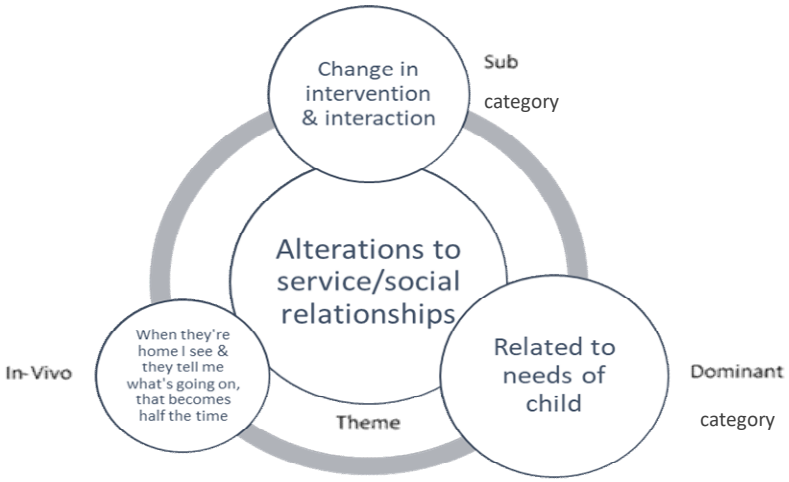

Figure 4.1. Example of Code, Category, Theme Relationships Theme One. This figure shows an example of relationships between the in-vivo code, subcategory, dominant category, and theme.

As in the other groups, the K-3 interventionists also adapted prior social emotional supports and the practices of other colleagues in the context of virtual instruction:

> Something our school principal has always done--that I really haven't ever really truly paid attention to until this year--is twice a day she does a mindful moment. Get the kids kind of centered. And she just has a brief activity for the kids to--or just say, like what, you know, produce snake breathing or something. It's been—you kind of walk through it. So, one of my coworkers had some mindful moments sticks and she said that she was using those with her kids to kind of get them grounded and focused before group began. And so, I started doing those too and having the kids pick, you know. Each day someone knew it was their turn to like pick a stick, and I would pick too---and hold [it] up in front of the screen and say 'Okay, do you want, you know snake breath, or do you want balloon breath?' That kind of thing, you know, and I think that was really helpful with them not being physically in front of you. To just try to get them centered and focused. Try to eliminate some of those distractions in the home. And they looked forward to it too. [P8, K3D1]

This response clarifies that the alterations to intervention in relationship to qualitatively different social relationships were not a linear process. That is, interventionists did not alter interventions de novo. At all points, it involved prior knowledge of prior practice but was heterogeneously adapted to the appropriate situation. In this instance, the prior practice was introduced by the principal as a means to "get the kids kind of centered" and, during the pandemic, recommended by a colleague. However, the practice was adapted to create engagement within the emergent setting. The interventionist used sticks and created opportunities for each member of the group (including the interventionist) to participate. This process created the potential to limit distractions through communal support. Similarly, Birth to Three interventionists, maintained aspects of home visiting but altered intervention, like access to food and government benefit programs, through communal support.

Theme Two: Alterations to Intervention on the Basis of Qualitatively Different Material Conditions

In Table 4.2, the subcategories, dominant categories, and frequency of the categories included in this theme are listed. Similar to the first theme, this second theme was characterized by alterations to intervention. In contrast, the alterations in this category related to certain material conditions created by the pandemic and the need to carry out job responsibilities. So, alterations to service, generally involved different techniques to deliver an intervention in areas addressed prior to the pandemic (e.g., reading). Typically, this involved some new technique that enabled the intervention to be delivered more easily in an online environment.

> You know what did change, you just made me think of something--so, as delivery goes, we actually started making videos of us reading books. And so, we did send those out to parents. We've never done that before either. So he would actually--like if the theme was Brown Bear, I have me reading Brown Bear, like projected on my TV, behind me and reading it. And then we would share that with everybody. And like I said, have handouts with links to things that parents could go to on the computer. So definitely we did a lot more video teaching and sent out how to do hand signals. Sign language. All that we had done before that definitely added to our library and that I think we would continue doing. Because again the parent can go back to it on their own, through the week to view what we did, maybe at a home visit or something. [P1, B3A1]

Here, the alteration to intervention involved the use of new materials and access to materials. The interventionist created videos and disseminated links that would support the video content. Altering the intervention in this way allowed the parent to go back and revisit the material in subsequent virtual sessions. Importantly, these alterations were perceived as effective and something "we would continue doing" because "the parent can go back to it on their own" [P1, B3A1]. Qualitative change to future practice, after the resumption of home visits, can be observed

Table 4.2. Frequency of Subcategories and Categories for Theme Two.

Subcategory	Frequency	Dominant Category	Frequency
change in service delivery	15	related to online delivery & pandemic rules	36
change intervention & interaction	15	related to instruction	8
change in practice & procedures	11	related to assessment	1
change in all areas	2		
change in role	2		

Qualitative Similarities Between Groups

Similar to the first theme, alterations were still in relationship to support for families and children but, again, the motivation differs from the types of social-emotional support in the first theme. As this verbal response by the participant clarifies, it emerged from the very real, difficult task of carrying out intervention in a healthy and effective way:

> Also, because we're masked at home, and a lot of times those masks you know we tried to use the clear ones but they get spit all over them it's kind of [makes a face]. So we, you know, we still have the solid mask. The parent and the child can't see our face for in person. So, then the video of you doing it separately, without your mask, it's like double work added on to what we do. I mean, I think like we all feel like we're doing a lot more now, I feel like. As far as trying to provide services in a way that is effective. [P1, B3A1]

So, providing the same quality of service was complicated by the need for personal protective equipment. As another participant described, this resulted in other, novel approaches to service delivery:

> But I used a lot with Mr. Potato Head. We did a lot with body parts and creativity and them having [the child] to request to change things. We could work on colors, shapes, sizes, you know, you can put a lot in with it. We did a lot where I would provide the family with a book and I would have the same books and we would do that together. And it was cute. By the time we would do that for like the first 100 words and different things like that, the families, the little kids would start—I'd get on they'd say 'book, book, book.' Might not have many other words, but they could say book. Because they'd kind of know what we were going to do. And I would provide them with Mr. Potato Heads, we would have 'em, you know. So we kind of could work on some of the same activities and mom could be coached or dad, you know, to work right alongside [the child]. So that was kind of cool. I think it stretched the parents a little bit. Definitely different though. [P3B1]

As the reader can likely infer from these verbal responses, these types of alteration constituted a complex activity that involved reconfiguring home spaces. As one participant explained, "I mean we had to make an office at home, none of us had this stuff at home" [P1, B3A1]. For example, entirely new technologies were bought to support activities:

> But one other thing that was on our assessment was can they do, can they attend to a book or saying a nursery rhyme? And so this little book would get their attention. The Itsy Bitsy Spider. Yeah, and so I would sing it, and then I would word it, and then kind of use that as my assessment to see 'Oh, were they paying attention?' But I would have to move my screen. I don't know if you know, on Zoom, you could do, when you change your screen, your background, you can, if you have a double monitor…I had to […] use my double monitor, even though I already had one. Well I wasn't using it prior to this whole year, I had to get a double monitor. I got a green screen behind me, that's why my screen is different. It's a lot of different adjustments that you have to do to make it work and to just be sane and keep it interesting. [P2, B3A1]

Often, reflections on these alterations for intervention was that they were adequate and necessary but less than ideal. That is, although this theme is characterized by alteration on the basis of conditions, it is also characterized by the requisite difficulty and need to abandon components of an intervention. As a participant in one the K-3 focus groups explained:

> So much, like any type of word work you'd want to do or dictated writing. Like you can't really write when you're on Zoom. I had kids who didn't have notebooks or paper and, look, we're trying to use the whiteboard option on Zoom. And it just like…that factor had to go out the window a little bit. [P7, K3D1]

Such material differences (i.e., notebooks) were in relationship to the technology and the type of intervention being conducted. Intervention strategies needed to be adapted to this medium and this limited the types of interaction that were possible (see figure 4.2). In these cases, practices seen as unfavorable were required to address the material necessity of keeping children engaged.

> It was just really hard to do anything besides like Round Robin reading, which is just not, at all--it's just not the best way. It's not the best method. But it was just, you ask students to read silently, independently, over a screen and they turn their screen off. You can see they're literally twirling in their chair. Like, you know it's just not happening. [P8, K3D1]

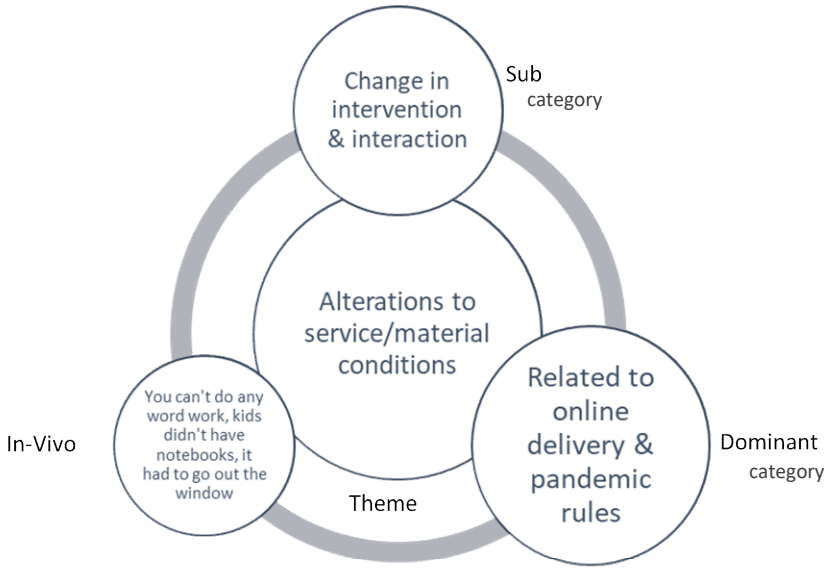

Figure 4.2. Example of Code, Category, Theme Relationships Theme Two. This figure shows an example of relationships between the in-vivo code, subcategory, dominant category, and theme.

Material conditions also included the literal access to technology that is required for conducting interventions virtually:

> Some of my families, you know, they have three, four or five kids in the same household. And they're trying to juggle eight different types of schedules, along with any adults trying to work from home at the time. It was a lot because like, with our district, we didn't have enough devices to give every student a device. There were times where it was just one device per family. And I don't have a strict program that I do so, a lot of the times with my interventions, I mean, you know, I was just getting on supporting them with any, maybe, class work things like that they needed support in. [P6, K3C1]

Qualitative Differences Between Groups

Birth to Three interventionists gave indications that changes to certain procedures, like meetings for Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), were viewed favorably, particularly in relationship to professional development and other types of meetings.

> I really like the online meetings for IEPs and team meetings and stuff. I think that just added hours to my week and I love it. We're getting done with our team meetings far quicker. And we're even incorporating a time to share celebrations at the beginning that, I don't know, we never seemed to find the time before. And we have more kids right now. But we're just very succinct, it's efficient, it's shared. I mean we're getting done with time to spare. So yeah, I'm looking forward to taking those good things forward, leaving behind what didn't work so well. [P3, B3B1]

So, virtual meetings were seen as more "succinct" and "efficient" and even incorporated new practices, like "time to share celebrations." Virtual IEP meetings were also seen as an advantage because they enabled better participation. As one participant noted, "I also get our local SPED directors, so when I'm working on transitioning to our transition plan and conference, I get better attendance from them by offering a virtual meeting" [P4, B3B1]. Again, these verbal responses reveal certain, preferred alterations that might persist after the pandemic.

Theme Three: The conditions of the pandemic, in relationship to earlier professional experience, are internalized in current perceptions of professionalism

In Table 4.3, the subcategories, dominant categories, and frequency of the categories included in this theme are listed. The development of this theme centered around specific verbal responses that were characterized by emotional characteristics that focused on some sense of 'feeling' about what had taken place during the pandemic.

This is not to say that the verbal responses from the earlier themes were not characterized by some emotional orientation to the pandemic, but the verbal responses in this third theme were distinct in their content and required different categorization. As one participant explained:

> I'd hate to say that our top administration is incompetent but, I mean, we have one guy covering the technology and the professional development and the curriculum. And he actually does most of the hiring--even though you have a hiring guy and like you got this one guy not doing anything very well and you've got these two other guys that you don't know what they're doing. They're kind of a waste of space. Like X is doing Y's job and Z's job. None of its happening really well. Like we have iPads, but we have Microsoft systems and this online thing that really isn't geared towards elementary. It's always a near miss. What do you want me to do? [P5, K3C2b]

Such a statement underscores the complex development within this theme. The development of perception involves the alteration to intervention (i.e., use of technology), the evaluation of the technological effectiveness in the current moment (i.e., none of its happening really well) and prior knowledge of the organizational framework to achieve a summative judgement of professionalism (i.e., they're kind of a waste of a space).

This third theme is also distinguished by similar verbal responses, and the development of perception involved administrators and related to whether interventionists felt supported and effective in their positions or enjoyed their jobs:

Table 4.3 Frequency of Subcategories and Categories for Theme Three.

Subcategory	Frequency	Dominant Category	Frequency
Feelings about administration	23	Related to support	14
Feelings about instructional delivery	11	Related to effectiveness	9
Feelings about job	10	Related to enjoyment	9
		Related to social perception	7
		Related to needs of the child	4
		Related to student attention	1

> Honestly, like it was really interesting when we were like debating whether to come back to school in February, sitting in on the board meetings. It was a five-hour board meeting with them going back and forth with the Union. And we gave a lot of reasons why at that point, like we weren't comfortable. And it was very much swept under. So, it's like we filled out all the surveys and it didn't really matter how we felt at the end. Even one of the board members had said, 'We're giving the families an option to stay home, but the teachers don't have the option?' And our superintendent literally said, 'They have an option. If they don't want to come to work, they don't have a job anymore.' Wow, not an option. Okay, cool. [P7, K3D2]

So, a distinction within this theme was that it was more directly characterized by policy decisions at the broader district level, including school boards and Superintendents. However, when input was requested "it was very much swept under." As another participant described:

> But our superintendent did have a roundtable this year, and there was a building representative from every building that was chosen to sit at the roundtable. My principal asked me if I would do it this year, so I did. So, there was a very small, small voice of myself that got to talk, but most of the stuff that we talked about were teachers because it was the teachers that were there. There were two building sites that represented their building. So even the stuff that I said, when I could bring one positive thing from the week, or one do over, and not two--not three, it's just one of each thing. So often, it was a teacher concern that was brought but probably already was voiced through [other groups] so were we heard, maybe? But not really. [P9, K3D2]

In this case, we see that although input was requested, certain constraints were placed on the input. There could be "one positive thing from the week, or one do over" and, because the input from interventionists was underrepresented, they were "not really" heard. As participants discussed these wider policy decisions, they perceived administrators and school boards prioritizing other considerations:

> I think like a lot of our schools were offering virtual because so many of our schools around us, are. You know, like for X. If X and Y are going to offer virtual by all means, Z is going to offer virtual too. Because they're not going to want to lose out on any students leaving because we're not offering. [P6, K3C1]

Qualitative Similarities Between Groups

In this way, the conditions of the pandemic were also internalized and related to a lack of enjoyment. As one participant explained, "Look, I wanted to quit almost every day this year. I'm just being honest" [P2, B3A1]. Such a sentiment was expressed in a qualitatively similar manner in another of the Birth to Three focus groups:

> I am crossing my fingers that by Fall, at least by Fall, we are back in person. Oh my gosh. Yeah, I need it. This is just been really way, way, way, way too much. It's not like--it's not fun. I love my job but this is just…somebody said 'Oh, you're getting ready to retire.' No, it's not that. I guess it's COVID fatigue. Or whatever they want to call it. [P3, B3B2]

So, within these quotes, it is possible to observe that the conditions of the pandemic that are internalized as "current perceptions of professionalism" also include a

desire to leave the profession and this necessarily involves prior experience related to interventionists being overlooked in the broader school community. As one participant explained, “We laugh because we're always like the ones left out” [P1, B3A1]. Similarly, as a participant from the K-3 focus groups explained, “I actually have never had an evaluation completed from the three years that I’ve been there, which is, I guess kind of crazy” [P8, K3D2].

Paradoxically, for some participants, the conditions of the pandemic did at least create a sense of being noticed:

> I think it kind of forced the people to even notice us, the powers that be to notice “Oh there's a program that--oh, they go into homes?” I think it was like by accident that they even noticed that they had a program. And the district, and--which because everybody kind of really knew about homebound teachers, people that actually go into homes. But they didn't know that we had any entity for Birth to Three. Or at least they act like they didn't know. So, I think that kind of forced--and it also forced them to “Oh well, what are we going to do with, you know, our staff, you know it's not--we clearly know it's not safe for them to go in and we clearly know, that its, you know, not safe to bring them to school.” [P2, B3A2]

Again, the development of perception involves the alteration to intervention (e.g., home visits), the emergence of unsafe conditions in the current moment, and prior knowledge of professional experience (e.g., they didn’t even know they had an entity) to achieve a summative judgement of professionalism. That it “forced the people to even notice us” (see figure 4.3).

Being noticed was also characterized by input about personal protective equipment:

> I mean we really had lots of meetings beforehand. Like you have to make sure we are safe, you have to provide for us, I mean they gave us bags of gloves, gowns, boot covers, I mean, masks, a thermometer. I mean we wanted to make sure we had all these things in place, because if you're going to send us back in you better…people are nervous and scared, you know? [P1, B3A1]

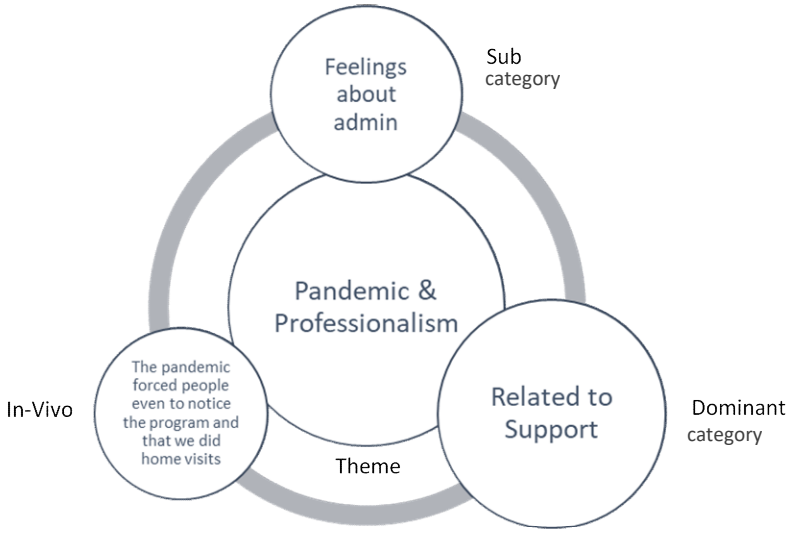

Figure 4.3. Example of Code, Category, Theme Relationships Theme Three. This figure shows an example of relationships between the in-vivo code, subcategory, dominant category, and theme

So, meetings with administrators addressed the interventionists concerns for safety and feeling "nervous and scared" but primarily by providing personal protection equipment that enabled completing professional responsibilities.

Qualitative Differences Between Groups

One statement in this category was a different, positive reflection from a Birth to Three participant and highlights the difference between administrative decisions and how these decisions are internalized in current perception:

> Our admin fought for us. Because we, I, have a very vocal team of 14 people. We are very strong willed and vocal. And we go, "I see three kids a day. Three to four. Which is actually less exposure than what a classroom of 20 kids would be." So, we mapped it out and she actually provided our Special Ed director at the ISD with it, and she goes "Here's their data. They are less exposed by these 12 visits a

> week than teachers in the classroom." And you know they were, there was hesitation, but most of our families are really willing to be like "We want you in the home. So, whatever we have to do, we're gonna do. No question." [P4, B3B1]

In this instance, the administrator was perceived to "have fought for us" and promoted a plan that had been developed by the "vocal" team. The administrator then engaged other administrators to develop support. Then, despite hesitation, families were engaged to assess their comfort level and develop consensus. Such decision making is in contrast to decision making that sought input to identify types of personal protection equipment needed to enter a home. In the next chapter, these verbal responses help to form the basis for certain implications for policy decisions and methods of incorporating staff feedback.

Theme Four: Vocalized Responses About Emotions are Characterized by the Conditions of the Pandemic in Relationship to Alterations of Intervention

In Table 4.4, the subcategories, dominant categories, and frequency of the categories included in this theme are listed. The categories within this theme were distinct. They began with some kind of change necessitated by the pandemic and then became vocalized as statements about emotions or feelings. In essence, this theme became the inverse of the third theme, where feelings emerged as a subcategory in relationship to an aspect of the dominant categories.

In this theme, the change of practice emerged as a subcategory and it was within the identification of dominant categories that feelings emerged. Most often, these verbal responses clustered around feelings of effectiveness.

> There's another challenge, right? I have a kid sitting right here, and brother's sitting here. So, I can hear that teacher talking to the kid or the TVs on and you know, all the background noise. That's something that's been crazy. I can't even stand it when I'm listening to them try and read with our LLI [Leveled Literacy Instruction] group and the girls got the TV on here, and the sister is trying to learn

> with the teacher over there. Like, I have to mute her when she is done because it's too much for the other kids. [P9, K3D1]

So, the alteration to intervention was complicated by conditions of the pandemic, like multiple children learning in one room or other factors of background noise. Then, these factors are interpreted emotionally, as something "that's been crazy" and difficult to "stand" and are characterized by the conditions, which are in relationship to feelings about effectiveness. The other child must be muted because "it's too much for the other kids."

Similar sentiments emerged in feelings about children's behavior. For example:

> Um, yeah, I think my biggest issues were probably--well, I do, I have to teach a program. So, I do Corrective Reading. And that's direct instruction. So, then, that determines that I give them something and they respond back to me. And, but, like my biggest frustration is the ones that need to be there either exit when they're frustrated, they just leave or they don't show up. So, I mean I'm thinking more of even, I can't, they can avoid me now. Every day. So, I mean to me that's been the hardest part. [P5, K3C1]

Table 4.4. Frequency of Subcategories and Categories for Theme Four.

Subcategory	Frequency	Dominant Category	Frequency
change in intervention &interaction	30	feelings about effectiveness	24
change in practice & procedures	14	feelings about child behavior	15
change in staffing	8	feelings about job	9
change in health	2	feelings about support	4
		feelings about relationships	1

These verbal responses are similar to those noted in the first theme and the experience of being "ghosted" but the verbal responses in the current theme were distinct in that a feeling emerged. The alteration in service was characterized by "frustration" on the part of the interventionist and the child.

Qualitative Differences Between Groups

A distinction between the groups related back to the types of activities that interventionists were engaged in and the age of children, which affected expectations. For example, gaps in attendance were also in relationship to verbal responses about the appropriateness of conducting interventions and evaluations virtually. As one participant went onto explain:

> So, I'm thinking, and I'm listening to you and if a parent talked to me about my online students, it would be hard for me to give that answer because they're laying on the bed with the computer over their head or--there's just so many factors to fluency and different decoding…because of even their posture or they have some food in their mouth or they're holding their baby, you know. So, it's really difficult to even assess sometimes what they do know and what they don't know. I can't like control, I guess, I want to be more in control, you know. I want to be able to control that they're sitting up, that they're tracking, that they're attentive as much as possible. [P5, K3C1]

In this way, these characteristics existed in a complex unity, simultaneously characterized by feelings about the effectiveness of intervention and children's attendance:

> I mean, was it the best? No. Were they getting exposure? For sure, you know. But, again, I feel like a lot of it, though, is the kids that I really needed to see or support were, I mean, they weren't there. [P6, K3C1]

Qualitative Similarities Between Groups

Such verbal responses were qualitatively similar to responses by Birth to Three interventionists and feelings about providing support and determining the eligibility for

services of very young children, “It was tricky, it's still tricky to this day, to be on the screen, and have to give an assessment to a one-year-old, a two-year-old” [P1, B3A1]. As another participant explained “I don't ever want to repeat it” [P3, B3B1].

> It's so hard to lose their attention. So, that was cognition and speech was usually my area that I would just do first--and not last. Because if you kind of mess up with cognition and speech you could potentially mess up someone's eligibility. [B3A1]

These characteristics distinguish the third theme and this theme most significantly. That is, although both themes contain verbal responses of great emotional impact, this theme pivots on the dominant category’s emotional characteristics. In many ways, verbal responses were characterized as an overriding sentiment of ambivalent, yet hopeful, turmoil (see also Figure 4.4):

> I always joke, I say, “This is not what I signed up for.” You know, you go with it. But yeah, I really need to get back in person. I’m sure that will change my psyche. Well, and, I’m having a heckuva time. […] I just feel like I don't know where my stuff is. [P3, B3B2]

In this case, the subcategory was characterized by the change to virtual instruction. The participant feels the “need to get back in person” which emerges in the dominant category as the feeling it might qualitatively “change my psyche”, which is disoriented because “I don’t know where my stuff is.” In short, within this theme, the shift to virtual instruction was characterized by changes in organization and student attention, in relation to instruction and assessment, and internalized as frustration, difficulty, and confusion.

Figure 4.4. Example of Code, Category, Theme Relationships Theme Four. This figure shows an example of relationships between the in-vivo code, subcategory, dominant category, and theme

Theme Five: Future Orientation is Characterized by Concerns About Educational Practice and Children's Experiences

In Table 4.5, the subcategories, dominant categories, and frequency of the categories included in this theme are listed. The primary characteristics of this theme emerged from the alterations necessitated by the pandemic and *how* participants expressed concern. These characteristics comprised a number of areas that were expressed distinctly: changes in personal circumstances, changes in how assessments were conducted, changes to children's instructional needs, and changes in perception on the role of education.

However, these subcategories ultimately merged as dominant categories that (a) captured concerns about the effects of the pandemic which were then (b) translated into

future orientation, what interventionists described as long-term concerns or immediate plans to address children's needs. These characteristics distinguished this theme from those in the previous discussions. Although the second theme contained some verbal responses that reflected on the future (e.g., practices that might be incorporated after a return to in-person learning), in this theme the concerns and plans were entirely more abstract (see figure 4.5).

A majority of these concerns emerged in relationship to the practical aspects of conducting assessments which was characterized, in the dominant category, by concerns about the reliability of results and subsequent impact on the identification of children for services:

> P7: It's hard doing the testing online. And I felt bad cuz I have kids in-person. And I feel like I can't test the kids in person, even though I want to. Some of the kids aren't--and you know that some of the scores would be different, obviously. But that is one thing that can stay in the pandemic, is testing virtually. It's so hard.
>
> P9: We found that a lot of scores have gone drastically down because the parents were sitting there with them at the beginning of the year. And it's messing up the teacher's rate of growth and they're evaluated on that essentially. That's one thing we noticed.
>
> P7: Or parents taking the NWEA [Northwest Evaluation Association benchmark assessment] for them.
>
> P8: Exactly they score in the 99th percentile when they're a Tier 2 kid.
>
> P9: And some kids didn't get service because they scored so high. Because we can't justify it. Even though we know. But, at the beginning of the year, when we were trying to figure everything out, we couldn't service some of the kids that we knew absolutely needed to be serviced. [K3D1]

Table 4.5. Frequency of Subcategories and Categories for Theme Five.

Subcategory	Frequency	Dominant Category	Frequency
change in circumstance	19	related to concern about reliability & identification	40
change in assessment practice	14	related to concern about interventionist & family/child's experiences	29
change in perception	14	related to concern for future	14
change in assessment scores	13		
change in intervention & interaction	7		
change in practice & procedures	5		
change in instructional need	5		
change in schedule & location of services	5		
change in biology	1		

Almost exclusively, K-3 interventionists discussed assessments in this context: children's assessment scores were not reliable, potentially because of increased parent support. This lack of reliability informed future orientation (i.e., how well teachers might be evaluated) and whether children might receive necessary services:

> P6: It's really, really tough. I mean, I don't, I mean there's such a fine line, you know, and I mentioned the twins that have been out. You know, they were on that cusp of 'Okay we're going to give them their second-grade year. We're going to see how they go. You know, we've brought him up to Child Study several times. Let's see, you know'. Well, now they're at home, and I mean according to NWEA they look like rock stars because they're in the 99th percentile. [P6, K3C2a]

In this way, the lack of reliable assessment data effected earlier efforts to provide assistance through Response to Intervention and complicated the process of getting children support:

> So, I'm one of the leaders for the Child Study Team at my school and I found that that has been my biggest headache this year, because the pandemic is now a factor that can lead to children, that when we're talking about kids going to Third Grade that don't know their letters and what not. Unfortunately, we're butting heads with someone in the special ed department, for kids that need to be evaluated, that this is a reason that they're not going to be evaluated---because of the pandemic and, they need more time. They need more data but like they're virtual, so like they're going to Third Grade and they still can't read. [P7, K3D1]

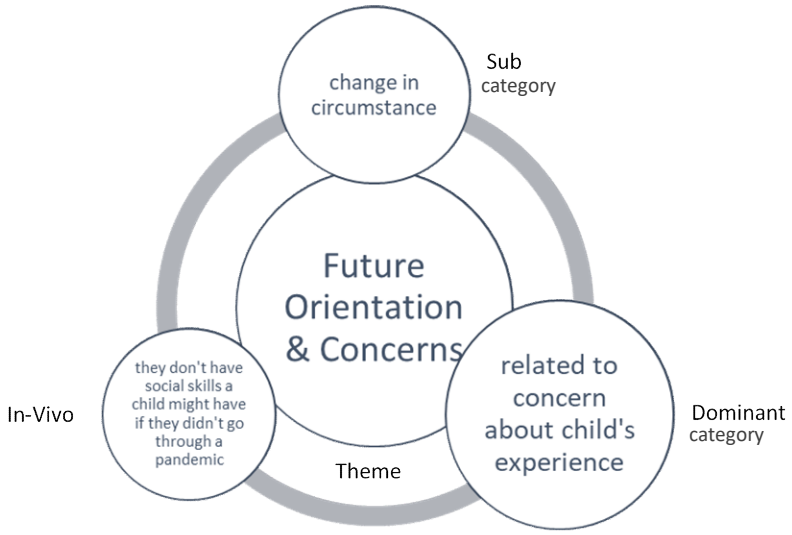

Figure 4.5. Example of Code, Category, Theme Relationships Theme Five. This figure shows an example of relationships between the in-vivo code, subcategory, dominant category, and theme

In this response, the relationship between assessment data and certain procedures to identify children for support becomes even clearer. It highlights the social relationships that characterize these procedures. Different team members might interpret unreliable test scores differently and this might relate to future orientation in concerns about State-wide policies for grade-level reading (i.e., Michigan's Read by Third Grade Bill). These relationships between policy and assessment also characterized government mandates that districts continue to administer summative assessments:

> It was crazy with M-STEP [Michigan's summative assessment], especially because it was optional for the virtual kids, that they wanted to come in and do it or not. So, of course, most of the parents didn't. But then we had some kids who they did come in and do it. And then the scores are being used against them, because we have kids that are then going to be pulled up for the third-grade retention law. And now the parents have to fight it and it's like, what was the point of--they say it wasn't being used for anything, but it was. [P7, K3D2]

Essentially, concerns about the reliability of assessment data are in relationship to concerns about support for children, but also characterized by broader policy decisions (e.g., administering the test) and the lack of clarity for decisions. For example, “they say it wasn’t being used for anything, but it was” and, in turn, this informs future orientation because “now the parents have to fight it.”

Qualitative Differences Between Groups

Within this theme, the responses of K-3 interventionists clustered around the reliability of assessments. For Birth to Three participants, concerns emerged around the impact of social isolation on children and families.

> One other thing that popped into my head as you were speaking, was the whole social emotional area. O-M-G. This has really affected, teachers and us adults and these poor children. So, we have had to evaluate and work with babies who haven't even been out the house. I have a lot of parents who are just now taking their children to the grocery store, who are now just going to the to the park. It's just unbelievable. I mean, and it's sad because we know that they don't have some of the skills that a child that hasn't been through a pandemic [has]. You know, they could potentially have social skills or not be, you know, have anxieties with people. […] we have some parents like “Oh, we don't know why they're acting crazy.” Umm, we're all in the house. I’m acting crazy too. So, we've all had to adjust. And I think that this has been a very big experiment on how we handle social isolation. [P2, B3A1]

Again, the importance of the type of activity emerges. For Birth to Three interventions, home visits often involve providing social supports for young children or the need to evaluate and identify children that are socially delayed. In the case of this verbal response, these procedures become complicated because “they could potentially have social skills” but certain activities were complicated by the pandemic and might relate to “anxieties with people” and all of this is “sad.” The same concerns about children’s anxieties and development emerged in this statement, too:

> I've seen the changes already. Especially, I guess, not even my older kids--I would say my birth to three-year-olds, that I've seen that social emotional [development]. One had went to daycare pre-COVID and post-COVID. Like mom's returning to work now, and she [the child] is a hot, hot mess. Same daycare, same everything but because she's been home with mom for 14 months, she just cannot process that change back. And it's that bonding piece. Like I've seen stronger family bonds because of COVID but at the same time it's that social, like, it's "Okay I go to daycare, mom comes home, dad picks me up." Things like that. And like you had said earlier, with kids not knowing how to play. Like last summer we had my nieces and nephews and I'm like, "Okay, go outside and play." And they're like "Play? What?" You had to guide them, and I mean they're elementary age. And so, even that that socialization and getting back out. I, yes, it's instantaneous now. But I also am intrigued to see in five years what our teaching has to be, because I think we're gonna have to add a huge piece of social emotional health in our curriculum. [P4, B3B2]

Such a response incorporates certain positive characteristics, like stronger "family bonds" but, as children return to typical activities (i.e., attending daycare, playing) it is difficult for children to "process that change back" which emerges in an expression of future orientation, the concerns about what teaching will be in "five years" and the need to adapt curricula to "add a huge piece of social emotional health."

Qualitative Similarities Between Groups

Between both groups of interventionists, these concerns affected planning:

> I think in our in our building, I think the support for the neediest kids, the ones that are really below where they should be, is going to start much sooner than it has in the past. Because we just we can't afford that month-long process of 'Let's let them ease into the classroom. Let's get all the assessments done. Let's analyze the assessments. Let's talk about scheduling.' It needs to happen fast. [P8, K3D2]

In these verbal responses, there is a sense of urgency and future orientation involves some plan to adapt procedures (i.e., we can't afford that month-long process) so that support can "happen fast." These types of responses about immediate alteration also

incorporated the variance in skills that might emerge as a constraint of differences in service delivery:

> I think, next year will be harder than this year because everybody stopped last year, right? Whereas this year, we have some that did virtual and some that came in person in and some that joined virtually. So, you're right. Like starting right away it's going to be very imperative. Because they're going to be all over the board. [P9, K3D2]

In short, future orientation was characterized by plans to immediately adapt procedures that were imperative to carry out right away. In contrast, other participants expressed future orientation that was characterized by concerns about long-term effects. As one participant noted, "the whole concept of school has changed" [P5, K3C1]. Such responses were characterized by uncertainty and fear, particularly in the context of children's academic skills.

> We have a group of second graders who are really, really, really struggling and its--they missed that chunk. That three-month chunk, at the end of first grade where there's a huge amount of growth too. That's where we've--it just, I mean there's lots of kids struggling at every grade, but just in general that's kind of what sticks out for our building, at least. So, and the thought of these kids going into third grade next year. So scary. [P8, K3D1]

So, disruptions to schooling limited potential "growth" which now emerges in children "struggling" with academic material which will persist into future experiences at school. As another participant explained,

> I never know what the right answer is or how it's, you know, but I do feel for the next couple years we'll be like spiraling trying to, you know. You know, it's one of those like, "Oh yeah, that's right. Oh, you were in kindergarten during the pandemic. Oh okay." [P6, K3C2a]

For Birth to Three interventionists similar concerns emerged within areas related to early development. Some of these concerns were in relationship to neurological development:

> I'm intrigued because I know there's been studies pre-COVID about technology and the neural pathways in your brain. So, examining in a few years, these infants, toddlers, even early elementary school kids. How has it affected their neural pathways? Because, I know, like you said staring at a computer screen all day. No thanks. I can't do it. And, you know, I can't focus and before I could, if I had a day, where I had people work, great, I could do it all day. Now I'm like "Okay 45 minutes, I made it! Yay!" But it's one of those things that I'm like I'm intrigued by how it's changed my brain but how it will affect these kids whose brain is still developing. [P4, B3B2]

In other instances, concerns were related to social aspects and anxiety:

> I see a lot of stress on these mothers, the ones who are at home with those kids all day long. Multiple kids. One in school, this one at home, this one on the screen and the baby. So, I definitely empathize even with the parents, because they they've just been overwhelmed, just like we have been. And the kids are just a product of all of this. It's really been amazing. But I found that the ones and, and I'm not making judgments or guesses, but the ones that work during the day, they seemed a little bit more okay with things. As far as with our program and with the ones that, you know, had something to do, or, you know, had an outlet […] But the stay at home moms and the single moms and the--you know, it was overwhelming for them. Some of that. anxiety just trickles down to the kids, unfortunately. [P2B3A1]

So, these anxieties and fears were perceived as social in origin in that "some of that anxiety just trickles down to the kids." And these anxieties are refracted in children in a number of ways, with an as yet to be determined impact:

> I'm seeing kids that are much more cautious, fearful, confused, just not socialized, than ever before. I'm not sure, yeah. I think it's going to have long term impact, I'm not sure exactly how that's going to play out. [P3, B3B2]

This theme was also interesting in that it actually was the "largest" theme. That is, a total of 83 in-vivo codes were grouped into this category. In comparison, the next largest theme was the fourth theme which included 53 in-vivo codes. Moreover, these responses are important as they record the very real concerns of interventionists, worsened academic and social skill deficits for children, a lack of reliable assessment data and potential methods to address these factors (i.e., more intensive, immediate

intervention). These responses lead to important areas of discussion, implications, and recommendations for future research and practice.

Relationship of Themes to Research Questions at the Meta and Sub Levels

Returning to the research questions which guided the study, the first two themes primarily relate to the second sub-level research questions: how did instructional practice change and how was it effective or ineffective? In these themes, analysis indicates that practice qualitatively changed on the basis of the shift to virtual instruction which necessitated all manner of change. Birth to Three interventionists began making videos for families, they adjusted to new schedules and provided new materials and connected families to community supports. K-3 interventionists adjusted the type of strategies they used in reading groups, they implemented supports for social emotional learning, and (like Birth to Three interventionists) altered assessment procedures. Overall, these changes were seen as challenging and ineffective—particularly in relationship to administering assessments and achieving reliable test scores. Changes that were seen to be effective related to the use of virtual meetings, which increased attendance for IEP meetings and the quality of professional development. Finally, vocalized responses suggested that the provision of social-emotional support deepened bonds between interventionists, families, and children.

The next two themes, primarily related to the first sub-level research question: how was the experience of delivering instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic different from pre-pandemic instruction? Discussions of experience brought up details about the difficulty of virtual instruction: maintaining student attention, establishing contact with families and children and technology issues which impacted the reliability of

contact. At times, administrators requested input, but the input was not acted upon. These characteristics were necessarily in relationship to the feelings of the interventionists. They experienced frustration and burnout which emerged in feelings about their jobs, enjoyment, and overall effectiveness. Importantly, this often related back to the feeling of not receiving support.

These themes also relate to the meta-level research question: when asked to analyze research questions, about the type of intervention used during the pandemic, do the verbal responses of participants indicate areas of change in their practice? As already discussed, the verbal responses of participants indicated a number of areas of change in their practice. The point which is important to highlight is that all of these themes, and the vocalized responses within, exist in a complex unity. This point emerges most clearly in the fifth theme. All of these alterations to intervention, the complex reasons underlying them, and feelings about these alterations, also emerge in relationship to future orientation and the immediate and long-term plans that interventionists developed. So, intervention is a complex activity and tool, which is characterized by social relationships, social issues, and experiences of the past, present, and expectations for the future. This theme, in relationship to the others, is particularly relevant in considering necessary changes to Response to Intervention and intervention in general. I will explore this discussion, resulting contributions to the literature, and implications in the next chapter.

Conclusion

The first two themes related to alterations of service but remained distinct on the basis of whether the alteration was in relationship to a social need or of material necessity. The next two themes were primarily characterized by verbal responses that

indicated emotions or feelings. The distinction between the two emerged on the basis of an inverse relationship of certain subcategories and dominant categories, whether the emotions or feelings emerged as either a subcategory or dominant category. The final theme was a distinct set of verbal responses about future orientation and characterized by concerns about educational practice and children's experiences. In Chapter 5, these themes lead to a discussion of findings, implications, contributions to the literature, significance of the study, and limitations and further directions for research.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, I discuss key findings that emerge from analysis. In relationship to the initial research question, I highlight key characteristics of themes. Then I discuss limitations, implications, contributions to the literature, and the significance of the study. These discussions focus on the confirmation of certain cultural-historical theoretical concepts, the necessity of research within a structural framework and the rarity of conducting studies during a pandemic.

Discussion of Findings

To begin the discussion, it seems appropriate to return to the original meta level research question: when asked to analyze research questions, about the type of intervention used during the pandemic, do the verbal responses of participants indicate areas of change in their practice? As can be inferred from the analysis section, verbal responses do indicate areas of change in practice. The answer to the question is 'yes'. It is also necessary to answer the sub-level questions: how was the experience of delivering instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic different from pre-pandemic instruction? And how did instructional practice change and how was it effective or ineffective? Here, these research questions (as tools to guide participants' analysis) were answered in the discussion of changes to practice, certain preferences and emotional experience. For clarity, I will consider these questions as they relate to each theme.

Discussion of Findings Related to Theme One: Alterations to Intervention on the Basis of Qualitatively Different Social Relationships

In the case of the first theme, *alterations to intervention on the basis of qualitatively different social relationships*, verbal responses indicated areas of change that were related to social relationships, as pertaining to the meta-level research question. Interventionists altered their practice to care for others. They provided emotional support to families and children and they connected families to services to alleviate food shortages and navigate government programs. For example, as discussed in the previous chapter, they provided families with information about locations of food pantries or, in the case of K-3 interventionists, allotted time for activities focused on mindfulness, the act of focusing in a given moment.

Interestingly, these alterations were often in contradiction to the dominant, hierarchical power structure. To maintain engagement, interventionists met with families at parks, contrary to administrator guidance. Or, when families (perhaps mistakenly) received EBT cards, they were encouraged to use the cards to assist themselves and other families. That is, the interventionists prioritized human need over compliance with administrator or governmental protocols.

Not only do these actions highlight the ways in which people helped each other during the pandemic, they also reveal the connections between the meta-level and sub-level research questions. That is, in identifying the areas of change to practice, the discussion also reveals characteristics of the experience of delivering intervention and perceptions of changes. These characteristics can be distinguished but not fully separated. For example, as discussed in Chapter Four, the development of a lunch group for school-

aged children, was a qualitatively new practice that emerged from the interventionist's concern about children's social isolation, even though it demanded additional time from the interventionist. So, areas of change necessitated new, additional responsibilities.

Discussion of Findings Related to Theme Two: Alterations to Intervention on the Basis of Qualitatively Different Material Conditions

Of course, areas of change did not only occur in relationship to social responsibility. In the case of the second theme, these areas of change related to *alterations to intervention on the basis of qualitatively different material conditions*. That is, the change to an online environment meant certain practices needed to be abandoned. For example, some K-3 interventionists needed to switch to round robin reading, despite the view that the intervention was not ideal. In other cases, entirely new materials were introduced. For example, the Birth to Three interventionist's use of Mr. Potato Head to try and maintain young children's attention. Again, in discussing the meta-level research, aspects of the sub-level research can be distinguished but not isolated. That is, although I have distinguished certain dominant characteristics for the purpose of analysis (e.g., material conditions), characteristics of the first theme (social relationships) remain.

In this sense, it is important to highlight the immense effort put forward by interventionists to alter these interventions and the specific strategies they developed. For example, in providing family support, interventionists expanded their availability to families and provided emotional support and advice on reading interventions. Moreover, they connected families with outside supports to ensure access to food and address other health issues (i.e., glasses). In other instances, they altered interventions in a way that

allowed children opportunities to share experiences and practice activities that promoted focus (i.e., snake breathing).

Obviously, the pandemic necessitated a reliance on technology. To adapt to this reality, interventionists created home offices and spent their own money to acquire technologies that allowed them to provide virtual intervention. These alterations to intervention explicitly relate to a component of the second sub level question, what changes were effective or ineffective? In some cases, particularly those related to delivering professional development and IEP meetings, the reliance on technology was perceived as beneficial. In other cases, technology created disruptions. For many interventionists, the families they worked with had limited access to technology or had multiple children receiving instruction at the same time. These characteristics, along with a lack of materials in the home, made providing intervention difficult.

Discussion of Findings Related to Theme Three: Conditions of The Pandemic, in Relationship to Earlier Professional Experience, as Internalized in Current Perceptions of Professionalism

As participants considered areas of change, the process necessarily involved feelings about change, as in this third theme of *conditions of the pandemic, in relationship to earlier professional experience, as internalized in current perceptions of professionalism*. Interventionists worried about their own effectiveness at performing their job, their enjoyment of doing the job was diminished, and they identified a lack of ability to affect change within the system—especially in the context of school administrators. Some participants commented that administrators were often viewed as incompetent, unsupportive or void of compassion. For example, in discussing changes to

instructional delivery, a superintendent specifically discussed firing staff members who were concerned about returning to school buildings during the pandemic.

So, consideration of the meta and sub-level questions, leads to certain recommendations. As I will discuss in more depth later, these verbal responses suggest implications for administrators and education policy in general. That is, administrators have faced immense staff shortages and the Michigan Department of Education has proposed broad initiatives to the legislature (Michigan Department of Education, 2021). However, if people do not feel valued, if they feel their labor is underappreciated and disposable, they might not be likely to stay in the education field. Furthermore, the expression of appreciation cannot be performative. Even when interventionists were included in the process of administrative decision making, they recognized when their input was "swept under" [P9, K3D2].

One participant commented their administrator was viewed as effective when they advocated for staff based on their meaningful concerns. The interventionists developed a plan that enabled them to conduct in-person home visits. The administrator accepted the plan, without deviation, and then advocated for implementation with other administrators. With their support, and based on the wishes of families, the plan was implemented. So, although these decisions occurred within a hierarchy, the decision making was ultimately decentralized. The interventionist's plan was wholly adopted and resulted in direct action.

Discussion of Findings Related to Theme Four: Vocalized Responses About Emotions Characterized by the Conditions of the Pandemic in Relationship to Alterations of Intervention

Other historical characteristics of hierarchical power structures, related to the meta and sub-level research questions, can be distinguished in the fourth theme, *vocalized*

responses about emotions characterized by the conditions of the pandemic in relationship to alterations of intervention. Specifically, when considering whether changes were effective or ineffective, feelings about effectiveness and enjoyment emerged but in relationship to the material conditions of the pandemic and alterations due to the pandemic. During virtual instruction, interventionists attempted to support children in spite of multiple challenges: background noise, children not attending groups and lack of attention during intervention. As has been discussed earlier, these characteristics were in relationship to the characteristics in earlier themes, a complex interaction based on social responsibility, material conditions, and feelings about what was taking place (e.g., needing to mute a child on Zoom because of a sibling learning in the same and needing to abandon certain writing activities because of a lack of materials).

Here, one point should be particularly clear: the participants in this study, all of whom were women, were empathetic, courageous, and inspiring. In spite of trying circumstances, and at great emotional and physical risk to themselves, they selflessly supported children and families. These characteristics can be placed into tension with historical characteristics. Traditionally, the early childhood education workforce is predominantly comprised of women (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). As the United States is a patriarchal society, these workforce numbers necessarily reflect a misogynistic view in which child-rearing is the responsibility of women. That is, within a structural understanding, relationships are internalized and acted upon within the system. And, as in the case of this study, a consequence of the misogynistic view is that periods of crisis are unequally borne by women, not only in relation to emotional well-being but in regard to physical health. Several of the interventionists in this study reported

contracting COVID-19 after returning to in-person instruction and one participant's vision was altered as consequence of frequent computer use.

By putting these characteristics into tension, I arrive at a certain contradiction. The hierarchical power structure expects women to place themselves in situations of heightened harm during an already horrific crisis. Simultaneously, their work is under-valued in the perception and action of administrators, who, especially in the case of superintendents, are predominantly male (Robinson et al., 2017) and yet express concern over staff shortages. In writing this, I do not mean this is the *singular* contradiction. Nor in discussing hierarchical power structures am I referring to some abstract social consciousness that exists in the ether. I am referring to a *particular* contradiction which is perpetuated by people in positions of authority, which maintains the patriarchy, and can only be resolved materially through compensation, recognition and self-determination.

Discussion of Findings Related to Theme Five: Future Orientation is Characterized by Concerns About Educational Practice and Children's Experiences

So far, the discussion of the meta and sub-level research questions has focused on areas of change, perceptions of change, complex interactions across themes and other cultural-historical factors. Within the fifth theme, *future orientation is characterized by concerns about educational practice and children's experiences*, reflections on experience and the effectiveness of change were also in relationship to expectations about issues that might come to be. These verbal responses further confirmed the meta-level research question, indicating areas of change, and how characteristics of the sub-level questions were internalized.

In particular, interventionists were concerned about the reliability of assessments and foresaw how this related to children's experiences. That is, children might not be identified for necessary services or might experience harm from excessive periods of social isolation. Although the interventionists in this study projected changes they might make in the immediate school year, they equally anticipated long-term effects that could take multiple years to emerge and which might be difficult to resolve.

In the context of this discussion, I return to my points in the previous section about recognition and self-determination. Again, I do not use those terms in an abstract sense. These terms necessitate material change. For example, discourse must recognize that if assessment scores are unreliable and, since the education system and Response to Intervention in general, are so reliant on assessment scores, there will be broader ramifications. Policies characterized by self-determination, would recognize interventionists autonomy, whether in the interpretation and use of assessment scores, the use of other types of assessment or the design and selection of intervention. In the case of this study, the K-3 interventionists reported needing to abandon certain practices like progress monitoring and the inappropriateness of certain intervention programs (e.g., Corrective Reading, Leveled Literacy Instruction) for online learning. So, the virtual classroom cannot wholly recapitulate the "typical" school day.

It is also interesting to note that in certain conditions where autonomy was denied, the interventionists *claimed* autonomy either by working around administrator directives or altering intervention within their immediate situation. These patterns in the workplace could suggest the potential for individual, direct action, specifically in cases where interventionists are not represented by a Union or in situations where Union leadership is

ineffectual. Moreover, these types of actions reveal the vulnerabilities and unwarranted authority inherent to the current hierarchy. So, future models might develop to remove traditional positions, like Superintendents and principals, in favor of establishing collaborative, worker run models in education. Work of this nature may also promote cross-disciplinary studies in fields such as political science and public policy research.

Limitations of the Study

A major limitation of this study is that it did not include families or children as participants. Although some of these experiences were related by interventionists, these are refractions of the experience within perception and then expressed verbally. Therefore, it is imperative that future research recruit families and children as participants and explore themes that might emerge from their verbal responses. Secondly, a constraint of recruitment was that it was not possible to recruit pre-kindergarten interventionists. There is a gap left between the experiences of Birth to Three and K-2 interventionists. Future research should also incorporate these groups to explore other similarities in experience of providing intervention during the pandemic or other major societal issues.

Of course, these recommendations reveal another limitation. Because of timing, I was only able to conduct my reference groups during the pandemic, as disruptions to intervention were occurring. The reflections on experience may change with time. So, future research should revisit participants to learn how these reflections have since developed. In particular, this might reveal new perspectives on the research questions posed during the first focus group and incorporate focus group feedback into designing new research questions.

Moreover, the pandemic created significant burdens on interventionists. Likely, the participants I recruited were those most eager to share their experience and this might have framed the types of responses I recorded and analyzed. Toward this end, future research should recruit more Birth to Three and K-2 interventionists and assess the stability of the themes in the verbal responses of different groups of participants.

Implications for Future Research

There are two main categories of implications I will discuss. The first is a fairly basic category that has implications for researchers engaged in fields that study what is essentially 'human activity.' The reader will not be surprised that I situate 'education' and 'experiences of interventionists' into the meta-category of human activity. My point here is that, in the context of this study, none of these experiences occurred in isolation. Changes to intervention necessarily involved feelings, past experiences, the ability to affect broader systemic change, and expectations for the future. Returning to my earlier critique of Response to Intervention research, it is not possible to study a specific intervention in isolation from the people providing the intervention or wider administrative and policy decisions. Nor is the inverse possible. The other factors I have just listed must be studied in relationship to the intervention. The course of study must account for structural development. Anything less is a reduction of reality and denies the need for more thorough and different types of experimental designs that are guided by a strong theory of development. As we deal with the ramifications of the pandemic an embrace of the holistic approach must occur.

Another implication in this category relates back to the hypothesis I outlined in Chapter Two. To recapitulate, I hypothesized that Response to Intervention functions as

both a complex activity and a tool, and that new relationships will emerge—if the tool is also qualitatively altered. In fact, as tools were qualitatively altered, new relationships did emerge. Such relationships were immediately observable as interventionists altered their practice to ensure children and families had access to food, services, and emotional support. So, this might imply, that this process functions on theoretical principle. The relationships that emerge might always remain as heterogenous but the potential exists to develop novel relationships by qualitatively altering the tool. Further work can focus on the reliability of this hypothesis by developing interventions that function on an understanding of structural development and are calculated to address the academic and social concerns noted by interventionists.

The second set of implications is about practitioners. As interventionists shared how they altered interventions, they shared practical advice for other interventionists. That is, a major implication is 'how to adapt interventions for virtual instruction.' These adaptations addressed social and academic needs. Given that the ramifications of the pandemic are far reaching and that the necessity for virtual learning might persist, further study of these alterations to intervention will be useful to other interventionists in the field.

Another set of implications in this category relates to policy decisions. As could be seen in Theme Three, interventionists did not feel their perspectives were adequately incorporated into policy making decisions. Since many school districts are experiencing issues with finding staff (especially in critical shortage areas), offering more authentic types of engagement might make staff feel more supported and likely to remain with a school district. Such authentic engagement would recognize an appreciation for virtual

professional development and IEP meetings. It would also recognize the inherent political nature of decision making and not create deference to any one particular group (i.e., parents) and abandoning hierarchical approaches to leadership. Further studies on virtual professional development and IEP meetings will be helpful.

Lastly, the interventionists involved in this study reported a lack of reliability in assessment scores at the same time as some children were facing significant academic and social needs. Therefore, policy might need to shift from specific types of assessments for progress monitoring and screening. These assessments could be more formative and less reliant on summative and benchmark assessment. Also, the exact types of intervention might need to be shifted to provide greater social supports. Finally, curricula standards might be modified to provide children with greater time to master certain academic knowledge. Research within these subjects might consider the interaction between these policy changes and human experience, like the experiences of children and families, interventionists, and their perception over longer periods of time. For example, I expect that children's perception refracts these policy decisions in the children's experience of school and creates contradiction with other events that have characterized the pandemic: loss of a family member, the politicization of vaccinations, broader social welfare policies, and so on. Theoretically, these perceptions should differ based on the child's developmental level at the time of the pandemic. For example, infants born just prior to the pandemic, might have externally observable, qualitatively different behaviors during social situations where the parents are absent (i.e., attachment) when compared to a child who was entering Kindergarten just prior to the pandemic. Nonetheless, as I discussed in Chapter Two, the task will be to move beyond the

externally observable behavior, toward principles of development, and not purely on the basis of differences between children.

Contributions to the Literature

The findings from this study support certain cultural-historical theoretical principles. Foremost, it was possible to observe structural development in the verbal responses of participants. When discussing the experience of providing intervention during the pandemic, it was evident that experience could not be segmented or altered. Returning to my earlier point in Chapter 1, the parts of that whole and relationships within it are distinguishable but they are not separable. At the point of merger, both the whole and their parts are qualitatively changed. So, this study supports the identification of certain structural, theoretical principles.

Next, analysis has confirmed the characteristics inferred in the General Law of Development. Although commonalities existed between verbal responses, each participant's experience was heterogenous and refracted through their perception of events. Furthermore, it was possible to observe internalization in the specific experimental situation. Participants reviewed the research questions and used this as a tool to reflect on their own experiences and suggest the relevance on the study of experiences during the interventions.

Conducting the study also confirmed that modern methods can be adapted to align with classical methods in the cultural-historical tradition. In this study, I used the modern format of reference groups and provided adaptations that created alignment of observations in constrained setting. As in the classical tradition, it became possible to

analyze the whole and study certain parts in certain relationships, which could then be expressed as themes.

As was touched upon under implications, this study contributes to the field of research on Response to Intervention. Namely, that the studies of interventions have interpreted intervention as something that can confer academic skills. But, as analysis suggests, intervention does not function in this dualistic manner. Intervention must be understood to be a special type of *social* activity that involves teaching certain skills in addition to certain relationships and that relate to feelings and broader social events, like a pandemic. Therefore, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of intervention design and its non-dualistic nature.

Lastly, throughout this study I have adopted what might be interpreted as a relatively dogmatic adherence to cultural-historical theory. However, my commitment is to research rooted in theories that recognize the complexity of human experience. To this end, the findings in this study might be beneficial to researchers working within Bronfenbrenner's (1994) Ecological Model. Analysis by these researchers could reveal particular relationships between different systems, specifically the chronosystem, exosystem, and microsystem. Especially if centered around children's accounts of their experiences, findings might reveal how global events are refracted based on children's age and their perception of how these ideologies are refracted in culture and ideologies (e.g., vaccination, political beliefs).

There are also clear connections to Elder's (1998) Lifecourse Theory. To some extent this theory (at least to me) has been forgotten or become a reference point as researchers work toward some tangential points about the importance of history. I expect

that some of these reasons are related to the fact that many of us have not lived through grand, historical moments like the Russian Revolution or World War II. Sadly, this is no longer the case and researchers will have the opportunity to focus on the particular age of a child at the time of the pandemic and development across the lifespan.

Finally, there are contributions to Ainsworth and Bowlby's (1991) theories of attachment. For researchers working within this theoretical framework, the findings of this study might assist in clarifying different types of attachment and factors that influence attachment. For example, the Birth to 3 interventionists involved in this study noted that children were more anxious around others and had difficulty separating from parents after certain pandemic restrictions were lifted for daycares. To attachment researchers, such child behaviors might appear as ambivalent, avoidant, or disorganized attachments. However, the findings of this study could clarify the role of historical events in developing attachment and factors that augment periods of social isolation.

Significance

A great deal of significance arises from the constraint of conducting this study during the pandemic. To my knowledge, and primarily because of matters of timing, no other studies have focused on the experiences of interventionists during the pandemic. And, historically, such studies have not been possible because of the infrequency of global pandemics. Therefore, this study is a rare, initial exploration of the pandemic and the experiences of interventionists. These experiences have revealed specific alterations undertaken by interventionists and specific personal experiences. As noted in the implications, these alterations are of practical significance. They can inform interventionists and administrators.

In some ways this significance is of historical value, but the findings also reveal the extreme emotional burden placed on interventionists. As a number of the participants noted, in many ways they became therapists for families and children. Simultaneously, they sought to grapple with their professional responsibilities and their own need to survive the pandemic. The participants in this study openly shared how these pressures were internalized. Again, these are factors of timing. Global pandemics are rare. And events are not static—they persist into the future. All this is to say, the effects of the pandemic on development will persist. So, this initial exploration will be an important reference for future research.

Conclusion

The interventionists who participated in this study took on significant responsibilities during a momentous and unprecedented historical moment. Their verbal responses revealed that during this unprecedented moment they altered intervention based on qualitatively different social relationships and to address material conditions. And, they actively interpreted these events in their perceptions and feelings and future orientation.

These findings underscore the importance of conducting studies within a methodological framework that emerges on a clear theoretical basis. As Response to Intervention operates as both a complex activity and tool, the potential exists to conceive of intervention in a non-dualistic manner. Finally, findings from the study assist in confirming certain theoretical principles, adapting classical cultural-historical methods, and reframing intervention as a social tool and activity.

APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board

March 30, 2021
Protocol #: IRB-FY2021-322
Research Team:
Adam LeRoy
Ambika Bhargava

Based on applicable federal regulations, the following study, "Response to Intervention as an Activity and Tool" has been determined to be Exempt, with the following categories Category 2.(ii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording). Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation.

Notes for Researcher(s):
This submission includes the following approved documents:

- IRB Date Stamped Consent Form V 3/30/2021 which has been uploaded by the IRB under Attachment in the Submission Details page in Cayuse. This IRB approved version must be downloaded and used in consenting participants in this research.
- Recruitment emails to research participants and administrators at interested districts
- in Oakland County Three Focus groups outlines/questions/checklists

Permission from
Research Site(s):
Please note the
following:

- This IRB exemption determination letter means that this research has met one or more of the federal criteria for exemption per 45 CFR 46.104- Exempt Research.
- Before the research is initiated, permission to conduct research at a given site must be obtained from all research locations listed in the IRB submission. You must keep copies of all such permission letters for your files.
- It is the responsibility of each researcher to follow all applicable policies and procedures of any outside institution where the research will be conducted.

Letter and Consent Document(s):

This letter along with the IRB approved (date-stamped) consent document(s) can be found in Cayuse in the Submission Details page under Letters and Attachments, respectively.

The IRB date stamped consent document(s) must be downloaded and used in consenting participants.

Modifications:

Any changes to this exempt project must be reviewed by the IRB prior to initiation by submitting a MODIFICATION request. Do not collect data while the changes are being reviewed. Data collected during this time cannot be used in research.

Record Retention:

Exempt projects will be retained by the IRB office for three years after the last action on the project.

You are approved to start the research. Please retain a copy of this notification for your records.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office.

Thank you.

The Oakland University IRB

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPTS

Researcher: Okay, so yeah that was, this is the, the first question that I came up with, just very basic, thinking about you know so how was the experience of delivering instruction during the pandemic different from what people were doing pre pandemic. And so yeah if you guys can just share with me so you know first off is, we can just kind of focus on that first one is that a question that you think other interventionists could, could speak to, you know, could they could they help answer that.

P1: Yes. I know birth to three doing early on our whole way of doing everything changed, so I have lots to answer to that question so that's yeah.

P2: Oh yeah definitely. yeah.

Researcher: Well, I know you and maybe it's similar to P2 I think P1 at the start, you had said how county-to-county differences were, but it sounded like you guys were going back into homes maybe sooner than colleagues.

P1: yeah, we, I was just looking at a timeline and you know, we obviously March 13 was the you know when we all stopped. And we actually didn't get things up and going and zoom's until April 12, we actually were just trying to figure out what we're going to do, and then I was looking back at my calendar and our first in person visit was September 8th around there. Oh yeah um so, but we can only do so many a day, usually we do four or five a day, we could only do one, the rest had to be Zoom the rest of the day. And my whole style changed, like basically doing zoom's with parents of birth to three kiddos you're definitely coaching much more than you are. So, it is and how he also assess the students--were still doing assessments during this time, so that all changed. I mean I don't know how much info you want to know but definitely that's a good.

Researcher: Yeah is that was, were you also doing assessments during that time P2?

P2: Yeah, we were also doing like ongoing assessment we've been virtual since last March, however, I just started early intervention here at this district this past September but I was previously with [redacted] with their early intervention program for a very long time. So I still have friends there and I yeah we've been talking back and forth about what are you doing and what are you doing. Yeah it's it's been interesting from city to city like she said, and even county to county.

P1: Yeah.

Researcher: I said it too, I mean, even I'm in X county and there are the difference between my kids district, and my wife's district and their regulations and how they

interpret the regulations. I didn't even think about the assessment components, so what were you doing assessments over zoom?

P1: Yeah yes we so we usually go out to the home and do what's called a Battelle Developmental Inventory. But because also you know, birth mandate state for special ed you know, while we're there we may look at that piece as well. However, that got changed because doing over Zoom you know, is this reliable whole is this, you know you're asking parents to get a list together that don't even match what's in your kit. So sometimes, or they don't have all the tools, you know, it just so we had to kind of we looked at qualifying for Early On right away, and then, as we got to know the child, and then we may bring in that special ed piece for them, as far as qualifying them under on special education as well. Um but we had to be really tricky with that it, it definitely was a change, but at least we got them started with us so we can you know make observations, as we went but. And then usually we qualify under what's called scaled scores, and then age equivalent, but over Zoom we only went with age equivalence because again weren't sure of the reliability of the scale score. Um so I'd be curious to hear what P2 was using your birth to three as well right P2.

P2: Yes, we were using the Batelle as well, some people opted to use the early intervention developmental profile.

P1: Okay.

P2: And I've used both of this past school year. And it's been tricky, yeah. And we brought students and special ed. And Early On. So we still kept with the same model, even though we knew that some of it wasn't and wasn't valid or you know could have been. We were not sure.

P1: Yeah, that's a hard call.

P2: So yeah but we used our best judgment with the data that we had. So it was tricky, it's still tricky to this day to be on the screen, and have to give an assessment to a one year old, a two year old uh however old they may be. And the parents, we relied a lot on the parents, they helped us a whole lot, a great deal.

P1: And X The other thing is, we weren't allowed in our building, even during that time, so we as providers not only delivered different kind of instruction, we had to learn a whole new system of Google forms and electronically sending everything and sent to parents electronically, and and then teaching parents Zoom. It was just a whole new change, I mean I've never I mean I can't believe all that we learned during this time, but it just the whole thing changed, I mean.

Researcher: Oh yeah. I got to see some of it second hand. I switched to online instruction, yeah but you guys were saying I mean it was you know when we when everything shut down, I mean the talk was well, maybe this is going to last two weeks.

P1: Yeah yeah.

Researcher: We so I remember you know when we came home, it was like okay well you know it's like maybe by spring break everything you know will be back in buildings and stuff and so yeah when she started doing the online, it was really interesting to me how much, because so much of it depended on parents her you know, especially with kindergarteners and, probably, similar to what you guys are seeing I mean right they're not able to navigate, you know as tech savvy as we think they are right there and they're not able to navigate a laptop. They're not opening up a Google classroom and and those kinds of things, so it was very her it really changed her relationship with her parents. The parents and the students and how they relied on each other.

P1: I was gonna say looking at your question, do you want, do you want, delivering instruction do you want to know details of like instruction versus assessment versus number of cases referred, that went way down.

Researcher: Did you see that as well with referrals P2?

P2: I didn't have a lot to compare it to like I said I wasn't in this district, however, when I was in [redacted] my last Early intervention position they are I had 120 evaluations by January and here in [redacted] I may have done 30 For the whole school so that kind of tells you that the best number, the difference and the number of students that get, go through each city. And here at X we service a lot of other cities like, Y, Z, A. The surrounding suburbs. So I thought that, I'm still kind of amazed at some of that. But this year, they say, the numbers here, compared to last year are pretty consistent with what it's typically.

P1: Do You have a case load um do you how often do you see your kids a week, if you if they're only Early On there?

P2: So for Early On, only we have one teacher that sees those students. And she I don't even think that she is a certified teacher. She's the person that, that just sees Early On students, they don't have any special education certifications. So the rest of us see the students who are typical, have a special ed eligibility. And I see my students well, they have the program broken up into weird ways, so I see my students once a week on my caseload and I'm supposed to see them again once a week in a group setting.

P1: All right, that's us too.

P2: None of our students really participate with group.

P1: That changed as well, for us, because they didn't have groups, so our teachers were having to come up with a different way to get that second time in a week. So that changed as far as instruction they actually, one teacher is doing a virtual group. Another

teacher actually, sent out activities that could take about 45 minutes to complete and sent those out and they were now they're starting to say, well, we might not be able to count that but they tried. So that changed to, that second contact that you're supposed to have for kids or at least qualified under early childhood developmental delay, the speech only kids are just getting one time, a week, not the second contact which are my kids. I'm a speech therapist so I I see them once a week, but that changed as well, that'd be another thing.

Researcher: Well, and that goes to this second but I had a better question because I think what I'm hearing from what you guys are saying I do actually need to revise, because yeah I did mean something broader than by look instruction I'm I really meant like What was it like working during this time, like how, how did people still get the job done, you know.

P1: Oh yeah. You know. And probably varying stories.

Researcher: Oh, my gosh. Everywhere, it was a, It was a Herculean effort you know I mean to just even seeing not only what my wife was doing but it's teachers, you know I mean so because my daughter was still in kindergarten at the time too. You know, and it was very…and I don't know if you saw some of this and the work that you were doing with kids but my since my son's older he kind of he understands what the virus is, you know that go out that you know, we need to do we need to take these precautions and stuff. You know my daughter when she was you know being about five or six it was a bit abstract for her. You know, it was very like well, no, you can't play with friends you can't you know. And I guess, I saw how they interpreted that stress differently of. Like my daughter's birthday, is in the springtime so we had to cancel her her birthday. And she was just beside herself, you know she thought we were punishing her you know. No sweetheart, you didn't do anything wrong just can't you know. yeah it was it, as you know, and I would think to one of the things about birth to three that always fascinates me is you guys, I think, get different relationships with families, you know just the nature of what you do is. It yeah, you have to engage with the parents in a different way. Going into the home. You see, the home life in a way that you know as a classroom teacher, I never got to see. Yeah any other any other thoughts on that. Before I go on to the next slide. Or other things that you thought were like markedly different from pre-March.

P2: Um, I think, where I'm at I was just kind of disappointed in the district because they had like a hands off approach to our program. It was like "Okay you're just birth to three", you know, they really didn't treat us or treat the program or the families like they were invested in the Program. I just thought that that was weird but I don't know.

Researcher: That is a actually a part of what I initially wanted to do with the dissertation because I see this a lot in early childhood is that disconnect between district, you know kind of like primary, you know, starting in kindergarten that transition from Part B to Part

C and that disconnect of the special ed system, you know at the district level and Early On and it just always struck me as odd to, you know, that there was…

P1: I feel for you P2 because that's we always in Early On, I mean I love, I like where I work. We laugh because we're always like the ones left out like here well we're all year round we're still there, like we don't experience the end of the school year, and so we always, like it's always like "As you wind down and you feel you know the stress level getting" And we're like "No, we're still here" You forget that we're still servicing our whole summer, you know, and I'm, and I think yeah, that's, and we were, speaking of, when we started to look back in homes, I mean we really had lots of meetings beforehand, like you have to make sure we are safe, you have to provide for us, I mean they gave us bags of gloves, gowns, boot covers, I mean, masks, a thermometer. I mean we wanted to make sure we had all these things in place, because if you're going to send us back in you better…people are nervous and scared you know and i'm.

Researcher: And I'm sure families too.

P1: Right and we had to make sure they were comfortable with us coming in and everyone had to be masked and that's been another push.
Some families have been like "Why do I have to wear a mask in my house?" And we're like "Because if you don't wear a mask we're not coming". I mean, that's just it's so that cause conflict sometimes. Yeah we hadn't really made the kiddos wear masks, I know they're, they were talking about having two and up wearing masks, but I don't think that sometimes people realize that you can't keep six feet distance in a house, I mean the kiddo is on your lap. Like, you it's hard to say no, you stay over there and we stay here, so that was a whole nother issue like just safety, safety going in. I think everything else we talked about like, like I said assessments delivery model was definitely um how we got paperwork to parents and into our, into our office staff meetings are all virtual now. I'm like probably everywhere else and I think that would, that would be a, you know, we always do a screener before we go into the house now definitely that. Yeah we, we have to get like the parent and into our building, obviously I think they're doing that everywhere, as well, but before we go to a home, you know any kind of cold symptoms or COVID exposure anything, then we would cancel and go to Zoom. um so we're really relying on the parent to tell us again before we go out. That they're safe.

Researcher: Yeah and that I think kind of goes into this. um I mean basic basically what I was trying to frame here, and I think I'll probably make similar changes to the wording, but just you know thinking about those changes. And how people found it effective or ineffective like, basically, like are there things that you know that you think that don't keep you know that that you would want to you know, like like changes that were made that you think were you know, actually, you know, improved what you were doing. And so yeah I mean just looking at that the same idea, you know is that. Is that true to your experience and you know it, or is there a better way to frame that or after.

P2: I think professional development, part of this whole COVID thing definitely got better. And offered more choices and more flexibility for you to be able to be you know, for you to be able to attend lots of them during the day, so that was definitely effective for our program. And since we all couldn't be in one place, at one time it kind of worked out good for professional developments, for staff meetings to just get on a Zoom and do what you need to do real quick, that was a really effective for us. The only thing I can think of that was kind of ineffective was, some, most of the kids you know this age didn't really respond to, you know, just being on the screen and it took a long time to build that relationship and that that whole process. It took a long time for us. For me.

P1: I'd agree P2 with that. Exactly, our professional development changed and people liked it, it was, could be flexible with it. They offered more choices, exactly what you said, in staff meetings to just popping in, it was, it did work well, that way. Ineffective I feel exactly the same way, it took a long time to build that trust with families, some of the kids can't be on the screen so lots of talking with parents about things to do, you know more, it was more coaching I know coaching got better, I think, through Zoom and I think I heard many of my coworkers say that, because, again you can't be there to be hands on, you have to tell the parents what to do and have them show you. And one thing that did change going back to that other question is, some of my families I actually drove materials, since you know we do a lot of driving to people's houses any way, I drove materials out ahead of time. Had them there when we did the zoom that was much more effective. And otherwise it would not have been effective. They had the same materials on my end that they had in their hands and that worked much better.

P2: One I just thought up that may be ineffective, depending on what district you're in was the therapy. The parents. Oh, so we offer physical therapy and occupational therapy and they really believe that they're getting therapy through our program, which they are, but our department or our program and our district, what we did, which I totally disagree with, is they were able to come on the Zoom with us to get their therapy. So what was ineffective was the fact that you have a teacher and a physical therapist on a Zoom. And then there is an IFSP that states they're supposed to get 45 to 60 minutes teacher, 45 to 60 minutes physical therapy. And so, some people in our department interpreted that as we can just do everything together and a lot of families were not getting their services. All year. And we have a lot of school, in our program, well my caseload, a lot of students who could have benefited from a lot of in person physical therapy, occupational therapy. And they have a lot of medical needs and concerns that definitely were not addressed properly. I wouldn't say that they weren't addressed, but they weren't properly.

P1: So you could change that to even say the difference, I don't know if you want to, like between the converse of special education services too, like effectiveness, because now, see, our district, does it different P2. In our IFSP we just write special instruction, if their special ED, they just put instruction and don't list us separately, which we don't agree with. We feel like we need to be on there, but that's how then they get away with. Just do both. So that's different than you guys and we wish it would change to listing, specific

and we don't do that and I thought, maybe you should if you're special ED you know list speech and language, list OT and I don't know why are our county doesn't do that that way.

P2: Probably lawsuits. Because we have a lot of people that will hold them accountable.

P1: Yeah which is that's just sad to me, that they are now on. Um. While you were talking, I thought of something else, and now I lost it, i'll see if I remember.

Researcher: Yeah I know our neighbor his son gets OT and PT. And that was what during the pandemic that was one of the things he and I were. I was just kind of like curious to know you know, I was like yes so how are they you know. Is he still getting those services and it's kind of like what P2 was saying, where when he met with the reading interventionists they would you know go through the service and stuff but yeah you're absolutely right, where it's not the, it's not the same quality of, and you know it really didn't. It didn't meet you know his son where that where the need actually was, as a parent, I don't think he really noticed it, but as a professional I would what I heard what they were doing I was like oh okay. In theory, I guess.

P1: The other piece, too, as far as effectiveness or in effectiveness is, I don't know if this goes under it, but the access to technology. Some families didn't even have Zoom or they couldn't even stay on the Zoom, we'd have to give them a phone call, which to me is very ineffective. There's another piece that was tough. If they didn't have good Internet service where they, and then trying to do a first time eval over a terrible internet, it started off on the wrong foot.

P2: Our district offered tablets to all the students eventually. I would say, by November, December they had that all together. Where they could offer a tablet to everyone, but everyone didn't have Internet access so that was definitely a huge hurdle for us, and so I believe Comcast offered some $10 a month for students or for families that were you know looking for service, so we hooked up, well didn't hook up but passed that information on to our families and they were able to sign up for that. But yeah that that has and a lot of technology, technology is great until it isn't great. If you get any situations where everything just shuts off or. We've probably experienced it all the past year.

P1: Yes, yes.

P2: Yeah and don't let something be going on in your neighborhood where the power goes out.

P1: Oh yeah we had that too.

P2: Yeah, so we had some interesting times.

P1: Yeah I lost the most families, I ever had during this time too. I think they just got frustrated and they're like we're just going to stop Early On, which was sad because that was the point before we did get to in person. And they just were tired of the Zoom like it just got frustrating, so I didn't and then as soon as we started in person, we did reach out to the families to try and get them back. Some just said no still and some just didn't respond so it was sad to see those families go.

Researcher: Yeah it is such a overwhelming time you know even. I know I experienced that with our you know where it was like with the trying to have four of us in a house to get everybody online. You know, there were a number of rows just like you know, and I, my wife was working, and I would to but I'm my job is less being a PhD student is less strenuous the kindergartners. You know, I was, I was trying to get both of the kids online and navigate all their Google classroom stuff and everything, and I know a few times, where it was, like all right, only one of you is getting into class today you go off. I can't focus on both of you right now so. You know, it was. Yes, called the teacher and say hey sorry I just not too much going on.

P1: Yeah I understand that.

Researcher: Yeah and part of what I was thinking of what this too was Like tweaks that you maybe did. Or that people did with you know, like some of the assessment things that you were talking. About or the way that I guess maybe the way they looked at the actual like assessments and the instructional activities and that kind of stuff, advice that we're giving and. sort of yeah the tweaks that make it to make it work in a virtual setting. That you wouldn't that even when you go back to in person you'd want to hang on to. Either a new way of approaching it or
really comes through in that, though in the way that i've got a phrased right now.

P2: Yeah one thing that I had to do was kind of look at the test questions and see what I had here in my kit and what families could possibly have at home, and so we would send a materials list home to families and we would tell them that you know we understand you may not have these things in your home but we're going to try to work and…

P1: Yeah that's yeah that's what we did, sent the material list, tried to find the same.

P2: Yeah, so one of the I can't remember on the test is one of these things I don't know if you can see, like a ring, and they have to stack. So. We had a lot of variations of this ring, of course. You can't really be real specific with toys. You kind of gotta go with what what they have in their homes and it's sad. We couldn't, well our program, our school did not give us a budget to purchase assessment items, and, you know, pass them out to our families and I don't even think we even have time to do that. But one other thing that was on our assessment was can they do, can they attend to a book or saying a nursery rhyme, and so this little book would get their attention. The Itsy Bitsy Spider. Yeah, and so I would sing it and then I would word it, and then kind of use that as my assessment to see "Oh, were they paying attention", but I would have to move my screen. I don't know if

you know, on Zoom, you could do, when you change your screen your background, you can, if you have a double monitor I had to, adjusting, use my double monitor, even though I already had one, well I wasn't using it prior to this whole year, I had to get a double monitor. I got a green screen behind me, that's why my screen is different. so, it's it's a lot of different adjustment that you have to do to make it work and to just be sane and keep it interesting. And also one of my screens, I changed one of my screens to have like items that kids would recognize, so I had the apple, so I could point to the apple or you know I could point right here on the screen because when you're doing some of those cognition and some of those speech questions you it's so hard to lose their attention so that was cognition and speech was usually my area that I would just do first and not last because if you kind of mess up with cognition and speech you could potentially you know mess up someone's eligibility. So those are some the things that I did.

P1: Oh that's a good idea I like how you project it behind you, I think that's great I never even thought of that, that's a good idea.

P2: Yeah, and some of the shapes, I have shapes I have a virtual screen with shapes. Circle, square, triangle. That way the parent can visually see what i'm talking about because we're not there.

P1: Yeah, looking at your question, how did instructional practice change, um. Yeah I don't know if you want to add in there, like what would you hold on to, what was effective that you would keep doing. Yeah because I think that you might get more specific answers that way. Um yeah definitely assessment changed and how. yeah.

Researcher: Yeah what one of the things that I thought was kind of cool with you know I mean, so my son's older, he's in fifth grade or so, he was and I'm sorry he would have been in fourth grade when this was going on. But. It was pressing to me how from March until June. Late like I liked how less rigid what the teachers were doing was because it was sort of like thrown together, yes. No, but they came back this school year you know, it was this very you know your online from eight to three, and all this and I thought, like a lot of what they were doing March to June was actually much cooler and interesting to him. Like he was making all these YouTube videos for class and you know the gym teacher day you know, like do this activity or whatever, but he became like a mini Martin Scorsese and was like coming up with like these five minute things with like a storyline, like all this stuff, but it was just interesting to me how he, you know sort of latched onto that is this way to be more creative.

P1: You know what did change, you just made me think of something, so as delivery goes we actually started making videos of us reading books. And so we did send those out to parents we've never done that, before either so he would actually. Like if the theme was Brown Bear, I have me reading Brown Bear, like projected on my TV behind me and reading it, and then we would share that with everybody and like I said, have handouts with links to things that parents could go to on the computer. So definitely we did a lot more video teaching and sent out how to do hand signals. Sign language. All that we had

done before that definitely added to our library and that I think we would continue doing. Because again the parent can go back to it on their own, through the week to view what we did, maybe at a home visit or something. Also, because we're masked at home, and a lot of times those masks you know we tried to use the clear ones, but get spit all over them it's kind of. So we you know, we still have the solid mass the parent and the child can see our face for in person, so, then the video of you doing it separately, without your mask, it's like, it's like double work added on to what we do, I mean I think like we all feel like we're, we're doing a lot more now I feel like. As far as trying to provide services in a way that is effective. But yeah that did change and my, speaking to what you're saying about your son, my son said he's, he was in sixth grade he said the same thing, he felt like from March to June thing activities were more creative and they got to do more, choosing and making things and then, then it went to academic you know, it's September and it's been a total change in his attitude of school. yeah funny yeah. But interesting he had the same experience, because he loves the same thing as your son, the videos and things.

P2: One thing, other thing popped into my head as you were speaking, was the whole social emotional area. O-M-G. This has really affected, teachers and us adults and these poor children. So we have had to evaluate and work with babies who haven't even been out the house. I have a lot of parents who are just now taking their children to the grocery store. Who are now just going to the to the park. It's just unbelievable. I mean, and it's sad because we know that they don't have some of the skills that they a child that hasn't been through a pandemic. You know they could potentially have social skills or, you know, not be you know have anxieties with people and, and so. One thing, my son he's in, he plays sports and he, kind of a loner he likes to be at home.
Even he got tired he wanted to be out and about you know he had an outlet of, you know, playing football and you know, but after that, you know, it's like, you know, we have some parents like "Oh, we don't know why they're acting crazy" Umm, we're all in the house. I'm acting crazy too so. We've all had to adjust. And I think that this has been a very big experiment on how we handle social isolation.

P1: P2 I agree totally. Many families have not stepped out of their house with their child. Or they're not around other kids either. Or them in the parent at home, yes, we see the same thing.

Researcher: Yeah it was. You know, once we, when things have loosened up a little bit, I think probably around mid-July, was when we really started. You know where the kids kind of started playing together and kind of like we've done as much as we can, but you know we can you know, keep at this for and was interesting just to see how, when they first started interacting again how. And again my kids are a little bit older, so they were you know they were video chatting with friends and stuff during that kind of March to July time period but yeah it was there was an awkwardness when they first started, you know just going out to ride bikes or. I can't imagine with little littles you know. The, your first year is just.

P1: So important yeah. yeah.

Researcher: Yeah and I think that's a good point to P2, I think, there probably needs to be a question that gets that more specifically about the emotional. How did we process it emotionally? How did families?

P2: Look I wanted to quit almost every day this year. I'm just being honest.

P1: We were laughing too, because a lot of us have had to put in money like I don't know if you have to buy any of this stuff you have. I mean we had to make an office at home, none of us had this stuff at home. I've had to buy a file cabinet, like you're keeping files. I mean, it's just we were joking about "Gosh I hate to have us come back in the office". We have these nice home offices now.

Researcher: Hopefully you guys get a little time to relax here.

P2: Yeah briefly. Then we'll be out in another week so it's winding down.

P1: That's good, good, good. Do you guys do services all summer, then, or do you close? Or do you guys continue?

P2: We're not on an all year-round calendar. We're still on your calendar, but we do have staff that volunteer to work in the summer.

P1: Okay.

Researcher: You guys are on the same schedule during the summertime and Kristen.

P1: We so what they did is they took our teacher calendar, so usually you know what we work through a school year, and for the Early On staff, they took that and spread it out through the year so they don't have to hire anybody in the summer. Yeah, so not our choice. So, um, yeah, we used to hire separately in the summer for Early On services, because it is year round. This way they don't have to do that. So interesting how yeah, so our breaks are different like we have two weeks it's spring break just so because it is spread out through the summertime now. yeah.

Researcher: I had a group of teachers or three from More west side of state.

P1: uh huh.

Researcher: And it was interesting because they do it they go through the summer, but it is similar to what you're describing that they do a reduced number of days so like they might have like 14 contact days in July and...

P1: Yeah that's what we used to do and we used to get paid separately for those because we'd work our regular calendar year, like all the other districts, but now, as they did it this way, so that we only work like eight days in July and like we you know, three, four day weeks in August, but again it's just spread out so they don't have to hire extra people yeah. It's hard. If you don't want to do it, then you switch positions, you know, so that's that I think that's what they feel like. So yeah.

Researcher: I'm hoping with the talk of some of this new funding coming through. That maybe will, it sounds like early ed is actually getting focus that has her for a really long time.

P1: Yeah yes, yes. And I'm curious with that--the credit, the additional credit of years, for this working through the pandemic, if that goes through. That would be nice.

P2: It may be an exodus, where a lot of people go.

P1: Exactly, exactly you're correct. I know and we need a teacher so bad. So. No.

P1: Yeah.

Researcher: Yeah, I think that is one of the--burnout and this really accelerated it.

P1: Yeah it did you're right.

Researcher: And people too, I mean like, so, the position that my wife took over, it was for a teacher who was really close to retirement and, you know, she just had to think about her health, you know the school they were coming back to in person, and it was like "I'm this close and I am in a, you know, section of the population that's more vulnerable. Why not take the retirement now?"

P1: If you can do it, yeah or, yeah, in that case you may not have had a choice either which is sad like thinking about your health, and, you know, yeah but.

Researcher: Um yeah so. I mean, this is a good start, because this was kind of, I was kind of curious just—yeah, if there had been any other things that had come up within the past week that you that you thought of as relevant to your experiences or the experiences of other interventionists you know pre and post pandemic and you know kind of just the lingering effects. So, I mean I hear two of the big ones: staffing. We have enough people and then just also the fact that the differences in, I guess the job itself.

P1: mm hmm mm hmm.

P2: So, for us, we I don't think we have enough staff to begin. Going into the pandemic, So it kind of made everything--not worse, but challenging. So, we've had like at least two. openings that I know of, all school year, for teachers and then we still needed more therapists. We had one therapist she retired, due to the pandemic, she just was like forget it, you know. This is not worth it, and just a lot of comings and goings, new people here, new people there. And we actually got a new, not a new supervisor, I guess her title would be coordinator, who was not in the realm of and never worked in early intervention. So that's been interesting too.

P1: Oh, that would be yeah.

P2: That's been real interesting. So. it's been challenging, to say the least, but we've had, yeah, just staff coming and going. Just and then like you said with your wife, we had one

staff member she her daughter was immune compromised. She just decided to just stay the whole year out. And I believe they're gonna let her come back next year, but.

P1: Were you guys mostly. Were you, Zoom, like was it required you started to go into homes, at a certain point or did you have an option of Zoom as a staff member?

P2: Okay, so the decisions that were made for our district were made like, and I won't say, solely based on what the board recommended, they go through a process. So they had a board meeting back in, I want to say, September--we've never been back fully in person. And the school, because my son goes to school in the school district, the school has been back, I want to say, since January in a hybrid capacity. Okay, so my son goes to school Thursday and Fridays. And they stay at home Monday through Wednesday, but early intervention we've never been back face to face. And in our main roles and any capacity. But we have done, like some in person evaluations. And we have done some in person, like this Spring we started, we just took it upon ourselves and said we're gonna meet at the park. We didn't care what the school, because we had a new administrator and everything, she…everything we kept, that we knew was right to do, she just didn't know. She just like well. Let me check with so, and so, and let me. So. In order to you know, keep our families, you know motivated, and in our program, and, you know, and coming back to us, week after week we had to switch it up amongst ourselves. So we decided to meet at the park, for our group, in person. You know, social distancing wearing a mask until they said not to when you can have to wear the mask on a public. So that's one thing that we just did on our own.

P1: Wow okay. Yeah, we um. So. Yeah, I think we started in person I forget when that was. Um. You know, some of us could, it depended on the discipline, as far as--and comfort level, for some of us. Like me, being a speech therapist, it was really hard to do my job over Zoom all the time. And so, I felt like as long as I had a really good screener to go over with the family and everybody wore masks you know. Now I did not require the little guys to wear masks but parents and anyone, you know. And then we also couldn't go into the home if there was another household member there so that was another, um, so for a while, it was just two households, I think, and so, if the caregiver was there-- like grandma--I couldn't go and that was, that kind of got to be a conflict too. Grandma had to leave for an hour, so I came if they wanted me in their house. Whereas before I could go and work with both mom and grandma. I had to make sure it was just one household in the family with me. And then. Yeah, like PT feels their job could be done over, again, sometimes they still need a hands on, but they could do more coaching through Zoom and having the parent do it. Whereas mine required, like, you know, I don't know…that more attention back and forth, and I just felt like I needed to be in person, so I think it depended on the discipline. Um but we were never told like there was an urge like you should maybe you know if you can go in and feel comfortable and go in, you know try it, but if not, you know, try and do what you can over Zoom. It just kind of depended on the family. There wasn't a lot of direction with that once when some of the restrictions were lifted, so I think there are still people doing a lot of Zoom right now.

P2: We're still doing Zoom. We still offer groups at the park and we are doing porch drop offs. We can go to their home; we just can't go in there home.

P1: Porch drop off. Yep. That's changed a lot. That drop off. That's brand new.

P2: Yeah, I know I'm like "Oh [inaudible]".

P1: And then we're starting groups this, in the next couple weeks. We haven't done those in a long time so we're starting in person at the park, as well, with only the teacher caseload so not--if I wanted to have a group with my caseload, I'd have to set up something separate. They're trying to keep the numbers small, so typically we would invite everybody to those, but, again, that's changed. We're only doing limited little groups so that's kind of another thing that's been put on my plate now, is to find out how I can do groups with my kids so, which before we kind of collaborated with the teachers and they were able to accommodate us, but right now gotta change for a little while.

Researcher: One question I have on, that is, I mean so have parents been pretty excited to have you know to be able to return it in that way to have these kinds of meetups or have you seen any apprehension or.

P2: So our parents were pretty excited to meet at the park. I could still sense a little ambivalence about coming to their homes because some of them had COVID. And, and the children, and the extended family, and so we definitely understood that. Our challenge now is now that we've been offering face to face visits at the park, some people in our department want to go back to Zoom, because our district is not--they're just kind of hands off. So, they want to do face to face Zoom for the summer for—and we're like what we just started offering face to face, and now you want to go back to Zoom. And so since, I'm not working in the summer I was just like this just a headache that I just choose not to even participating in. But I kinda need to participate, because I need to advocate for the families that, you know, that that want it. So, we're just kind of in a tickle because the district, and when I say the district, our leadership, has not taken a firm stance or a commitment to our program and to lead us, and guide us. It's like we're doing it all by ourselves. I mean just, yeah.

Researcher: That was one of the other things I wanted to kind of pick up on because historically, I mean, I think that's true were birth to three is kind of treated like this [inaudible]. And I was curious if you thought that that was something that the pandemic just sort of exacerbated, like it you know it was something that had always been around and because of that, because of the new situation, it just kind of made, I don't know necessarily worse, but it just heightened that or if it was or if it seemed to also kind of manifest in different ways too.

P2: I think it kind of forced the people to even notice us, the powers that be to notice "Oh there's a program that--oh, they go into homes?" I think it was like clearly by accident that they even noticed that they had a program and the district, and which because

everybody kind of really knew about homebound teachers, people that actually go into homes, but they didn't know that we had any entity for birth to three. Or at least they act like they didn't know. So, I think that kind of forced, and it also forced them to “Oh well, what are we going to do with, you know, our staff, you know it's not--we clearly know it's not safe for them to go in and we clearly know, that is, you know not safe to bring them to school.” So, we've actually been, where some teachers in the district, most of the teachers in this district have to go into a room, into a classroom, to work during the day, but our program they had us in like a one big room and we had about five rows and it's about six people in each row. In September, we all knew that it was impossible for us to social distance in our office so we've been forced to work at home pretty much the whole school year, until they force us to come in and do what we gotta do to make it through.

P1: Yeah, we had a sign up as well, we couldn't all be in there, at the same time. So that was new. So, you had to check and make sure who's in the office, because you couldn’t go. If somebody else was in the office already, you had to sign out a different room. It was interesting because, at one point, we were talking about going into homes but they wouldn't allow us, you know, we had a couple parents, say, well, can I come to your building and come to you, instead, and that was not allowed. So that was interesting, uh, they didn't want the parents coming in. I don't know if it's due to contact tracing, I’m not sure why. I know it kind of goes against the natural environment piece, but just trying to get service and one to one, they thought, well, I could mean to you. And they said no. Um. What else were you saying? Yeah, I feel like Early On, is always been you know, like I said when, the superintendent or someone talks about “Oh, the years winding down, glad everyone's getting ready to be off, and you can relax”. And there's never like “Oh, except for those Early On people who are still working all summer”. There's never any of that. We all feel like we're just forgotten. A lot of the time. And then we did ask for special meetings with the superintendent just to remember that “Hey we are going into homes”. like we actually set up a couple of those with our director, just to find out, again what the health department was saying, and so he could hear our concern, because we were big time concerned about, you know, the idea of going into homes, eventually. So, we did have those meetings. But like we are the last ones on the list, which is sad. But I think I think a lot of my colleagues would say the same, yeah.

Researcher: Yeah and mean it's cool I like the…I think I would have done something similar to what you guys could well, I mean one you just have to even more forcefully advocate. And then like you were saying too P2 where it was like sometimes it was, like all right we're going to do this thing, and if somebody doesn't like it down the road, I’ll apologize but we've got to do things in a way that makes sense, you can’t always wait around. One of the other things that we kind of talked about, or that kind of came up toward the end was, thinking about the social. emotional effects and concerns with that, concerns with like the drop, or changes in referrals. Do you think going forward there'll be things changes in your programs to address some of those concerns? Or do you think it'll be do you think as it's currently in place it'll it can be addressed? Or?

P1: um I feel like now that things are opening up, we're probably going to get more referrals now. A lot of our students have like put off for wellness, and things like that. Now they're starting to go. I don't know if P2 you're seeing that to, like that increase. But what I'm worried about is we did have staff, you know, we did have a position open for a teacher and they took that off the table for a while and now I'm hoping that that goes back on, like our staffing needs. We are short, like P2 said, of people. We don't have a PT right now. I think it's going to pick up from here, but it's been really slow. I don't know P2 what you've seen.

P2: Our numbers have been so consistent. Like I said, maybe about two or three months ago, we've had an opening for two teachers and additional therapist, so I think about it in terms of we have, well, it started out as one opening for one teacher and then it gradually, next thing you know it was another one on there. I Think of it as when you look at the numbers, with early intervention, it is like you're working, you're already at the capacity for those two teachers, so we already know what our load is. So, we're carrying the load, for them to even consider hiring two. They don't think about hiring two new staff until they have the numbers. Like a reverse type of, yeah type of thing. I forget what else we were talking about.

P1: No, no yeah just how, yeah, X what else do you, what--

Researcher: Well, with thinking about, you know, social emotional concerns for some of the caseload kids. Do you think that you know just like some of the things you were talking about P1 where now that you're going to be able to start meeting in groups? Do you think that'll be sufficient to kind of catch up on some of those areas? Or do you anticipate doing different activities or adding different things?

P1: Yeah, right now, I know that those that I've told the parents I've told about groups coming up, they have all been very excited, they're excited to get out of house and do something. And meet some other people. We've had one group that's been doing a virtual group, online, and they've enjoyed and shared contacts with each other through the Zoom. So that's successful, but they really want to be in person. And I think it will be good for the kids to be around other kids because they're not, and the parents are not taking them out anywhere. So and P2 since you've started groups, you might have seen more how the impact is.

P2: With our participation it all depends on whether the parent is at home, if they're working. We have a lot of parents that are working from home, just like us. So, they, you know, they take a little break from what they're doing and it's overwhelming for them too. To, you know be, have a computer in one room and then have to come, go down the stairs and have group with us on the on the screen as well, so. We definitely have to take in consideration some of those things that some people don't want the social interaction, because they're at home and they're working too. We have quite a few parents that are doing the exact same thing, not our job, but you know the scenario that we have. And then we have those parents that, you know, they know that their child has suffered the

whole year by being in the home, you know, and isolated and the pandemic. We just have a wide range of needs of these families that we have been trying to meet and we also have parents that, you know, that just they want to get out, regardless of any circumstances, you know, we have at home mothers that's a lot of a lot, I see a lot of stress on these mothers, the ones who are at home with those kids all day long, multiple kids, one in school, this one at home, this one on the screen and the baby. So, I definitely empathize even the with the parents, because they they've just been overwhelmed, just like we have been. And the kids are just a product of all of this. It's really been amazing. But I found that the ones and and I'm not making judgments or, or guesses, but the ones that work during the day, they seemed a little bit more okay with things. As far as with our program and with the ones that you know, had something to do, or you know, had an outlet or. But the stay at home moms and the single moms and the, you know, it was overwhelming for them. Some of that. anxiety just you know just trickle down to the kids, unfortunately.

Researcher: Oh yeah me and my wife talked about that a number of times that, I mean you know, we had a we had a few friends that were either pregnant and delivered during the pandemic. Or had a had a very young, you know, infant, toddler and especially if it's your first kid and babies are stressful anyway, but when it's your first kid and everything is new, like that in itself is, you know just like such. So. And you have to do it, during something like this, and especially, to us, we rely so heavily on our parents, when our when our first born, you know they they were a big help you know. Actually, get sleep and, you know, um, and yeah so not being able to have any of those contacts or anything, it would just be.

P1: Yes, that's very true. hmm.

Researcher: So one of the other things I was kind of wondering about to was, districts now, and I guess this kind of going back to you know, maybe some of the disconnect between early on and the like K five realm well, maybe, but most districts now have like these kind of response to intervention programs or the multi-tiered systems of supports. Do in general, do you guys feel plugged into that or is it kind of like you show up on the radar when it's time for them to transition from, when there's the you know proceed to from the Part C or Part B transition, or when maybe they're moving to pre K kindergarten.

P1: I never hear about them when they go from Pre-K to Kindergarten. I don't know what's happening with that age. So, I'm just birth to three, so when I'm transitioning to the three to five world. The only response like, we do things so differently in X county like we. Oh. We don't list services separately like speech, OT or PT, everything is special instruction. Even if they're made eligible under special ED there's still special instruction. I don't put myself on separately, which is, I think needs to be done, but that doesn't happen. And then, as far as response to intervention like having them, so if I have a kiddo on the border who might need special ED services at three to continue getting service. Sometimes I'll have the district meet in transition, and they may invite them to their small group activities, a couple times like to see how they do and how they function. Probably

the most response to intervention we get…otherwise it's transition conference, they stay with me till they're three and then they move on and I don't know what happens to them ever again. Because they're in a new program three to five and their own district.

P2: Okay, so. I have seen this done different ways. Prior to coming here, in [redacted], I do believe, I saw it done somewhat correctly. However, here, the lines are a little blurred. So. We in early intervention or Early On, we…I'll just give a case scenario. I have a student who came in the program back in December, he will be three in October. So that means he entered the program and he's going to be exiting soon. Our department has said that everybody who is turning three and September and October needs to have their IEP done in June.

P1: That's how ours is. Okay, or yeah well yeah, if I'm, because they'll have a transition conferences, they well no go ahead, keep talking, I want to know.

P2: So, I already did the transition. We can do a review with the transition. So that was his next set of paperwork, however, at this transition conference and the district, because he is still in our district--we service other other cities too--because he's still in our district, and because the lines are blurred there is no facilitator for me to invite from Part B.

P1: Oh wow so you don't have any Part B representation at the transition?

P2: No.

P1: whoa.

P2: No. Not for [redacted]. For those other cities that we service, yeah, they sent a representative from their district, but not our district we don't have anybody. That's a big, that's a big problem. So now we're at the point where they want to do the IEP. So, they wanted me to use my scores and so, not only was I the Early On MET representative, they want to use me as the Part B representative.

P1: They can't do that, can they? Don't you have to have…does there. Oh, my gosh.

P2: So, this has been my frustration all week. So, they want me to use my own scores, take my own biases and just--now you work over here. And bring this kid in and--

P1: Under what eligibility then would it be?

P2: Do his REED, and his MET, they want me to do his REED and his MET, and this is what they do for everybody in the whole program so I'm not just saying that his happened to me. So they want me to do his REED and his MET, and then a new teacher with do the IEP.

P1: ECDD?

P2: So, his scores at the time that we evaluated in December reflect ECDD. But he's had a speech eval over this time period. And so, instead of the speech teacher just, you know, giving him services for what he needs. She went into the MET and put stuff in the MET and I'm like okay, we didn't really have to do that, you don't have to do it for early intervention you don't have to change the MET in order to give services. It's just a mess.

P1: Oh, my gosh, you know what, it's just, X, the thing about Early On, it's so different across counties. I can't believe how…there's no consistency, at all. At all. I can't believe that's happening with you P2. That's huge.

P2: Yeah, so, I'll tell you how I sort of kind of resolved it. I told them that I was recommending additional testing, because the parents told me at the last minute that they suspected ASD. And so, I told the team, I said look, I think we should wait, you know he won't be three until October. Right let's just wait to do his IEP and so I got a lot of pushback from people saying, well, we need to do to the IEP now. And I'm like well why? We need the data. I cannot sign as the MET representative and now the representative on the REED too that his eligibility is ECDD day and I don't believe it is, it may not change, but at least let's just offer the testing to the family.

Researcher: And time to get into the pediatrician to I mean I would think that doctor visits are severely disrupted. I know I mean our kids missed, all of them, it's like, the last place you want to be now is…

P2: So yeah, it's so unbelievable. Some of it, I just can't even wrap my brain around, from day to day. I'm like. And I know the correct way to do things and I'm trying to have a lot of transparency, with my job, and with these families, you know and try to keep things separate. But I'm like I, you know, at the end of the day, it's my signature my work. So I have to be careful about what I'm doing. Especially when you have the district telling you the wrong thing to do.

P1: Oh, my gosh yeah.

Researcher: I'll give you one of my quick little experiences of that where the district, I was in at the time, our special ed director decided that we could be the one that, she was going to make us designees so that we could sign, not the IEP at the end, as superintendent or special education doesn't mean that supposed to be the. It should be the either either the superintendent or the special education director and she felt that she was just getting too many IEPs to have to sign and so she wanted to push it down to the building level. And it's similar to what you're saying P2 so I'm signing off as, at the time I was the teacher consultant, so I was signing the IEP is the teacher consultant and reporting my scores for that. Then, at the end, you know, becoming the person that said the district was going to follow the IEP and I know we got talked to by the county about that, because it was you know I didn't have that what was that it was so messy because it was like what. I don't even have that authority I can't dictate district resources.

P1: Oh, my God.

Researcher: Yeah it was.

P1: Oh wow.

Researcher: When you have yeah. yeah sometimes people make the wrong… for their own convenience.

P2: You have to be able to draw the line somewhere. You have to. Especially when you know, when you know better, and you know some of the names that lead up to the IEP. Like I just didn't feel right. I just don't think that we offered enough to this family. In between, he came in December to now, you know, especially if he had a suspicions of ASD. We just can't REED.

Researcher: That's really only what you're thinking of breaks everything, that's really only like about three months.

Researcher: So really kind of the last thing I was wondering about you know, unless you guys have other things to add. So this is the second project that I've done this kind of format with. Like with, especially with the first group with that kind of reference group thing, where you guys are looking at the research questions and giving feedback. And so I was just curious if you guys like that, if you thought it was if you thought it was useful. The goal is to kind of make research more collaborative, I mean that's the goal with that, I hope it felt collaborative but I mean if it didn't or any tweaks that that you think would have been made it more enjoyable for you or anything like that.

P1: I enjoy talking to P2 and hearing with her it's so interesting to talk with other counties and staff and hear how they do things and get ideas and, I mean, I've enjoyed this format it. Good conversation. Good to hear.

P2: Yeah I agree, is a great way to get your collaboration and get your information that you need.

Researcher: thank you guys so much I seriously appreciate it. yeah when the when the pandemic happened, I was like I'm never gonna finish this program. But like, and you know, and then, once I kind of came around on the topic I was just like nobody's gonna want to meet right now. I appreciate you guys giving your time and I really, really appreciate it.

P2: No, thank you, I appreciate it, X. This is like therapy to me.

P1: Yes, it is exactly. It's like someone understands what I'm talking about.

Researcher: Yeah, how was the experience of delivering instruction during the COVID 19 pandemic different from pre pandemic instruction? And already I'm noticing by instruction here, I kind of meant, you know, specifically your interventions So yeah I mean just first you know this is kind of one of the first things I was wondering about is just you know, do you guys think this is something that interventionists could could speak to? Would it be a research question that you or colleagues will be able to help out with? And you guys can stay unmuted too.

P3: I was trying to unmute I'm used to being on Google meet so I'm doing the wrong function. Doing control D, did not work. Um I think so, I mean I this is ban a year plus of just something I've never seen in 25 years of teaching and I've taught everything now from Early On, all the way through age 22. Yeah, I mean definite differences, I think it would definitely be something, digging in deeper or whatever, I mean if people want to research. And there's been good and bad both. There's been some real positives that have ended up coming out of it, I don't ever want to repeat it. We're supposed to be back full fledge, in person in the Fall and I, maybe even over the summer, a little bit. I can't wait, I mean I'm in a rural area we don't have good Internet. For the majority of our folks in our county and I cover nine districts. So that's been a big challenge. There's been some positives that have come out of you know, doing the virtual and whatnot. So I won't go any further than when you're ready to have the answer, but I think it's a very valid question. And you know how is this different. I mean, there's so many differences in the last year plus and a half, I guess, I know. Do you have a better question that would be asked, what do you think P4?

P4: I'm in the same boat I think this is a really valid question. I too work in a very rural district. I think we have been back in person. We got back in August and we took a month off in there, but pretty much I've been back in person. No, July. We went back in July. I've never been so thankful to be in an office or in a home. Yes.
And our admin was very prominent that, we needed to be in person, because it was tough. Um, but I think it's a good question, the only thing is delivering interventions. It depends, I hesitate, because we had a primary service provider model. Um and I think most, not all counties in Michigan do--fun learning fact I've been learning--um, but I think it depends on what type of services you're providing. Because some do more therapy based, and I think that's very different than that PSP model. Um because, thankfully, and we did a lot of the parent coaching and stuff So for us it was just kind of an extension of it but, for some counties, I know it's been a lot more of a struggle.

P3: We were only back in person for a month and a half since this is all begun, and that was before Christmas, at some point, and then they reached a point where it was going to be Thanksgiving, I think, maybe we were back, yeah, maybe six weeks and they determined you know we're just going to shut everything down clean everything well,

and send everybody virtual, until after Christmas, because this is going to be a lot of exposure to families and things. But Early On, some of the schools have phased back in, Early on has never gone fully back. Just maybe eight, six or eight weeks ago we started allowing certain evaluations or extreme cases of children with maybe ASD or something like that, we've allowed them to meet at the intermediate school district building. No more than one hour a week but, otherwise, we have to be virtual for everything. My caseload has expanded because there's tons of kids coming out of the woodwork, now, I don't know where they've, you know, they've been in hiding the last year. So we're getting some pretty severe kids. I mean, I have, you know, probably at least 10 more kids than I normally do on my caseload but I don't have all the drive time. So they're piling em on. You know of like my 22 right now, 11 are on the spectrum, and that is so unusual. Very high. So, it's just been a really wild year. It just so happens, the person who handles the COVID rules that are district is also one of the Early On supervisors. So she's really following it to the letter of the law, it can be done virtually do it virtually, so we are just now told that maybe in June, we can have outdoor visits, weather permitting, but you still have to be six feet apart and with a mask. Oh well, yeah, I mean we're a long way they're telling us don't expect anything until fall to be like back to normal.

P4: Yeah, we do interventions, but we're in home, and we have parents and staff to wear masks and if older siblings are home, anyone over the age of three, is asked to wear a mask.

P3: That's how it was that brief time in the Fall and I will say that when we went back in person, I can't swear to where I caught it, but I did get COVID in the Fall, when we went back short time and, I am, I was not surprised, or anything like that, but I was pretty sick. And it wiped out two or three classrooms in a school, the one day I took a child, you know, I was doing the filming of a virtual classroom visit for ECSC. Had the mom on Zoom, she's watching me go around the classroom, I mean, you just think outside the box, because they weren't letting anybody out side of you know staff, in that building, either intermediate school or the school district. No parents or anything have been in the building. I don't think parents were allowed in any school building, and most of our districts, until maybe February or March. They were at the curb so but, it turned out I got sick. That whole classroom was sick. Two or three other classrooms in the school, so I don't know whether you know, and I had several families sick all at the same time, so who gave it to who, who knows. That was my experience in that brief time we did go back to be socially distance with masks. In the homes.

P4: Our parents are still not allowed in any of our local school districts or our ISD programs. So IEP meetings and all of that.

P3: Isn't that interesting? But yet you can go in homes?

P4: Yes, because and our admin fought for this. Because we, I have a very vocal team of 14 people. We are very strong willed and vocal.

And we go, I see three kids a day. Three to four. Which is actually less exposure than what a classroom of 20 kids would be. So if we you know. we mapped it out and she actually provided our special ED director at the ISD with it, and she goes “Here's their data. They are less exposed by these 12 visits, a week than what I teachers in the classroom”. And you know they were, there was hesitation, but you know, most of our families are really willing to be like “We want you in the home. So whatever we have to do, we're gonna do. No question”. like I felt really weird when we started back being like “Hey you're in your house, but can you wear a mask?” But they're like, “Hey, I have to have a mask on, I respect that. I'd rather you be here, then try to do this on a computer or by phone”.

P3: So what all ways have you delivered service than? In person? Like through Zoom or Google, phone, texting, mailing, dropping things off? Yeah, that's I mean pretty much what we've been doing. And I have gotten a little creative on what I do on like Zoom or Google, but there's only so much you can do.

P4: When we were primarily virtual through the summer, a lot of my coworkers were doing like Zoom backgrounds or Google backgrounds, [inaudible] backgrounds, just to keep kids more engaged. I personally didn’t because I want, I use more--my coaching became very interesting, I’m like “Okay what toys are out today”. Because, I’m like, I've got to coach with what you have. We did do a lot of door drops. But we have several Amish and Mennonite families.

P3: We do too.

P4: So it was very interesting to connect with them. And there was a lot of mailed letters back and forth, and things like that.

P3: What county are you in P4?

P4: I’m in X what county are you in P3?

P3: X. So I’m down like South of Y. We have like [redacted] that whole, there's like four communities that are very heavy in the Amish and Mennonite.

P4: I’m X, so north of Y. And we have like [redacted]

P3: I didn't know that was really heavily populated with Amish, interesting.

P4: We have, I want to say right now we have like overall 180 kids on our Early On caseloads. And I want to say, probably about 10 of them are Amish or Mennonite.

P3: Yeah, that definitely, it was more challenging. Because there was no way to provide service, other than we would drop materials or ideas or little packets, phone calls, if you could connect and a lot of just mailing.

P4: I had a lot of phone calls on the way to parents work, a lot of my parents were working through the pandemic in healthcare. “I don't have time” and I said “How about on your way into work?”, So when they were driving to work that's when we would do our visit because I’m like I respect that you're working.

P3: Yeah, my hours definitely changed, I usually tend to go later than earlier, we're allowed to flex our time, but this was way more extreme than usual. I some days wouldn't start until 10 or 11 and finish at 7 or 8, because I totally would follow what a family could do. Which are our supervisors were super flexible, they did not mind at all, but it really was just a whole shift of everything. You know but everybody's schedules was so different. Even if the family wasn't working I think people were staying up later, kids weren't getting up on, you know that early schedule, I really had no takers on my early morning visit times. During pandemic.

P4: I never did pre pandemic or.

P3: Yeah, it's gotten even crazier. Yeah, I agree, I always tended to work a little bit later, but this is a new level of, the 11 to 7 shift.

P4: I’ve worked in early on for three years and to get a parent at even 9:30, they're like, “No I’m good. How about 1030?”

P3: I know and I’m, people always act like that’s so abnormal in Early On. I don't know, the speech therapists and PT, sometimes they can rattle them loose. I--maybe I don't try hard for something, but I don't have interest in early mornings with my families.

P4: A lot of our families have siblings so they're like “It's really kind of getting the kids ready for school”. Or when pandemic was happening, it's getting them on their Zoom. Or Google. Or whatever. “I have to deal with this” and “I’m like I get that”. More than once “I’m going to set the phone down because they have to switch classes”.

P3: Yep. I think it's just caused schools, businesses, everyone to really look at how we're doing business, so to speak, or doing our jobs and really looking outside the box. How to…do it differently, do it more efficiently, do it with a lot of technology, and now I don't know that will have even in person IEPS when we're back in person. They have found it to be such a time saver getting more people to the table when you're not having--because a lot of times I drive anywhere from a half an hour to an hour and 15 minutes to get anywhere in the county. It just depends where I’m at. And it was so inefficient, because you just couldn't time things out. So they're finding while we're getting you know parents able to tune in quick, they can pop out at work and get on an IEP without having to, you know, take time off like that. So I will be shocked if we start doing IEPs in person, I

doubt we'll be doing our teaming or staff meetings in person, I mean some of those things I don't think we'll go back to pre-pandemic. And we've changed like all of our attendance, and I mean a lot of those were shifting that way, but it gave folks came to like redo programs and everything and our stuff is super streamlined now, for, you know, keeping data for when we're monitored and things like that. So those are some of maybe the positives. I really feel like some of the families were so desperate for somebody to talk to or somebody to help or to reach out. I mean, I think there was a deeper level of connected, it was one of two ways, it was either a deeper connection or I was ghosted because, they just had too much stuff going on and I have four or five families right now I just I am not hearing back from them and so we've also had a high number of changes, cancellations. I spend so much time every day redoing my schedule, doing my schedule, redoing my schedule it's and it's always crazy in Early On, and I get a lot of that, but this is again to that new extreme level. And I am one that is like a bulldog, I stay after families, because I know they need it, I don't want them to drop out or fall off the face of the earth. But we, you know, our supervisors have started saying "You gotta let go P3, with, you know, three phone calls, two texts, two letters, a drive by, a drop--no, you know it's okay you gotta, you gotta move on, because we're suddenly getting all these kids". So. Yeah definitely I think it's a valid question, to ask how things are different and then hopefully--is what they're looking for how to change? Are they looking for ways to change?

Researcher: Yeah, and that does kind of go into this next question was, you know, really thinking about then--I guess the first question is more just, you know, general experience. The things that you guys were, you know, discussing and then this one would be more aimed at um, you know, so what parts of actual intervention and how it changed as a result of you know, being virtual. And I guess kind of, you know, like what parts would you keep and what parts would you, are you going to be glad we're done, gone. And I mean, I think I heard some of that too. P3 what you're saying with the scheduling. You know, I mean things like team meetings, IEP meetings. Things where you can actually probably get more participation by not making people travel to a physical space. I remember from IEPs just how many times it goes work to try and get, you know, six different service providers to appear in the same room. And, yeah, I mean so, yeah, were there other things that you guys particularly liked or found challenging? I know from one of the other birth to three groups was having a similar conversation about the type of service delivery model and how that affected things so, you know, people that were doing predominantly, you know, working with parents, families and you know doing more coaching and that kind of stuff. And then I, one of the people that was doing more direct therapy with infants and toddlers well mostly toddlers but, you know, had to change it up and switch to mostly, you know parent coaching because, you know, a one and a half year old in front of you on a webcam--they're pretty limited and in what you can do.

P4: I think, like with my instructional practice, personally, like I got better at coaching. Because I was a preschool classroom teacher before I moved to Early On, and so it was a [inaudible] with child. So when I switched, it was a mindset shift of "Oh, I need the parent to be the 'we do'", you know. And so, for me, being virtual where I couldn't touch

the kid, so to speak, you know interact or hand over hand, it allowed me to like, even now that I'm back in person, be like "Okay, I want you to do this" and it allowed me to kind of step back and coach more. Or, but then at some times, like, when we were talking about specific sensory strategies, to be able to model like how hard to do like deep pressure squeezes. Something that you kind of have to be a person because, like, I will grab the parents arm and do it "I'm like this is about what you want. Here, try it on me, before we tried on the child". You know, things like that, where I'm like I couldn't do that virtually. But I also think instructionally like we do a lot of co-visits, so co-visits it's like we said with IEP meetings for virtual. So much easier to do a co-visit virtually because I don't have to account their drive time, because one side of the district to the other side is an hour an hour and 15 minutes in our world too. I got to make that make that drive earlier today, it was great. But, you know, I can say "Hey I need you to pop on for 15 minutes", and they can pop on and I'll bring out my work computer to homes and go "Hey they're going to join us virtually" and still do that model. But I also get our local SPED directors, so when I'm working on transitioning to our transition plan and conference, I get better attendance from them by offering a virtual meeting. Because they're like "Hey, I'm, you know, booked all day, but I can cut out 10 minutes to join this conference, and you know get to know families and have that great conversation about what is next steps". Before they'd have to cut out, you know, that hour to be there for half an hour or. So that was a huge thing. I do think more of the therapy--there's still some of us that, and some kids that need more of a therapy stance, then a coaching model too. And that was difficult. I didn't personally, I'm the teacher, so I didn't see it, but I co-visited with my PTs and stuff and I'm like, I don't know how you're doing that. She went out and bought a baby doll that's how she did it. But you know. And just interacting with, how to interact with toys even, you know, for some of them. I have nieces and nephews so I have a lot of age-appropriate toys, some of them have teenagers they don't have infant toys at home on the ready anymore.

P3: We did get a budget to buy things because we were, we did briefly go back, of course couldn't take anything in the home that was going to come back out with you, because we had a whole sanitizing protocol and couldn't, even with food grade sanitized blocks and certain form boards, and so we literally bought thousands of blocks and every family got bags of blocks and everybody got their form board, and everybody got to keep, you know, so maybe it was helpful that some of the families had access to things they might not have. I don't know that they know where they're at anymore, but. So that was different. I got pretty creative in my virtual, I liked it in some ways, because they could see my mouth, especially if I was working on sounds. When you're in the home with a mask that's a problem or kids that have sensory issues that were scared, things like that. But I used a lot with Mr. Potato Head, we did a lot with body parts and creativity and them having to make request, you know, to change things. We could work on colors, shapes, sizes, you know you can put a lot in with it. We did a lot where I would provide the family with a book and I would have the same books and we would do that together. And it was cute. By the time we would do that for like the first 100 words and different things like that, the families, the little kids would start—I'd get on they'd say "book, book, book". Might not have many other words, but they could say book, because they'd

kind of know what we were going to do. And I would provide them with Mr. Potato Heads, we would have em, you know, so we kind of could work on some of the same activities and mom could be coached or dad, you know, to work right alongside. So that was kind of cool. I think it stretched the parents a little bit. Definitely different though. We actually, several of our staff members, we made little videos so if we were trying to present a certain concept or action words or whatever it was, we would do a, you know, 30 second- or one-minute video, and then we would share them with each other, so we could all share them with families. And that was kind of helpful. So, I mean, it made us do things we probably would have never stretched and done before or thought of. I've dug deep and pulled out a lot of my trauma training and a lot more of--my master's was in sensory integration and everything. And so, pulled out a lot of those things that I hadn't used as extensively as I had before the pandemic. I think a lot of those kind of cool things, I would like personally I'm going to try and do a hybrid model, to kind of stretch my schedule, my time availability, so that I can offer parents, you know, maybe one week we go in person, when we do virtual or things like that. I have, in the beginning, I hated Doc Hub, now I love Doc Hub. We use it to get all of our signatures. Wonderful. We used to chase down administrators endlessly. Parents have even gotten pretty good at it, I have a few that can't quite get it, but--just the time savings on not tracking down signatures on REEDs and IEPs and crazy stuff. Doc Hub, done, done. We even have somebody now who will just upload it for us. So I mean, I think we've really improved some of our processes and I am, I'm hopeful maybe I'll end up doing more in person, but I really think if I could master a blend of that. I think I would really have feel like I had a lot more time next year, so I am excited about the positive changes with that Doc Hub for signatures, our uploading process for documents, our ability to you know, share data and videos and all kinds of stuff. We've just, I think we've all gotten a lot better with technology this year. I'm not in the generation that had that automatically. I mean when I graduated high school, there was one apple computer in the whole building. And that was cool, that was new, that was brand new so we've come a long ways. I've never had formal education on computers or programs, and all that. It's all been learning as we go so. It's been kind of cool. I've enjoyed that part of it. I think the frustration is being in a rural place without reliable, stable Internet all the time for the families. We've even tried with hotspots, Chromebooks, iPads and stuff but you know, we had some families that unfortunately we're using up all the data before our meetings and they don't know how to monitor it and stuff. The technology, well, it was wonderful for us was not wonderful for the families always.

P4: I agree with that technology piece. I mean, I had, I have a lot of families who have various cognitive abilities. And we had the Chromebook and the hotspot for family, and, you know, it just they didn't understand. As much as our tech tried to simplify it, it just was not something they were able to do. And you know or "Oh, we lost it again". And how many hotspots have been lost, you know that's a wonderful question. My district has literally said to a family, I can't get you another one. Everyone one of your four kids has had one and you've lost them off. You know. So, at some point, you know it becomes that but then it's--with, especially with my lower families being in person to guide them, I feel is hugely beneficial. But, yeah it's…it's a toss up.

Researcher: Yeah and that really has come through in some of the other groups to it, so, in some ways, you know it seems like it was kind of like one or the other side of the spectrum, you know. Or, you know, some families, it was just you know, that's great, that's great, but you know, obviously, was a stressful time I probably shouldn't use great as a word. But um and then similar to you were saying you know, depending on the family's comfort level, depending on their, you know, their abilities, the mat you know just did it created more, obstacles and confusion and. It was interesting to I heard--so, I've done two other groups with K three intervention us, and it was interesting because you know the nature of what they do it's you know it's based within the school, you know, they're not you know, that would be rare for them to go out to a home or something like that. And so it was it. I know for a lot of them it extended, created relationships with families, they didn't previously have. Because you're in the home life times the parent, you know as somebody who had a conductor my daughter was in kindergarten. Last year, when all this started and so, yeah, I mean you know, I was pretty much sitting buyer on the computer anytime they had to go through things you know, so it was me and her you know I was with her teacher for like three or four hours each day. And, yeah, so that that's been one of the interesting shifts I noticed the difference between how, you know, birth to three services are provided, and you know what K three is doing that was one of the interesting distinctions, I suppose.

P3: Oh, I was just gonna say that made me when you mentioned having to help your daughter that made me think, you know, I'm fortunate my kids are grown and gone. You know. I had to deal with, you know, life during COVID and teaching and everything, and, you know, we all have our things but I didn't have to teach children at home, too. And I felt for my co-workers who were so torn with trying to be so effective at work, but their kids were coming in and out and they were trying to set their kids up on Zoom and they were having, you know, their stress level was through the roof. So, it also gave me that insight into if this is how these really skilled, professional people are handling it with this stress, imagine my family's with less support, grandmas and grandpas not around, working odd shifts or totally out of food and money, or, you know, I mean the list of needs, was a big. How are they handling that challenge? So, I do try to give a lot of grace. As frustrated as I get about my schedule, I commend them on hanging in there, I think, I am so tired of it all, and so fatigued and like…just over it. I can't imagine how, you know, I try to put myself in their place, but I feel fortunate that my situation was not what a lot of the families were. That's just interesting. I can't imagine having to try and help multiple children or whatever through their lessons well trying to do my own stuff I know it sounds crazy or lame but I feel for every parent out there.

P4: So, I wasn't the parent, but my sister-in-law, my brother worked and he works in farm repair. He got no time off. And then my sister-in-law drives a bus, so you would have thought she was off because of the pandemic, but they did food delivery with the buses. So, three days a week, she would drive the bus. Which means her four kids, three of them being in school, would come to our house, on top of me. And my mom is a retired teacher, but still she had her own Zooms, because at that time she was a parapro. So, she

was helping. And so, the Internet lag. I would have my hotspot for work, but I'd connect one of their computers to it, but then we had two of them on there. Plus, we had a three-year-old they don't do anything that you want them to do. But, see like the positive piece of that was he would attend his sister's preschool Zooms because you know it's a family event, at this point, and almost every one of her classmates was quite humorous to watch. But he got, he picked up he picked up different things. So, sometimes I think for the younger siblings that aren't in preschool, they're still picking up on that learning. But I know like there was times like I'm on a meeting and I'm like I'm really sorry parent I can't show you this because I can't see you, and, you know, my--never realized how bad my Internet was at home. And you know, then one was in fourth grade so she was on Zoom like all day. So, it's like where does she go to find that time? There's not enough rooms in our house. Um, but I also I can't remember the other point I wanted to make, but that was the one.

Researcher: yeah, I have a--so my kids are 10 and seven. Ten and seven now. but um yeah, so we had a lot of that Internet fun of, you know, four of us trying to connect and we were fortunate the district gave us gave out Chromebooks, so, you know, they had their own separate Chromebooks. So, we didn't have to try and, you know, have four of us on one laptop or anything like that. Which I know was true for a number of families, um, but yeah, it was just--I mean it was laggy and they would, you know, things would cut out and then you get one kid online and then they get disconnected. You know I gave myself the unofficial title of technology specialist.

P4: So that's the point I wanted to make. My job evolved. I'm the youngest one of my cohort, of Early On, and I became the Early On tech specialist. Because, which to some extent I'm good with, but when they call me and go "My computer's doing this, what do I do?", I never realized how much tech support truly, probably needs to see the problem. Because, also in the middle of the pandemic--so June, July last year--we switch our IFSP/IEP writing system. We moved to complete 180 of programs, so we also learned that during the pandemic. Which I mean, we're talking almost a year and we're working on there's still kinks, but it was one of those that they're like "Okay, what do I do? Where do I go?" And I'm like, "Okay I'm like hold up, we got a video call". But I think my job got more titles.

Researcher: Yes. Yeah, I mean so we're—I guess there's still a bit of time, but yeah, we're getting closer to four o'clock. Those are kind of my two main things. Are there other things that you guys would want to talk about? Or bring up? You know relevant to the past year and a half or time before and really thinking about going forward.

P3: I think I hit on most of it, I think I'm trying to take the good things and take them with me. And keep those in place. And learn, I learned a lot this year about resilience and the COVID trauma piece, for everyone, and learned a lot about technology, new techniques, better parent coaching. So, I mean there were there were really positive things I think that came out of it. I just want to--and I really like the online meetings for a IEPS and team meetings and stuff. I think that just added hours to my week and I love it. We're

getting done with our team meetings far quicker. And we're even incorporating a time to share celebrations at the beginning that, I don't know, we never seemed to find the time before and we have more kids right now. But we're just very succinct, it's efficient, it's shared. I mean we're getting done with time to spare. We can schedule, after. So yeah, I'm looking forward to taking those good forward, leaving behind you know what didn't work so well. I am anxious to get back in in homes. I do miss that a lot, and even at the ISD, it is not the same. Because I tell them to bring a bag of toys, I'm really not supposed to have anything, I mean you have a couple things if they're sanitizable, but no books or anything. And we really don't want them to have their own toys anyway. But it's challenging. I mean they put us in these rooms with a million wires and computers and no plug covers and do the first thing I did was buy a giant bag of plug covers and put them in all the plugs you know. I mean, just those crazy things. It's not conducive to kids. I mean, it's not like a play area or anything, you know, they're running under tables and smackin' their head. So, I'd like to lose that element. I don't want--I either want to be in homes or virtual, come up with a nice blend. But give the coming to the ISD, unless it's like a true parent meeting or something, because that was challenging. That was better than probably virtual for evaluations, but not an effective, natural environment to do anything in. So, yeah, I just don't want to relive this whole COVID thing again. I can just tell you that. I am good. I am reaching that fatigue point myself, I'm not usually one to count the days to the end of the school year but I can't wait. Even though I work 15 days in the summer I cannot wait for June. 3 I am done, done. I need at least a solid week or two to recover before I go back at it and so, yeah, it's just been challenging all the way around.

P4: I think it's been challenging but it's really made me stress my self-care. Because we talked about it earlier, you know you said it, P3, earlier, is those work hour boundaries. And, you know, there was times I was on the phone until, seven eight o'clock at night and-- Okay, but then I'm like wait did I really get to shut off and enjoy my family? No. As well as I had a lot of CPS involvement during COVID. Which is not fun, but you all know this, um, but it was--how can I support my families in this moment? And, you know, I kind of at that time like we weren't in person. We couldn't do outdoor door drops things like that and I'm like I'm a little island because I can't get you the support that you need. So, I worked on like my boundaries which it's a work in progress, let's be honest, I work until seven o'clock tonight so--and that's an in person seven o'clock night. It's a great time. But, I love it because it's a very unique situation but it's when mom and dad can actually both be home. So I'm like I gotta do it, you know, but I think the technology piece, but becoming a better coach and now that I've been back for--what is crazy to think about almost a year. So I was only virtual for like six seven months. I still don't want to go back. I don't want to go back like when we were quarantining and things, a few of us got quarantined because we were exposed and that, just scheduling evals virtually, has been a nightmare. You cannot tell the same exact information from a virtual that you would get from an in person. And so because you just can't. Kids don't sit in front of a computer. I can't sit in front of a computer so.

P3: Yeah, you know my eyes went for me being near sighted to being far sighted with all my stuff on the computer. I actually reversed my perception. Isn't that crazy? My doctor

said she's actually seen that a few times during COVID that people are on the screen so much and just doing different things that it can actually change…like that so yeah, very interesting.

Researcher: No, no, no, no you're totally good. We're sharing tales of surviving the pandemic.

P3: And that's what it feels like. Survival.

Researcher: And it was so weird because…let's see in mid-February I flew out to Portland for a conference. I remember, even at that time hearing, that things were going on and in China, at least, I remember hearing stories. Because my coworker and I were talking, we were like should we cancel this trip? You know, is it really, you know, we're like well they're still holding the conference, and you know we've already got the tickets and stuff, like 'let's go'. And, and then, when we got back you know, things were kind of accelerating and then, like mid-March, you know, work had told us like, okay--when it looked like the schools were going to close for the year and stuff, you know. And, well, it was—right--it was initially like that two-week thing. They were like, okay everything's been closed for two weeks and I genuinely thought it was like, okay, yeah like that makes, like you know, like two weeks okay. So yeah, so it was just like I never really knew, like everything was just always so minute by minute. And even like when I would go, you know just like--I remember like going out to drive up to the grocery store and yeah it was just like that it…almost felt like a Twilight Zone, you know, like I got to the grocery store and it's just like you're, everything is gone.

P3: I know I remember telling my son, because he lives in Las Vegas and I said I felt like it was the zombie apocalypse or something, you know, there happened to be a really dark grey sky that day and I go to go Costco and they have like all these barricades and one way in, and you go there's hardly anybody and—I said this is terrible. And then I guess it was just as bad out West. But my husband always--I was like the designated person, you know, how they want you to just have one person that would be the one to go, and of course I am the one that got COVID but—oh well. But yeah it was an eerie feeling and it was the surreal--kind of like you said. I kind of blew it off in the very beginning, when you started hearing about it, like in January in February, because we've heard H1N1 and swine flu and bird flu and a million other things before, and it was not really a big deal. At least I didn't think it was you know and. My younger son has a business on the side that he goes to like expos and stuff so I was actually, I helped him set up. And he was supposed to have a whole weekend show, and they got the news that day, you know one o'clock to shut down pack up and leave, that was the same time the schools all closed, so I mean, and then it impacted his small business that whole time. So I mean it, I think it's to me it feels like a 9-11 that you'll never forget, like, what you were doing when this all started, you know it's like "Oh my gosh, yeah, I know exactly, that was Friday the 13th" you know kind of a thing. Very weird.

P4: I was just telling him on Friday the 13th, I got on the plane and I flew to Jamaica.

P3: The day that it started the shutdown and everything?

P4: She [Gov. Whitmer] announced at midnight and my flight was at 10am like that 13th. And my friends was at like five o'clock, because we were meeting in Atlanta. And everyone's like, "should you go? Should you go? And I'm like, I'm going. It's two weeks, like, Jamaica--to that point Jamaica's numbers had been like zero. Like to look at it, they had had like nothing, and I was like 'they're fine the.' The theory was that the warmer climates are fine. You know it's killing off the virus. I was like 'No, I'll be fine'. And going there. And so Atlanta was busy the 13th because only Michigan had shut down but coming back, I came back the 22nd, it was like dead. The planes were dead. The airports were dead. And I was like 'Okay, this is really scary and odd and I don't like it at all'. And just to have an airplane have like less than 20 people on it is really weird. But I spent that first whole week of COVID in Jamaica. On a beach.

P3: So, did you have to count it as days off?

P4: No, I work year-round, so I had scheduled those days off anyway, so it didn't affect me.

P3: Okay, okay that makes sense. Yeah.

P4: Everyone's like really?

P3: Well, they came up with all kinds of things, because there was a lot of backlash that "Oh teachers have it made. They keep getting their paycheck and they're doing nothing," you know, and all this. Well, oh no, we took more trainings and I've taken in my probably, career. In the time off, they had his reorganize all the files on the computer, all the drives and come up with new forms, we created resource files. We just, we were required to be busy during our work hours. And you know, of course, we were checking with families, we, you know came, up with food drives, we came up with emergency things. So, you know, it always bothered me that people thought we weren't doing anything, and well they think that all the time, I swear. It was even worse than usual. and I'm like, "Oh my gosh, I feel like I've taken on, like, this weight of all these other people that are in desperate situations". So, I said I feel like it's a really heavy thing. We've taken on more than our usual jobs and then, when it went past the extension, then it really got like, you are going to be, you know developing virtual platforms, and I mean, everything just ramped up. That it changed from more from that initial survival, to let's come up with a serious way to teach and instruct and help and do all of that. So, it changed gears but--and again we're still not back to fully in person. June 1st, we got the approval to have visits at the home if they're outside. And I still have to wear a mask, no matter what but if the family is fully vaccinated they don't have to, and they--we still have to socially distance. So yesterday, we met at--one family and I, we met at a park, and we toughed it out through sprinkles. We decided it was fine. And people were looking at me like I was a complete idiot, at the park with a mask on, you know, it's like what are you going to

do? So that's the reality we're still living, we are not back in person and I don't know when it's going to happen for Early On in our county so.

P4: I feel so bad for you.

P3: It is so ridiculously hard. It really is.

P4: We had our people last July, and we were virtual again a month and I'm like, I can't do it. I can't do it.

P3: We have only been not virtual for about a month. And that was in the Fall, briefly. And then, once Thanksgiving hit, then they told us go back virtual through the holidays, make sure cuz everybody been re-exposed and then it just every time it just kept extending, extending. So, we got really tired of telling families "Yeah, we're going to be back in person in February 4th…oh no, now it's March. Mow now we're waiting through spring break and". So anymore, I just got, so I told families, "You know what? We are virtual indefinitely, we really have no estimated time of return". Because it was just too painful. They were getting their hopes up and we were too. And I'm just like "OK, I'm over it." We're just indefinitely virtual and I'm not really sure you know. Our Pathfinder Center was open, with all of our most challenged students in the county in session, every day. You know, all the school districts in our county were back at least to a hybrid but, most of them were full, you know, in person. So, I'm not really sure why they just--even GSRP, all the preschools, most of the daycares, everything had reopened. So I'm not really sure why Early On, for us, had to stay primarily virtual. Don't really know. I mean they've tried to just tell us, it had to do with going into homes and you can't control sanitation. But we are one of the few counties I'm pretty sure that kept this model and it's only been a couple months that we would let them come to the ISD.

P4: What's interesting is that, our county, Early On was back. Our early head start program stayed virtual for--they're still virtual just like you. They've never gotten back to in person. They are hoping July 1 they can get back to in person visits, but our Early Head Start was the only one in our counties--well there's three of them that are under the same collaboration, but their head start programs were back, but early Head Start couldn't be. So.

Researcher: Yeah, it was--

P3: --Wild.

Researcher: Everybody interpreted it differently. I mean that's one of the things that I've been really noticing with doing these focus groups too is—yeah, just everybody. One of the people in the group was talking about, because they were there in southeast, and they just kind of went rogue and they had two families that really wanted to meet up, so kind of like what you were describing P3, you know, she just didn't tell anyone and started meeting them at the park and because their services that they're kid needed, it was just--

you couldn't do it virtually, you know, there was just no way. And so she just says, all right don't tell anyone but--

P3: Well, I my family, I met at the park yesterday they've been so desperate. They've been coming to the ISD for probably six weeks and I told her the change and she kept questioning me, so I said I'm going to send you a copy of the policy. So that there are no questions, this is not me telling you this. She just kept saying, "I can't believe we have to be outside," You know and all this. So I sent it to her. So yesterday, she was going to drive to the ISD, and I said that's fine, we'll go to our room. And she said, well I don't want to go to that room. And I'm like, well if we're going to be outside, why are we driving the ISD? Let's go to a park where there's some equipment and a little more fun. We can do some different things. So that's when we agreed to the park. Why would you drive 20 minutes, when we can go to a park right in town? So, that was our compromise, but it was, yeah, I mean the parents just really are not understanding why we're at this point. And so, I when I sent the policy, she said, I have to tell you this makes no sense to me but I'll follow it. But, yeah, I, we have all been tempted to just go off the grid and do our own thing. And it was funny because at the park yesterday it ended up there was a retirement, like, party under the pavilion and it was all teachers, from that town. Not from the ISD, but they, I knew most of them. I'm like, oh yeah, I would have been so busted if I didn't have my mask. So I'm like, okay, here we go. So, it's been tough to not do our own thing and have buy in from the families. It's been very challenging.

P4: Maybe we were back in person, because our boss knows that some of us would go rogue. We have strong opinions, for lack of better words. And more than once we're like, "Well I know it says this but I'm going to do it anyway". With our Amish and stuff, we're working on trying to get one of them glasses. Well, they don't have transportation. So, one of my co-workers takes a day off, so they're "not working" and we'll transport them but that's against the policy. Cuz it's, you know. She's like, well it's my day off, I can do, what I want. So, yeah, we're a little, you know, open minded.

Researcher: Yeah, but good for you guys, I mean that's awesome that you know. It's good that, you know, they respect that you know.

P3: Well, they let a coworker and I move a family between two communities, about a half hour. We got the award at the end of the year for Two Men and a--well, Two Ladies and a Truck. That was a few years ago, we literally, and we looked at each other halfway through--and they let us do it on ISD time, as long as we didn't have the people in our vehicles--but here we are, I'm thinking we're so stupid. It's an upstairs apartment. We're getting all this, we look at each other, like what are we doing? It's starting to rain, you know, you're trying to get it in her truck and my van. We took pictures. Stuff was bulging out the sounds. But yeah, I think Early On is a beast of its own, you just because you're so family. You know, you just get so woven into the family. It's really, it's different than all the years I taught in the classroom for sure.

P4: You can't not be impacted by the families you work with. I mean, if you're building a relationship, you're gonna know pretty much everything. Umm, a lot of cases that I know way too many details about some families. But, um, that's the nature of our job. I mean if someone came in my house consistently, every week, every other week, I would hope I gain their trust and relationship that I feel comfortable telling them. So.

P3: Well, I had a mom yesterday, and incidentally, on a call. We were doing a phone call because she had some appointment that was going to interfere with the time to virtually see the kids. So, she was trying to talk on the phone, she's saying 'I'm sorry I just picked up the kids from school, can you talk to my other daughter, I gotta run in the house and go to the bathroom and do a couple—and I'm like, you know, nobody would even understand that this is part of our job. And I'm like, so I'm talking to her daughter. Who I also had in Early On. I've had five of her kids. So, she comes back out, we're talking, and by the end of the conversation though she was you know, "I feel really bad because I feel like maybe I am--" I don't remember how she worded it exactly, "--abusing the situation". Or she said, "I feel guilty because you're not really seeing my kids right now". And through a lot of the pandemic it's been a lot of these phone calls. At one time out of desperation she took a job to deliver for Amazon. So, she would pack her kids in the car with her, to go, and so we would do phone calls. And so, she goes, I just feel really bad because I feel like, you know, maybe we've even—we've crossed the boundary kind of between friendship and professional, and kind of go, it's hard to separate but I've had so many of our kids and been out to the house for so many reasons. So, I said, she said I feel like we blurred lines, I just don't want to get you in trouble. Like you're not doing your job, and I said 'no, actually, I am doing my job because whatever helps that child function better, that's my job. And if the family's functioning better, than I'm doing, you know so. A lot of, I said, and I understand she's a person who needs somebody to talk to, I really feel like I'm the therapist through this pandemic for a lot of the families. And so, she even identified and kind of hit it, you know, right on the head yesterday saying, you know, it's been a really different role because you've really been there for me and answered questions on how to get more food or how to do things and, you know, just to talk me down when I'm super stressed and how to figure out how to get gas money, you know. So, I thought that was interesting. It really made me think about how different what I did, not just the virtual part and all that, but just the dynamic with the family was just way more intense, way more personal, way more everything, than it has been in the past. It was, yeah, it was just so different. We lived the pandemic right along with them and that always gave me perspective that their view of the pandemic was just so entirely different. You know, some actually really liked it because they got the unemployment and a chance to be home with kids. They didn't have to go to their job. They got this extra money, you know, so some weren't really scared--they might have been initially until things kicked in. But some were super scared the whole time. I mean, they didn't have the resources, some lost family members to illness during that time. So that saying in the beginning, where they would say 'oh we're all in the same boat, you know, whatever, whatever'. And then they changed it and said, no we're all in the same storm, but not in the same boat, I think was way more accurate because everybody's perception. But to be in a position where there was a lot more uncertainty for a lot of the families we worked

with, then what, you know, I had to go through, it always made me feel a lot more grateful. That as crazy as things got in my world that was nothing like I know some of the families had to go through. Lot of stress.

P4: For me, I live outside of the community I teach in. So, I live, closest is a half an hour away. So, I live more towards grand rapids than what my family's do, so I had a very different perspective, even just geographically. Because I could find you know XYZ and there was three food banks in all of Montcalm county for them versus how many there in Grand Rapids on a given week. Even now, you know. So, it was one of those that I had to become more aware, which my ISD did great with letting us know, like here's your food pantry list, here's where they're at, you know, here's a pop up one. Getting that information to us, so we could give it to families but knowing what resources were available, just I know, most of them, but even during the pandemic I'm like "Okay, I know they're only there only working two days out of the office, so if you leave a voicemail expect to call in a week", You know, those type of things where I wouldn't have necessarily had to know that otherwise.

Researcher: Yeah, the food access was, well, I wound up volunteering at our at our food pantry and, yeah, the food access thing was such a huge issue. And, yeah, I'm kind of like what you guys were saying too, it's like you just kind of do like what makes sense, you know. Like technically, I think you were supposed to, pull up and everything like that, but I wound up dropping food off to people. They didn't feel comfortable leaving the house or they didn't have transportation, or you know, whatever it was.

P4: Well, and with that, Michigan did the EBT cards for school aged kids and, I don't know if you experienced this P3, a few of my Early On kids got it. Have no rhyme or reason as to how they got it. They were not my MMSE kids. They were Early On kids and like one of my parents is like, they got the mail and they were walking in from the mailbox, and she opened it and she goes what's this? And I'm like no that's a pandemic EBT card. And she's like, is it because they're in Early On? And I'm like I have no idea.

P3: I'm not aware of any of them, they got it but they might have and not told me.

P4: Well, a few of them would text me and go, 'Hey I got this food card for them. Is it because they're with you?' and I said, no, because we're not connected to a local school district. Like what was one of the requirements. We're at the ISD level. So I'm like, I have no idea how you got it, but if you got it use it like.

P3: Did they have older siblings that were getting it?

P4: A lot of them were the only kid. That's also what I can't figure out. Because I was like, well if they have older sibs, like they know if your school has that record that you have this kid. But no, they were like only kiddos and I'm like I don't know you got this.

P3: That’s wild.

P4: And, you know, and some of my family's really needed it and one of them’s like, I really don't need it, what can I do? And I said, well, pretty much they're not going to really take it back so.

P3: Might as well use it and donate the food, if nothing else, you know, give it to.

P4: Exactly. I said either stock up or, you know, go find a family in need down the road and say, okay what groceries do you need? And go buy it. And they did about 50/50. They bought a lot of frozen meats and stuff and like “I filled my freezer,” and I’m like ‘good’. Hopefully with healthy stuff. But, yeah, I still don't know why some of them got it and it wasn't the MMSE kids which I would have thought were connected.

P3: That’s odd. That’s really odd. Yeah, this is just been definitely a year for the books. There's just no doubt about it, I mean, I was teaching during the 9-11 thing. I was teaching high school at that time, and that was really, you know, you remember exactly what you were doing at that moment in time, and, you know, the kids came, one of the kids came in and said, ‘Hey, Mrs. Bradley turn on the TV. There's a big fire,” And I’m thinking, oh, there's a local fire, you know, something. And we were getting ready for announcements and we turned it on, and we were actually able to watch the second plane go through and--you just never forget that. You just think, ‘oh my gosh’ you know, the world will never be the same again and, probably would have been different if I was with elementary but this, to me, it’s just so much more different because it’s so personal. This is, I mean 911 was devastating and it was it impacted the country and it impacted us too, but this is just on a whole different level. 9-11 didn't really change how I taught the rest of the year, you know, and it didn't affect family members, you know, just right here, you know. And I think one of the hardest things, and I know families experienced it too, was just not being able to see your extended family or even like my kids, you know, just people outside your immediate household. I guess is how it should it. That that was probably the hardest thing for me was that, you know, being able to see the family and at a time, you really want to see people, feel closer, know they're safe. You know, really tears at your emotions when you're separated at that time. So I know that also that isolation is really just gotten much of everybody, probably, but a lot of our families, I know it's been rough.

P4: I think 911 was more global, a global perspective, vs COVID. Yes, it's personal, but I want to say more social emotional.

P3: There you go that's a good way to put it.

P4: Because, if you think about it, like, yes, there's the medical scares of COVID and stuff. But it was more that social emotional stuff where you're not supposed to leave your house, you need to stay -home, you need to have masks—da-ta-da-ta-da. That's more mental because, like, I have a parent who has high, horrible depression, anxiety. And for

her, I mean, it was a daily phone conversation for a good three months because she's like 'I can't do it. I just need someone' And I'm like, I'm here, you know. She's talking to her therapist as well but, she's like I don't know what. And that's what makes me really—9/11 changed us in a global perspective. But COVID changed us social emotionally.

P3: I think we have no idea how long the effects of this are going to go on. That's what I see. Long term.

Researcher: That's what I was going to ask you guys, I mean, do you think--and you kind of talked about it at the start. But the, like with kids and socialization and have you been, have you guys been seeing those effects? Or do you anticipate like having to like change what kind of coaching you do? Or intervention to address it or…

P4: I've seen the changes already. Especially, I guess, not even my older kids--I would say my birth to three-year-olds, that I've seen that social emotional, like, one had went today care pre-COVID and post-COVID, like mom's returning to work now, and she is a hot, hot mess. Same daycare, same everything but because she's been home for with mom for 14 months, she just cannot process that change back. And it's that bonding piece. Like I've seen stronger family bonds because of COVID but at the same time it's that social, like, it's okay I go to daycare, mom comes home, dad picks me up, things like that. Um and like you had said earlier with kids not knowing how to play. Like last summer we had my nieces and nephews and I'm like, okay go outside and play. And they're like play what like? You had to guide them, and I mean their elementary age. And so, even that that socialization and getting back out. I, yes, it's instantaneous now, but I also am intrigued to see in five years what our teaching has to be, because I think we're gonna have to add a huge piece of social emotional health in our curriculum.

P3: I agree, well, and I think a lot of the families, well, yeah, they mean the kids were just home, they didn't have that and they didn't even necessarily have grandparents and family functions to have that interaction. Because grandparents sometimes fill a huge role and I felt like that was--extended family, that was a big piece that was missing for some of the families. And I mean even just the experiences. You usually take your kids to the grocery store so they learn about all the sights and sounds and smells and what we're doing. And you couldn't take your kids in the store. They had to leave them home with somebody or whatever, only one person was supposed to go out. So, I mean, I feel like they just even in the everyday life, not even with people. I mean, they you couldn't take your kids out and I think that was a big part of it, But yeah we see a huge difference and I really do think that's why we are seeing this huge influx of referrals now and they're more in, you know, more challenged kids than we've seen in a long time. My ratio of you know ASD is just so high, I mean, I know, in general, it is always trending up right now, but this is unbelievable. And what's interesting is kids that are presenting has really, you know, with a lot of red flags and we're questioning in the beginning, if we really are able to kind of really intervene, right now. We're some pretty quick changes which makes us go 'Okay wait a minute, is this really a kiddo on the spectrum? Or is this just such social deprivation that they're presenting kind of that way?' That's been interesting because

CMH was going to do, several I mean several ASD evals and their list was so long but that by the time they get to a couple of our kiddos through like, you know, they really, you know, why did you refer them? And what was going on? I'm like they are not the same child they were three months ago, so that's kind of interesting to me too. What all that means. But yeah I'm seeing kids that are much more cautious, fearful, confused, just not socialized than ever before, so. I'm not sure, yeah, I think it's going to have long term impact, I'm not sure exactly how that's going to play out and what, how our curriculum is or, you know, intervention. But I also know that I took more training, and I have had a lot in the past, but it was all very fresh and relevant. Tons of training this year on resilience and trauma, and social emotional, the pyramid modules and all these different things. And it's, you know, there was one training and it's just on this whole COVID fatigue and COVID trauma, and how it is impacting our kids. So it was super helpful. I'm glad I had those extra tools to deal with some of this and I think we're all going to be trying to figure it out for a while. I'm not really sure what all its gonna be.

P4: And I also—to go back to you, you know, you're not taking the kids to the stores, but last summer you weren't taking them to parks you weren't taking them to those farms even. Because we weren't supposed to. So those natural, open environment experiences. Like I went to the zoo and I was like this is a hot mess. And it wasn't my nieces and nephews but I'm watching other kids and going 'Oh man, we haven't been out in a while'. Just that social awareness. Like, I have a 12-year-old, who just literally ran up and pushed in front of me to see something and I was like "Oh hi, Okay". And like I stepped back as the adult but my nephew was like 'What happened?'. Things like that, where I'm like "Okay, you have this in the past and did we just forget it because we're not using it? And my brain weeded it out, or, you know, those type of things, where I'm like those social skills in an outing I think are lacking. Because we as parents, as adults, we haven't had to teach those. Because you keep them home to keep them safe.

P3: Well, another thing too that comes to mind as I am always kind of pushing that, you know, it's--you really have to limit, you know studies show limited tablet time, TV time, phone time, you know, under the age of two and, you know, I try and always gently bring that in the conversation because phones rule with these kids right now. Oh sorry, you need to be quiet here's a phone, play a game. But now we're shoving technology at them. Half the parents are holding up the phone to try and get them to pay attention to me for our little visit, or whatever, you know, they don't have a computer. And I'm like we've done a real disservice because now we are cramming technology down the throats of so many people, that it's too much. I mean, it was I'm more used to it now, but in the beginning, when we were just solid, you know, six, seven hours. Wow. That was doing me and I felt like I'd been beaten up by the end of the day. And I'm like and yet I'm not getting exercise. I'm sedentary. This isn't a good combination. But I did think about that because I'm usually the one telling em not to give the technology, you know, to limit it and to, you know, why and here's the research and now we're having them exposed to more than ever. Those kids are going to be wanting technology to the nth degree. And parents are going to think this is the best way to educate because that's what they just lived. Where we're always telling them, you know, we want that interaction and all this.

So, it probably sent a lot of mixed messages. I mean, obviously it was out of necessity but--definitely sent a different message to parents then what I usually preach. You know, the value of that face to face.

P4: I'm intrigued because I know there's been studies pre-COVID about technology and the neural pathways in your brain. So, examining in a few years, these infants, toddlers, even early elementary school kids. How has it affected their neural pathways? Because, I know, like you said staring at a computer screen all day. No thanks. I can't do it. And, you know, I can't focus and before I could, if I had a day, where I had people work great I could do it all day. Now I'm like "Okay 45 minutes, I made it! Yay!". But it's one of those things that I'm like I'm intrigued by how it's changed my brain but how it will affect these kids whose brain is still developing.

P3: Right very true.

Researcher: Yeah, I think that's going to be a huge direction for research going forward. It's just it's the--there was a really interesting…there was this guy, blanking on his first name, his last name was Elder. But in the 60s, he did he was doing research and he wound up, uh, the people that he recruited had all been born during the Great Depression. But what he started off researching something else, and then and then came across this and wound changing what he was looking at. But similar to what you guys are talking about, where it was like the timing of when they were born during the Depression, was like really important. Like even like down to like months and stuff. I guess it goes back to what we were talking about earlier where like so much can change in three or four months, you know, so much happens developmentally. But, yeah, I mean it just had the impact throughout life was just that significant.

P3: Yeah, this will be interesting to see down the road. I have six years left till I retire and I'm really curious to see by the time and my friend retired this year and she's like, I just never thought I'd go out on a year like this. I could just say to a couple more years but I'm good. And so, yeah, I'll have a little more opportunity to see what's going to come from all this. But I can't believe how much has changed, you know, I sound like my mother now, you know, she'd should always say well, "You wouldn't believe, we used to walk uphill, fix my," You know. Whatever. But I feel like so much has changed in the years I've been teaching, you know, my kids laugh when I'll say we had the ditto masters you know, "What's that? What's a ditto?". So, you just, I mean, things have changed and now I feel like we're on an accelerated path of how fast things are changing with technology and just everything. So. Yeah. It's gonna be interesting in the next six years, I bet it's just going to be really incredible. And I do know that there has been talking our county that of the several schools as a cost saving measure are considering a hybrid model. And not really so much for COVID but as a cost saving measure, now that they figured out they could do this. And I'm not sure how that will play out because I don't know how parents can work with, you know, a crazy school schedule. So, but there have been talks in some of the smaller districts. That they found out they could save a lot of

money. I'm not really sure how. Maybe the busing and stuff like that, but didn't think it would be that big of a deal. But.

P4: Yeah that's interesting because I had a talk with one of my special ED directors, but at a local district. I want to say it was yesterday, before meeting. We both happened to be on early and I was like "So what's this fall looking like?" She goes, "Our goal is 95% in-person". She goes, "We will have some virtual options". She goes, "but we're finding with test scores, with the Star and MEAP testing," She goes—well not MEAP anymore, but that Star and whatever. Not in the classroom can't tell you. That it's not ingraining. And she goes, "So, yes, we'll have a select few that, you know, that 5% class or two that are virtual but the rest should be in person and." Wow. And I mean they made the option in January when we came back for semester break that if they were not successful in the first semester virtually they said, nope, it's not an option. Your child needs to be in-person. So, they had called, she goes, "I think we called about 30% of our virtual kids back". Because of attendance issues or just not doing lessons and things like that she goes, as a district, we had to and I'm like, I agree with that, if they're not showing up for the classes--you're held accountable for their learning so if parents aren't enforcing it, I know you've had many conversations. But, yeah, that was her--she's like, I'm hoping 95% in person. Our Head Start announced they're going back because they did two days a week and split classes into like eight kids and weird COVID system. But they announced they're going to do full classrooms four days a week, next week. Next school year full days. So. I'm like good, we can service all our Head Start kids.

P3: I am crossing my fingers that by Fall, at least by Fall, we are back in person. Oh my gosh. Yeah, I need it. This is just been really way, way, way, way too much. It's not like, it's not fun. I love my job but this is just…somebody said "Oh, you're getting ready to retire." No, it's not that. I guess it's COVID fatigue. Or whatever they want to call it. But I am doing my job and I do love it, at some level, but it's not been that typically.

P4: It's not working hands on with kids.

P3: No, this is just not what I signed up for. I always joke, I say, "This is not what I signed up for," You know, you go with it, but yeah, I really need to get back in person. I'm sure that will change my psyche. Well and I'm having a heckuva time. My stuff is either, half of it's in the car, because some people will say, "Well, what are you doing visit in the car for?" Well because I had to run and drop stuff off and I don't have enough time to get back, you know, the way scheduling so I sit and do visits in my car. Mr. Potato Head bag of stuff. I can sit there and work on body parts and colors, and all this. [inaudible] You pull it all out. So, these are either in my car, they're back in here, stuffs at the ISD. I just feel like I don't know where my stuff is. So, like this morning I had to run out and grab stuff out of the car to come in because I had a virtual, than an IEP. Now, I have to go in person at the ISD but it's just not even a fluid day. It's a mess and I never I feel like I never know where my stuff is. And this stuff can't go to the ISD because it can't be contaminated. Because you can't you know still can't sanitize books so, well, [inaudible] stays with me, is one place. Then, I make the families bring stuff to the ISD,

or they bring it to the park now. And, so, yeah, I just feel like I am not organized and scattered. I think that's the other part. Just because I it's just so discombobulated. So, I'm looking forward to a more--if there's such a thing and more typical school year. Getting my stuff all together. I just keep like, thank you, I think I've forgotten something, even though I've got all my checklists and all my stuff. I just feel, you know, out of sorts. That I feel like I'm forgetting something. Today will be a day of reckoning, because we have to do our sign out sheets and said "Okay what did I forget? Have I done all my IEPs? Have I published? Turn stuffed in?" So. Yeah. I'm ready. We do work 15 days in the summer, but it is much more of a break. So I mean I'm ready for a break. I've been ready for about six months. For this big break. So that's why I know I'm not--it's not been a typical year. Because I usually don't even really think about the fact that it's going into a summer break. It's just the continuation of my year. But. So, I'm feeling it along with everybody else, I guess just not the same way as the families, maybe, but I'm over it.

Researcher: Yeah, So this was kind of one of the first broad questions that I thought of. How is the experience of delivering instruction during the pandemic different from pre pandemic? And we can kind of tackle this in a few different ways, but broadly those are like the two main areas that I was kind of interested in getting your feedback on. You know so first off, do you think this is a question that interventionists would have you know important information to share about? And is there a there a better way to phrase that question?

P5: And I'm looking at and I'm thinking that's obvious. Some of the answers. And I'm thinking, I don't know, I wonder what are the roadblocks? For reading intervention. Or I do reading instruction. For interventionists, during the pandemic or something or something like that. Post-pandemic. And I'm thinking, maybe you need to tie it into the type of learners we service. Because when you think of intervention groups and the kids that we service, their kids they have a lot of avoidance issues. You know, online it's just so much easier to not get the intervention. I don't know if that helps, I'm just thinking.

Researcher: No, that definitely does. P6 are you are, you also primarily reading?

P6: No. I am. I do reading and math, mostly reading. Kind of switching over a little bit to math because next year we're actually hiring reading teachers, not so much interventionist. But um I do both but I guess, I was kind of thinking about--I don't want to go off on a tangent--kind of thinking about my time during the pandemic, when we were shut down, how I was able to service some of the kids, and I mean I guess like P5was saying, there were a lot of roadblocks. You know a lot of times I just zoomed in with a class. And kind of helped, supported, my students that needed those interventions, you know kind of those type of things. Like roadblocks. I mean there were times that I, you know. You know, would just meet with a kid, a student one on one, but there definitely were more roadblocks, that you know, I'm…so I'm not sure if I'm kind of getting off tangent but just. But, no, definitely, there was definitely different experiences delivering, you know, the instruction during the pandemic, but maybe like P5said, you know what were those types of roadblocks that, you know, especially for interventionists. What were those roadblocks that, you know, we couldn't be able to you know meet with a student or meet with our groups or, you know, things like that. I know and one I'm actually, I don't know P5, I'm between two buildings so I'm budgeted out of two different grants. So, I'm between two buildings, so you know my one building that's all Title One I had many, many roadblocks. My other one, not so much so.

Researcher: And, and do you both think it was kind of similar in that regard of, you know, so yeah--one like definitely a lot of times students that are assigned for intervention sometimes there's like those straight up motivation issues, where getting them engaged is an obstacle in and of itself and then--

P6: For sure, for sure.

Researcher: Sometimes, with the pandemic too, then you throw in the scheduling component of now, you need to be here at this, you know, and so its kind of like both of those issues kind of become…

P5: Um yeah, I think my biggest issues were probably. Well, I do, I have to teach a program, so I do Corrective Reading. And that's direct instruction. So, then, that determines that I give them something and they respond back to me. And, but, like my biggest frustration is the ones that need to be there either exit when they're frustrated, they just leave or they don't show up. So, I mean I'm thinking more of even, I can't, they can avoid me now. Every day. So, I mean to me that's been the hardest part.

Researcher: I'm somebody who also had to do corrective reading, as an intervention, I empathize greatly. I know what an obstacle, it was even when I had, you know, 8 kids in front of me. Prompting. Being able to directly prompt them.

P5: Right well when they're in person, you can keep on them, you can keep--you can do the structure and you can like do the STAR rules and keep, you know, keep refocusing them, but when they're online it's absolutely almost impossible.

P6: Well, and I think too, just the whole like scheduling purposes, because I mean, you know, a lot of times, some of my family's you know they have three, four or five kids in the same household. And they're trying to juggle eight different types of schedules, along with you know any adults trying to work from home at the time. That, you know, it was a lot because, like with our district we weren't I mean we didn't have enough devices to give every student a device. There were times where it was just one device per family. So even like that, you know, and I don't have a strict program that I do so, a lot of the times with my interventions, I mean, you know, I was just getting on supporting them with any, maybe, class work things like that that they had that they needed support in. Or, you know, we do the Fountas and Pinell leveled literacy intervention. So, you know I would get on too, with the books that, you know, I could get online and to be able to share my screen and everything. But the whole lack of motivation and kind of like, I'm-- also, the whole scheduling of trying, you know, to get the kids, you know, to get the kids on. I mean, I don't want to you know dwell on it too much, but I mean I come from, you know, one of my schools. One of my schools very neat and very needy and, you know, it was hard you know, some of them were being watched by grandparents because you know other times, you know, their parents work didn't shut down, you know, maybe they were, you know, working at a store, you know, or a frontline worker or something like that. So, and, you know, some days there was, where I was not giving intervention I was giving more or less you know, support and just trying to be there and things like, you know, things like that. I don't know. It was, I mean, it was very tough. Now I'm not doing any online intervention, right now, because we're back face to face and our students are getting all of that from, you know, their teacher if their virtual and things like that. So, I

mean, I shouldn't say that I do have one student that I'm servicing that's online. He had to be online for a certain reason but. So.

Researcher: Did it feel like when they came back for full time face to face, did it feel easier? Did it feel like things went back to normal or was it different challenges?

P6: I would say, half and half, like, for instance, I was telling P5, before you got on. So we had students that kind of seemed like you know they would be coming and going, you know. All of a sudden, you know, we had a bunch of students that could come back in March. So, for instance, a first grader I'm working with right now. So, she went out in March 13 of her kindergarten year. Here we are March a year later and I mean right now she's about to go on to second grade next year. And I'm working right now with just word families. I mean, I finally got her to get the 'at' family down. And it's like. So right there is like one of my biggest challenges, because it's like "Oh my gosh, how do we put this poor girl, is going on to second grade". You know she's been out her half of her kindergarten year, half of our first-grade year and--I just I feel like our challenges are just beginning, you know, what I mean? It's just going to be a domino effect, you know, especially for those kids who have been out a full year. And P5and I were discussing I mean X offering virtual again next year.

P5: Yeah. I think that the whole concept of school has changed, though, because I was doing the MEAP testing and so I'm trying to pick up all the kids that didn't test during MEAP. There are kids that aren't showing up to school for months or they're on a week, off two weeks, or they're coming for a day. The whole concept of coming to school daily, at least from our population, most of it has changed. So, um, that's the difference I see. The importance of education or coming to school consistently coming to school, to me, has changed--where it's not a priority for a large number large percentage of our population. That's just my observation. Because my kids will come, they'll go. I mean, they'll--I'm like "Sorry are you on the three day plan or the five day plan? Because we have a five day plan". And then there are some kids that in my intervention that I might see once a week or once every two weeks, once they come back face to face. It's almost like the parents have decided that--we come, we don't come. So.

P6: No, I feel that that's how I was telling P5 too. I have actually two high schoolers and you know it just floors me that you know you've got these high schoolers that are virtual but yet here I am at my son's baseball game and their virtual all day. But they're coming to play their sports but yet they just get on maybe 20 minutes, a day on their Edmentum program, to fill out some kind of you know assignment and they're done. You know. It's just, it's mind boggling right now, you know. And I know we're, all in this, but at the same time I'm not sure where we're going with it.

P5: Yeah, I wonder if your question should be how has the perception of education changed post-COVID? But I don't know. It's very, very disturbing to me at least. We're going to be in a tough spot as a country if we let this linger.

Researcher: Yeah, I totally agree, I mean that's really insightful. And yeah, I see like a few of the ways where, you know, the wording I'm kind of initially trying to keep it broad. You know, anybody, you know, interpret it. But yeah, I think that those are pretty consistent experiences, I mean, just from, you know, my wife still actively teaching. And hearing everybody's different--and even me just as you know, I'm not in a classroom anymore. You know, I have a 10-year-old and a seven-year-old and, yeah, there is that sort of—I don't know the right word for it, but I guess bewilderment, as you know, it was like their school's going back to face to face, but then there's like all of these other opposing messages that are going on. Kind of like what you're talking about P6. Where it's like, you know, like my wife's cousin wouldn't come over to have a barbecue with us, but her son participates in travel baseball.

P6: Right, right. No, you're exactly right. And to even go back like, you know, and it's hard. My son's who's a junior is, you know, working his butt off right now, trying to keep up as GPA, all his ap classes, all this because he's got it, you know, apply to college in a year. But and he's just sitting back watching some of these kids who he knows don't do anything--oh here you go 4.0, here you go, you know, you got a 4.0 on this assignment and, you know, come play baseball now. When it's kind of like, I mean, again it's the whole thing. And I mean I was telling P5too; in our district we're hiring virtual teachers for next year. So, these parents, right now, who have their kids at home virtual and continue to keep them, it's going to be a big change for them next year because, with a virtual teacher they have to be on now all day. Where right now they're just, they Zoom with their teacher at the end of our day because we let our face to face go home an hour earlier. So they're kind of at their house doing their Edmentum program, maybe checking in with the teacher twice a week but next year if they want to stay virtual they're going to have a whole year of a teacher all day long that they're going to have their normal schedule. So that'll be interesting too, because I don't think a lot of people will end up showing up. They're not used to being on a device all day.

P5: They're not used to school all day.

P6: Right exactly it's no you're exactly right.

Researcher: This, this is a side question. P6 I know you were saying like one of your schools is more predominantly title one. One is right, maybe not so much. With the online programming, and this is just something I've been wondering about personally, it seemed to me that it fit much better for…like, our friends that are going to continue to do online are also able to do remote work. They tend to be middle class or upper middle class, I wasn't sure if you saw any breakdowns that with the difference between two schools, who is choosing to continue virtual.

P5: I think it's our lower kids, our kids that fall through the cracks more. They're not being supervised. Sometimes there's not, we know there's not adults there. There's nobody helping them with their devices or helping them submit things. To me, it's the people that are falling through the cracks that are mostly online. It's creating…I'd say it's

predominantly black. So, it's going to make, create, this big chasm between our black students and our white students and then it's going to create a big chasm between the haves and the have nots. Because I think it's for a lot of different reasons, it's the kids that fall through the cracks but then their falling in a deeper crack and Hell. Because they're just not showing up they're not doing any work, they're, you know.

P6: And, and to give you some feedback on that too. Actually we've seen this in both of our in both of our schools, so we do the NWEA testing. So with NWEA our literacy coaches, we were allowed. our virtual kids took the NWEA test from their home. What happened as our literacy coaches, like you know got them on and they watched them and all that. Well, we do these data meetings and we're doing our data meetings and these set of twins that I had--I've had them since kindergarten. They were, they are now in second grade. They have been virtual. I mean, mom had such a hard time getting them to school, she avoided the whole concept of, you know, my kids need intervention. We would hold child study team meetings, we'd try to meet with the parents. You know, "they're okay, they're okay", you know, that kind of situation. You know, "they'll catch up, they'll catch up one day". Um, so they're first grade, they're in first grade last year, NWEA score they're like at five percentile. Okay, we go on the pandemic. We go off, they take the NWEA in the fall—99th percentile. Ding, ding, ding. I mean, you know. And we just had that similar situation with another student, 85th percentile. He came back so he just took the NWEA this week, teacher came down and said, "Well, here's his score. He got 2%". I mean, so like, right there, I mean, is this huge, I mean, huge gap. I mean, we got, we've got the parent taking--somebody obviously had taken the test or read it all to them. Or told them, you know, what I mean. So I just like, P5and I keep saying, I mean, I just. I don't, even if we were to all go back face to face, I mean this is going to be a domino effect for years to come. And like I agree with what P5said--no, I see, like, for instance, the set of twins that I had those parents that school wasn't really important, but now, and I don't want to put judgment, but now, hey, we've got this pandemic, I'm not sending my kid to school now. I've got this pandemic, now that, you know, no way are they going to school. Well now they've been out a full year, I mean, they were already behind. I can't even imagine what there'll be like when they ever come back face to face. So, no, I definitely agree with P5and what I'm seeing that are staying virtual. The parents who have the crazy work schedule and, you know, they might now, you know, they worked at night and so their kids, it was always hard to get them to school and things like that. I definitely see that that type in my elementaries.

Researcher: Yeah, I'm gonna go on. There's one more slide to go through. One quick thing before I move on, part of what I wanted to get to with this question as well, was the emotional experience of having to provide intervention and having to try and navigate all of these different things, in addition to trying to survive. And be parents as well and that. I'm hearing some really good feedback, I think, especially too with what you guys are talking about, even just inserting some of the language of roadblocks. I think that'll kind of immediately bring people just what some of those more emotional experiences were--even with like I'm thinking of my wife. You know, so when she was doing her, well, she was teaching fourth grade at the time for an online class, but one of the kids just had a

smoke alarm, where the battery needed to be replaced and was so it was going just constantly off in the background for weeks. Just her, you know she's trying to get through this, you know, this new online program and they were using Canvas and this Microsoft teams program. And the program wasn't working efficiently, and on top of that you've just got this constant beep that's--

P6: And I give I give kudos because, like I said, I mean I, being an interventionist, I was more of like the support system, and I mean, yes, there were. But I was never having to be in front of that class of, you know, 25. And I mean I was the one helping my principals track down students and all that. But, thank goodness, I mean, I was in the position I was in because, I mean I don't know where I would be at right now, because that, I mean, especially when I would get on these Zooms with my colleagues, trying to support them. Oh my. I mean, I know you'd have babies crying or, you know, a little brother running around screaming. Just.

Researcher: Oh yeah. Yeah and so, you know, as I've been--I was able to do earlier for the weekend I got to do a similar group with Birth to Three interventionists. And so I'm noticing more that this question, I don't think is sufficiently different from the first question. But broadly, I mean, what I was thinking about was yeah so how did instructional practice change and how was that effective or ineffective. And, and to clarify where my mind was when I came up with that question, was like so, for example, P5with Corrective Reading. When I had to administer that, I only administered it in the way it was supposed to be administered was when I going to be observed. That was how I implemented it. Because it was just sort of the things that you were saying, where the you know the eight kids that I had in front of me, if I wanted them to actually get out of the program what they were supposed to get out of the program, I couldn't just read off the script. And so I guess what I really mean by this question is, you know how we adapted practice, how we adapted things so that they made sense for the current situation. And which of those things, would you keep. You know, like are there, certain things that, you know, you adapted and you, and you would plan to hang on to or not.

P5: I wouldn't do Corrective Reading online at all. It's too interactive. I'm pretty, i'm committed to the structure, because that's the program and I don't read off the script, but I do all the sounds and this reading, you know, and those things. But I don't read from the book, you know, because I've been doing it for so long, but I don't think this works at all for online. It's too interactive. But you're supporting [inaudible] probably works.

P6: Say that again P5, you broke up.

P5: I said, where you're supporting the child that probably works more. Better than what I'm doing.

P6: And there was a lot of, right. And with the leveled literacy intervention, Fountas and Pinell did a great job because, obviously, you know, and a lot of companies did once we went into this pandemic, they started getting so many things online that you could share

your screen with your students, granted they might not have had the book in front of them, but I could still go to different activities. Part of the level of literacy intervention program, to be able to show them and share with them. Or, you know, here's some word wall words and you were able to scan them to them, and, you know, get them and get them to them, you know. But I mean that definitely I thought was a definite plus having all of those resources. You know, online and just being able to, you know, support the teachers. And I mean too, with a lot of times, with the Zooms, if I did go into a, you know, a teacher's classroom and I did see some of my kids that day I was like, "Oh, you know Jimmy and Julie are here." Hey, you know, she'd make up a quick, you know, quiz room for us, and I would go into that room, with just those two students, you know and be able to do do something quickly with them. You know, but. I mean, was it that was it the best? No. Were they getting exposure? For sure, you know. But, again, I feel like a lot of it, though, is the kids that I really needed to see or support were, I mean, they weren't there.

Researcher: Yeah, I wonder how it will, I guess, it would depend on the structure of things--like data team meetings and how people on the team interpret what they see. But I do wonder how it might hamper getting a kid the assistance that they need if--kind of like the example you gave P6, of where obviously somebody read them the test for them to be 90th percentile right and then 4th percentile. And I can think of situations where I would have had a team member that was like "Well, then we need to give them more time, who knows," You know. Other times, where I would have had a team member that was like, "Obviously, somebody was reading that to them. We need to like".

P6: Exactly, exactly, exactly. Well and I do worry about with, you know, us offering a virtual program next year. With parents being like "Hey there's going to be another virtual program this time, it's going to be a teacher all day, this is going to be great". But again, how is that going to support them, I mean. because, like I said, is, I mean, these kids are going to have a normal, well as much normal as a day as possible, with having to say, "Okay you're getting on, from 9 to 10, we're doing math. Okay now you're going to have your, what would be like an art break, you're going to take time off for 20 minutes," I mean that's going to be huge next year.

P5: We do that, right now, where they have to be online pretty much face to face until maybe one-ish. But they come, they don't come, they turn--they log into the meeting, but they don't turn the camera on directly and they're not really there. Even for mine, like, I have a rule and I've been pretty strict about it, you have to have your camera on and you to be in front of it. But then I'll be saying "Melody you've got to do this work. Melody, come on, you gotta do. I need that assignment." And I still won't get it, I can't get it from her even, you know. So, even though they're, they might even--you know, if you don't have like certain things that they have to be in front of the camera, they have to be responding, and they have to turn in their work and teachers have to check into Power School or whatever. I don't know. I mean it's going to be motivated by the motivation of the child and the parent. I don't know. It's not working out well here. All of our NWEA

scores are like super low. And the kids aren't Dibel-ing, so the virtual kids haven't Dibled. I think if they go virtual they should have to come in to do tests in person.

P6: I do feel like I actually had, did a reading assessment on a child, because the parent, what happened is they missed the cutoff date of their child being able to come back. So, they had to wait like another three months, and she was so worried that you know, finally, that my principal and I just decided, are you okay, if your child comes in and I will assess them? You know, to kind of put that parent at ease, but I mean that's what I worry about. These students that have been gone all this year have had none of our normal yearly assessments throughout the year. And then what's going to happen next year again? I don't know. I'm not, like I said P5and I were talking. We're not quite sure why like P5 had said, you know, I think like a lot of our schools were offering virtual because so many of our schools around us, are. You know, like for X. If [redacted] are going to offer virtual by all means, X is going to offer virtual too. Because they're not going to want to lose out on any students leaving because we're not offering, you know, we're not offering a virtual like. Just feel like we all just need to come together and say "Okay, let's, we gotta get these kids back". Well, you know I mean. For instance, my boyfriend teaches in a smaller district, I'm not sure if you're familiar with Armada. He teaches in Armada, okay. So, he teaches high school [redacted] and [redacted] has decided, they voted last week at their board meeting, nope. We got to bring everyone face to face, there is no virtual. At first, they were going to do just a virtual at elementary but they said, no way, we got to bring everyone back. Because him being at the high school they have seen significant decline. These kids aren't showing up, they're failing classes and they just, it's not, you know. So, they just decided, nope. That's it. It's all face-to-face next year. You know. Not sure what the right answer is.

Researcher: Me too. One of the things that's I think changed for, you know--so having to get my--so our district does I-Ready. That's the assessment. And I'm only speaking, you know, so but yeah, I was not a big fan of I-Ready prior to the pandemic. And having to get a 7-year-old and a 10-year-old through I-Ready, probably solidified my opinion that's a. And some of that's just my own, you know, like--so my son, for example, he's needed reading intervention throughout elementary school. But kindergarten through third grade he really needed it and I was always some of it is just being an education, particularly being in special education. But it was like when we had the conferences with his reading interventionist teacher, I was much more focused on what she had to tell us about what she saw when he was actually reading. I mean we went through the I-Ready because Read by Third Grade. And all those good things you know, but the I-Ready score never told me anything more than what she could actually tell me about what it was like when he was you know. And we were fortunate that he was a kid that was not a, you know, he's very good at like if you tell them to do a particular thing he's going to sit down and do it, you know, but that that as a parent that was one of my first things, you know, it's like "Well, is he actually even engaged and you know, like these kinds of things. And, and so it was to me, it was much more meaningful to have her insight of, "Yeah he knows-- this is, you know when it when it comes to these specific sight words, these are the". You know, being able to have that that level of conversation. But yeah I think that that to me

that seems like one of the things that's changed is how we're able to have those relationships, you know, I mean just being broken that you know--

P5: So, I'm thinking, and I'm listening to you and if a parent talked to me about my online students it would be hard for me to give that answer because they're laying on the bed with the computer over their head or--there's just so many factors to fluency and different decoding because of even their posture or they have some food in their mouth or they're holding their baby, you know. So it's really difficult to even assess sometimes what they do know and what they don't know. I can't like control, I guess, I want to be more in control, you know I want to be able to control that they're sitting up that they're tracking that they're attentive as much as possible. And I can't do that. So, it's frustrating. And I only want them to do it until they learn it, and then once you learn it, they can do it any way they want to.

Researcher: I mean, I know we've already kind of talked about what's been--a little bit about what's been going on the past week, but was, um, anything in particular from last week's group that stood out to you? Or that you thought more about or…?

P6: No, I guess, it was nice um, I have to say it's P5 right? Was it P5? It was nice talking like with somebody that like is going through the same thing, but also, I guess, I would have to say is-- you know, going back to like even what [redacted] had always said, like, "Oh wow," you know, like people, like us, we're complaining about stuff and he's like, "Oh my God your NWEA scores are great," Well P5 it seemed like you know I think--is she in X? Like you know, like she has a lot more, I mean, like you know her trying to do the Corrective Reading online, And all that. I mean, obviously I don't know anything about corrective reading just--I'm actually my room at one of my buildings is between the two special ED rooms, so I have a lot of, you know, I work with them a lot. And, I mean, they've shown me the Corrective Reading and I'm like "how is she doing that?". I mean. You know Zoom or anything. You know, and I thought we had a lot of kids that didn't show up, it sounds like for her, it's just, it's hit or miss. You know, what you know with her if kids are, you know, kids are showing up. And for her and her me she sounds like she has to meet with a lot more kids than I did via Zoom. I was more of just that support person. I would go into different Zooms throughout the day to support the teachers and all that. And then, if they needed me to pull somebody would go out into a breakout room and thing so that was a real eye opener--you know just to see how different districts do things.

Researcher: Yeah, it's been really cool um. So, I just when I did the recruitment, I just kind of put out, I sent out things to as many people as I could think of. So, I wound up getting it wound up being a pretty representative group of like [redacted]. One of the groups that I had last week was from [redacted]. Um it was interesting just hearing, how um so that's the side of the State I've never lived on. I've visited a few times, but I don't know much about it. But it was very interesting, the one group or the one woman her district is primarily Amish and Mennonite families. And yeah, and so it was really interesting hearing how it challenged, a lot of the things that I thought I knew. Because I had assumed that you were Amish that you weren't allowed to use electronics. But yeah so it was just interesting how they how they had to navigate all of those things and…But I mean that's one of the things that's come through I think amongst all the groups is just kind of these… yeah a lot of drop off. A lot of, you know, people that were a lot of kids that were starting to get services or were starting to get put in and then disappear. For whatever reasons.

P6: Well, and I guess too, even from an answer from a special ED background too. Like, not me having it personally, but being on like these child study team meetings, you know, we were just in the middle of we had maybe three or four kids that our social worker was

just going to start reaching out to parents to do you know, like the preliminary of, you know, starting to do the testing and it's like--well you know, so that halted. You know what I mean? Like, okay come back to the fall. Now it's like, okay, now we're behind we had all these kids so, then you know was just this domino effect everything got pushed back.

Researcher: Yeah and so that was one of the things I was curious about do you think--I guess it applies to the summer programs too--but do you think that there's like with the intervention, and the scheduling, and other things that you have going on right now, do you think that that'll be enough to kind of see the growth that will catch some of the struggling students up? Or do you anticipate changing things to try and--

P6: I definitely, well I'd have to go back to like one particular student even like how I really like. The student, I brought her up last week when I was talking to you about. She's in first grade now. She came back in March. Well, she was one in particular that, you know, she obviously was gone the rest of the year for kindergarten. Basically, almost the whole year of first grade. So, she comes back to us in March, and I mean. Yeah, to me seeing her, she was that middle of the road kindergarten student where I had to go all the way back. You know, just doing word families. Where those would have been things, I would have done with my kindergarteners in the Spring that were behind. Well, here she is we're sending her off to second grade and we're just doing the basic, you know, vowel sounds and all that. That I mean for sure, for me, following her next year--definitely things that, I mean, she would be in one in one of those where next year I'll probably incorporate her in my first-grade groups. You know, what I mean? Like because this year it was really hard because they really, you know, trying to keep social distance, you know, they didn't want you--normally I could try to get some kids in from different classes, different grades. But this year they really obviously frowned upon that. Because they didn't want us doing any of that. But she definitely is already on my list to say "Okay, we need to bring her into like a first-grade group at the beginning of second grade". You know, getting in. And I guess too…you know some of the, I don't know like how P5 would have felt, but like these, the teachers are so frustrated. Because we've got a lot of teachers that want to, you know, they really want to hold students back. You know? And to me, I'm just. I don't even see. I mean, I get what they're saying to some point but it's not their fault that--It's not like before. Like, okay, you want to hold a student back. They've been here every day, you know, they just aren't getting it. We've tried all these different interventions, but, how do you say, I mean, you want to hold a student back because we were in the middle of a pandemic? And it wasn't their choice not to come here, you know? And it's the same thing about how we went through like with teachers wanting to get these kids tested for special ed all of a sudden. Well, but they haven't had the schooling. I mean. They haven't had that opportunity. And it's nobody's fault, I mean, we're in a pandemic. I mean you know?

Researcher: The circumstances don't, you know. It feels a lot of ways, like, yeah like the last year and a half is kind of bit of a wash. Right, you know right, as far as, I mean for you know as far as they got is as far as they got. But yeah, I think about, I've been

thinking about that a lot with, you know, just the role of response to intervention and better identifying kids for special education. I just can't imagine being a special ED teacher right now and having to certify a kid and saying--looking at their test scores and saying like no I think this is representative of.

P6: It's really, really tough. I mean, I don't, I mean there's such a fine line, you know, and I mentioned the twins that have been out, you know and. You know, they were on that cusp of "Okay we're going to give them their second-grade year. We're going to see how they go. You know, we've brought him up to child study several times. Let's see, you know". Well, now they're at home, and I mean according to NWEA they look like rock stars because they're in the 99th percentile. I mean and it's like, and I believe they're slotted to stay virtual next year too.

Researcher: Yeah, that was one of the other things I was wondering about because I've heard that come up a few different times too, with districts that are going to try and offer a purely online and a purely virtual option next year. And, it seems like across the board people really are too big a fan of it. Especially the interventionists. Like, they're ready to have these kids back and, if it's safe, obviously. If it allows for it. But, um, I was, I mean do you think any of that is kind of like the, like school boards and just not getting--like teachers aren't able to advocate enough at that level and so they're just hearing worried about or?

P6: I do, I do feel that some ways. And, I mean, you know not go into a big thing, but I mean our board is not very, um, I want to say they're supportive of us, but it's very, it gets very political. And you know, however you feel, whatever side of the fence you're on. You know what I mean. Politically. I mean, there's been many times, you know, like, you know, words about our governor at board meetings, and you know the mask wearing, and, you know, we have to offer--you know we're going to offer virtual and it's kind of like, "Well if you feel that way, why are we offering virtual?" Because it's like. But I also think the virtual component comes into, they don't want to lose students either, to say--you know, cuz [redacted]. Those big school districts. Well, if [redacted] was going to offer virtual and we don't offer anything, how do we know they're not just gonna go school a choice? You know, down the street to [redacted] or something like that. I think they want to make everybody happy, but I think, at the same time it's kind of like--Okay, I know that we're not officially, like out of everything but it's kind of like, okay, today started June 1. More restrictions were lifted. You know, um. You know, there's word of when I do summer school, starting you know when, like, after July 1, there's could be a possibility those elementary students don't wear a mask anymore. You know it's kind of like, why are we offering it? You know, it's like we're trying to appease everybody, but at the same time, I mean do these parents really know that next year the virtual is going to be, you know, they've gotta, you know. We just posted six elementary teachers just to be virtual. So, do they realize you're going to have to be in front of that device and it's a whole school day? So, I don't know. And that makes it really tough for me because, like, right now I could make time because we get out an hour and a half earlier. So, we can meet with virtual kids. Well, next year, I won't have that—because. You know. So, it's

kind of like, what does my job look like? Are they still going to want me to say, okay, see face to face kids and yeah, you're gonna have to jump on Zoom. With. Like. Everything's up in the air, like.

Researcher: Yeah and that has been the tike the story of these past two school years, is--everything is just kind of minute by minute. You know when it when things started, I honestly thought you know, I was like I'll be surprised if we're out two weeks. I would be amazed. And then in April, that, you know, it gets called for the school year. And then we, with X, they started--no they delayed. So we were off most of September. But by October we're, all of the kids were back face to face. And okay we're going to give it a shot and see how things go. And then, by Thanksgiving it was clear that that didn't really work out. They had, you know, a couple hundred kids in quarantine and they're like well. Um, but, yeah, I feel like that it's been very reactive, as opposed to this is, you know proactive I guess

P6: Now in Clawson and when you guys started out, then, was it like were the students online all day long, in front of a teacher?

Researcher: It depended on the grade. So, K-1 was not. My son was. So, yeah, and they did like a phased in thing. So, the early childhood did come back fully in September. If you were in preschool you could go to the building. And then, like a few weeks after that they started back K-2. And then, a few weeks after that they started back three five. But yeah, the 3-5 was pretty much a full, I mean, they would have work time where maybe they weren't on camera. That was really only about 20, 30 minutes at the most. For the rest of the time they were fully.

P6: Yeah, so, I mean like I said I don't know. I mean, because like we get kind of mentioned last week, I mean, when I look at the students that I meet with this year, there's a lot of them that normally, I don't know if I would have really seen them this year. But I think, because they were out so long. But then I think about all the kids that I should be seeing and I haven't seen because they're not in the building. You know? They're not in the building. And we haven't really seen numbers yet of how many, I mean, we sent out a survey of how many parent, you know or how many kids are going--are gonna stay virtual next year. But I mean from my understanding, I mean, once they pick virtual it's like "Okay, this is your teacher for the year" kind of thing. Like I could be teaching all second graders, from all different buildings. You know, because it's not like I'm going to have all second graders from X. You know? I'm going to have a full class of 20, just from them, so I don't know how it's gonna work to tell you the truth.

Researcher: Yeah, though that was how X did things. I mean, if you. They put out a thing, they put out a survey in August, you know? do you want to be in person or virtual? And you were, they made it clear that they weren't going to relook at things until January. So in January, they sent out another thing, you know, do you want to be online, or do you want to be virtual? And again it was like "Hey if you pick the virtual like, you're not coming in the building." Click. you're there until the school year ends. But yeah it was. It

was, I actually don't know much about what the virtual program may have been--because our kids, were we signed them up for in person, so they were online, but they got the online in person. The virtual program, I think, they had a teacher assigned to. But I think it was what you were, just what you're describing actually where the if the virtual students, it was more of like a self-paced kind of thing. Because my son had a friend, that did the virtual, and there were times where like he stopped over house at like one o'clock and was like “Hey can [redacted] play?” “Well, no, he's at school like—". So. It must be fairly close to what you're describing where.

P6: Well, exactly, because our kids couldn't, in elementary, our kids couldn't even see their teacher until they got done with their face-to-face kids which was at 2:45. So all along during the day, it's like either, you know, if they've got supportive parents and the parents have them online doing the assignments, or it was just you weren’t doing anything academic than until like 2:45. And that wasn't even every day that they saw their teacher. They only had to meet with their teacher two to three times a week. So.

Researcher: Yeah, and I think that's kind of that--because there was that requirement for the minimal like two-way communication. So it kind of comes through in that of where it's like, well, we have to check this box. We're gonna do, we're gonna have the time to do this it's like as teachers, we notice like but that's not sufficient, like.

P6: Exactly, And it was always like “Oh, well, the parent emailed me,” “Okay, that's, that's one way. Okay, you made communication”. But I didn't meet with the students. You know, so I don't know like I said I don't know. Now is Clawson offering like next year, do you know, are they still offering a virtual? Have they said anything?

Researcher: I don't think so. They did send out a survey saying, do you want, you know, to plan on online or in-person. But I, and I mean, I have some inside knowledge because my wife works there. There at, like, I think they really only have a handful of kids that are still fully virtual. I would be amazed if they have the numbers to say. And that's you know spread out throughout the district. I’d be surprised if they have the numbers to say okay, we’re going to hire a dedicated virtual teacher.

P6: Exactly. Exactly. I know that's why I mean it'd be interesting, once you know we see, like, some of our numbers like, do we really have enough, like, to say, you know? And I guess that's what we're going through in summer school too right now. That was my meeting tonight because it's like we--our district and our board wants to offer some kind of virtual, but what's happening is all of a sudden, you know they're calling off these names and they're like--I’m like why do they want virtual their face to face right now? Yeah, well what we’re finding out now is like the secretary would call and say “Oh, I see you signed up for virtual, your face to face, right now,” And they're like, “Can I ask why?” “Well because for a week we're going to be up North and we'd like them to be able to,” You know. So now it's like, oh, it's a matter of convenience. You know? Mom and dad are going to take the laptop or the tablet or whatever and you can get online up North. Well no--you'd be better off being in school.

Researcher: You know what are they going to--I mean if your options are. go play at the beach or--

P6: Exactly. And, like I said, through the ISD, through the [redacted], this program--I mean a lot of the virtual is basically, okay, the teacher will get on you know, maybe like do like a shared book and then, go give like, okay, some time. Okay, now I want you to go write about this or, you know, and then they're offline for a little bit. So, I don't know. It's really hard because we're with, we're trying to--like talk with the board, like, hey we only got four second graders that want virtual. How do we say that we're going to pay this teacher $40 an hour to be with these four virtual kids, with--how do we even know they're going to show up? And it's kind one of those things. It's like, you know, we could take that money and go, you know, get another face to face teacher for the summer program. You know. So I don't know, every day. We'll know more at the end of the week because that's when registration ends. I don't know.

Researcher: Ya know, that will probably be the thing that gets their attention is the--once the money starts factoring in.

P6: Well, exactly you know, exactly. And I think too it's you know some of these parents, I know just by looking at their names of their students they're signing their kids up that--I mean, okay, they're reading to grade levels above. Like--why are you signing up? “Well, I gotta keep them busy”. Ya know, it’s like—Alright, that's fine, you know, because we're offering it to everyone. Normally we offer these programs for like 31a students, title one, students that are, you know, a couple levels below, academically at risk. But this year, we have to offer it to everybody, you know, everybody, you know.

Researcher: That was another thing I was wondering about. Because I envision--once I do once, I heard that it was going to be offered, you know, like ours is, you know, it's the same here, you know. Everybody can go if they want to. I was just hearing from people at our neighborhood where they were like “Oh cool, we don't have to sign them up for a camp, this summer, because we can like X's got the program going and that's free you know,”.

P6: Yeah, I know and that's why I mean it's kind of like this should be interesting. I mean, you know, and it should be interesting, you know, once registration ends and that. Because what always happens is registration ends and then all of a sudden the last week of school comes. And all of a sudden, you have these parents of like “Well, what are you offering for summer?” Well we've only been offering it for the past month, you know, and now all of a sudden, they got to figure out what they're going to do with their you know child so. I don't know. You don't--like I said, every day, just like this year, every day, is you know you wake up to something new every day.

Researcher: Have you seen have those kids that you're kind of had more concerns about have they been signing up for the summer or--?

P6: Some of them have yes, yes. And some of them just need that extra like support. Like a mom had contacted me last week, before the long weekend you know. “Well, I have this link, but my internet's not working,” You know, so it's like basically just “give me the information, what do you want, you know,” I’m just that type of person. “What do you want him to sign up. And I’ll get it done,” you know. Trying to walk you through it, step by step, like, I can just get it done for you in five minutes and you’re registered. But you know, you're right, you know, but a lot of times to from the summers even the past of working this it's like--then it's like, okay, it's great if you get them signed up, now it's do they show up, you know. Sometimes it's like the parents will sign them up” Oh, this is great,” and then all of a sudden, it's like where's the student, you know. So, we will just, you know, have to wait and see, but again it's one of those where, you know, it's not like we're going to sit there tracking the student down because it's not like I mean, you know, it's the state funding all these things. I mean before it's like-- before this stuff would come out of our 31a money or a Title One budget, and we be paying for these kids to come, so I don't know it should be interesting, you know, to see what happens. And it'll be interesting to see if we really do get those kids that have been impacted by not being in school or, you know, being out of school for so long, and only doing half a year, you know, because I think X think it was like I think it was three times throughout the year that they could come back. Then they were also lenient too on some students that, you know, “Hey, by the way, you know my kid really, really needs to come back,” And it was kind of like “Oh okay, sure, we'll let them back in”. And then, you know, there were those ones too like who had IEP, and all that. We had to, you know. We had to let back in, you know. It was just they got the IEP and Oh yes, they didn't, you know, it's not working out for them, and so I don't know.

Researcher: One other thing I was curious about too is—with, you know, so kind of like the issue with one, either kids just pretty much dropping off like they're not logging in. But then too also like they're there, but no camera’s on, can't really get a response, and things like that. Was it similar to, like kids, you know, like those kids that you get referred to you for intervention but fundamentally the problem isn't necessarily reading or math. A lot of it is you know, social or behavioral. I was wondering if there were any similarities in that, where it was like well, even if they would have been there, the intervention really isn't designed for that. The intervention is designed for--you need to pick up these reading skills, not that…you're behind in reading because--

P6: No, totally. I totally agree with that, ya know, that I think that some of it was. I mean, there were a lot of times where, you know, I should have maybe been doing interventionists but I almost became like a social worker too in that same, you know, that same aspect of, you know, helping the student. So, I don't know if that's the track, you were on like asking that. Yes, it sometimes became like there were some kids that I saw during the pandemic that like I said I don't think I would have even seen face to face. If that, you know, that--if you have that like…I wouldn't have even, you know, seen them. I mean, there were a few times and I mean, you know—and I probably shouldn't have--but like, you know, they kind of recommended that like some of the interventionist and like

even our parapros, because it was like, even our parapros--we're very lucky in my title one building, we have 8 parapros. And we're pretty much more like 350 students. So, we've got a lot of support. And there were times, you know, these parapros, they're at home and they're like-- I'm getting paid. Like, get me on these Zooms. And, you know, what it was like, "Okay, just come on, you know. Put you in a little breakout room. You'd be doing this anyways at school," You know what I mean? You know, and it was all that, you know, when it was first new. Like we're all doing Zoom. Like, what is their role? Should they be doing that? Well, they would be pulling the small group anyways at school--I mean, who cares? It's gonna, you know, it's going to support them and help them. So, I think a lot of times--I think like we didn't know how to approach it, but then it was just kind of like 'this is what we're doing'. This is what we have, you know, this is what we have to do. But I do--there is, to go back to that, there were a lot of kids that--even this year that were face to face--I don't think I would have ever seen him this year. But they just--they missed so much at the end of last year that it's now, it's kind of like--you know, with my title kids, we're all title one at [redacted]. So, I can see whoever. My 31a building, you know, it's supposed to be, you know, certain criteria that I see these kids. Well, some of it is like, okay, yeah here, they, you know, I could check mark this--they meet this criteria I need to be seeing them. And it's harder for me because I am between two buildings. So, for instance, you know, like on my days that I'm at Green, you know I was on--this week my Green day is only today. So, I saw those kids today and I won't see them again until Monday. So, you know, it just--it's the way that, you know, the days fall. And you know, so, we tried one year to do it, where the interventionists were, you know, at every building for a half day. But it's like by the time you get there, you get your groups together, you meet with them, then it's like—okay, you gotta have time to eat lunch yourself. Then you've got to travel to your next--I mean it just. It was just time consuming. It wasn't enough time. You know. And the way we're funded, you know, at my one building I'm title one. So, I come out of their title one budget. Well because I'm at the higher level of the pay scale, it's like they can't afford to have me there every day, because that would just, that would just chew up the whole title one budget. You know. So it's just--I really do I think, I wish we could move where you had an interventionist that every building. All day every day. I think that would definitely help. You know, because I think too, you know, our parapros are great. And they're a great support, but when you look at it it's like--and nothing against them-- but you're putting the hands of the ones that are so low academically, in the hands of the ones that are the least educated. Where it's like, you look at those are the kids that need to be in there for the tier one, the tier two, and all that. But then we're giving them, you know, the paras the tier two students. Well now it's like well, we hope, would they didn't miss anything in tier one. Where to me when I was in the classroom I would have loved if my parapros could take out my higher kids and go do like a lit circle, you know, dive really deep into a book with them. And I get all this extra time you know. I mean, when you look at a schedule, sometimes, you know, we'll do that a child study and be like, "Wait a minute, they're out with a parapro 30 minutes here, then they might go to the intervention--that's an hour a day. You know, that they're out. It's like--Well, what are they missing? You know? And, like I said, it's not that I'm offending or like trying to disregard the parapros. But it's like, they need to be in that room more. I feel that X is big

right now on the whole tier one instruction. Which it should be. You know, and as a teacher it's hard to plan because it's like “Okay well they’re. I can't be doing direct instruction right now. So, here's where I’ll do my assessments or I’ll do small groups. But I have to make sure that my other kids are busy and doing some--it just. It's a never ending circle of how to schedule, all this. You know.

Researcher: I remember having the same discussion with a para one time, when I was [redacted]. It was a similar thing where they were having, you know, these fifth graders that were level, you know, not quite low enough that they were going to be certified for special ED but, you know, Level F, Level G. Pretty low for a fifth grader and they're like and they were coming to me as the teacher consultant--like I don't know what, you know, like--that's not their area. Even they were saying you know, like isn’t this weird that we have like the lowest. And for them too, a lot of it was--I know it can vary by district--but a lot of our referrals there were kids that were mainly behavioral issues. Not that they weren't behind in the meeting, and they were absolutely behind in the reading. Nut they weren't going to get the instruction, whether you put them in a room with three kids or 20 kids. And, and so that was another issue was that the paras were kind of being straddled with these kids that were very demanding. Even for even for a teacher, you know, even for somebody with a bachelor's or master's degree. So to put that much pressure on them was just--

P6: Well, and we we've talked about that before because, like, in the days, where we could hold like data meetings, and all this and be able to have subs and we would sit down with the teachers, and the interventionists, and the parapros and talk about this. I mean, we always said that. I mean, if this kids a behavior problem with the para, he's not leaving and, you know, you try to explain to the teacher of like the teachers like, “Okay, well then, I guess, when I bring them up to child study, I let them know there's no parapro time,” And it's like, well, no you're now going to have to do the tier two--you know I mean. Any day now I mean anyone could come in and say “Oh, we have no more funding for paras.” Well, what are we going to do then? We're not going to give tier two instruction? You know what I mean? Like, it's like, you know, we're not. I mean, there was one--I’ll never forget this one boy, it was like he needs that extra support but he's not going with a para. I mean. The para isn't trained or the para isn't making enough to have to deal with this. You know what I mean? That it's kind of like, you know, I mean that's, you know, we'll go to these interventionists meetings and we'll go to these child study team meetings and, you know, a teacher will say, “Well you know my paras been out a lot lately, so—" And it's kind of, like you cringe, like, oh my God, you did not just say that out loud. Like you did not just say, “Well, he hasn't been getting extra support because my para is not here”. You know, it's kind of--you know, and by no means--I totally know how it is, you know, but I was there. I was, you know, but it was kind of one of those things like “Okay you're not meeting today. Okay, so I’ll do the level of literacy intervention, you know, lesson today with you because you need the support”. You know so that's where I just always thought it was always backwards. It's like, why are my kids that need to be here with me constantly leaving, you know, my room. And it's been a big thing in X with Special Ed about that too, you know, because--and I’m sure maybe you

dealt with this too. It's like, all of a sudden, like the teacher would be like, “Well time to for you to go down to the special ED room here, you know, take this test, take this too”. And it's like teachers like, “No. No, this boy cannot be out of your room while you're giving the math lesson”. Like, you know. So, we've really been looking at that lately in our district of, okay, these kids need to be in the, I mean, be in the classroom. You know. I just feel there's so many times that, you know, then if they, you know, if they go with a para, if they have speech or then they go see a social worker, I mean. You know. And I even questioned that as a teacher, you know, I’d be like wait a minute he's out of my room for almost an hour and a half, every day. You know, so I don't know.

Researcher: Yeah, it is just the…to me it always spoke to--and I see this now to that I’m doing early childhood--you know, kind of like the disconnect between like the Birth to 3 system and then getting the K to 5. But I saw a lot in special education too. Like that kind of stuff you're talking about. Where it was like, yeah, those situations where it was, you know, the kid is out of the room too much. Or when they were getting sent, I would have a lot of issues where it was like--I don't think people really understood that I had a schedule. So, I would get a lot of situations where it was just like kids were like showing up. Why are you here? And they're like, “I have a test,” It was like I’m working with a group of second graders. Yeah, but so it's always those kinds--and you know, of course, you don't--like okay, well sit down and we'll figure this out. But you totally got the impression that, like I don't think this teacher knows that I’m not, I don't just do worksheets and tests with kids like I actually do instruction

P6: Right, right. Yep, I see it all the time. Like I said being sandwiched between the two special ED rooms, you know, I’ll hear my girlfriend go, “Well, I’m NWEA testing right now with third graders,” And the fifth grader will be like, “Yeah but my teacher said, I have to finish this”. And she has this great relationship and she's like “Well, okay, but I’ve got their testing”. Like, you know, what I mean. And it's kind of like, what are you doing just like walking around? And, you know, you know and everything. And it's just like you know those--I mean, I give a lot of credit to you guys, because it is, I mean, you have so much to juggle, your schedules and you know, and then, when it's you know time for their re-eval or something, and you have to go testing. You know, and looking at that--Speaking of the whole re-eval, that was big, you know, this year. When, you know, we started those special ED teachers and the social worker like, “oh my God, we've got to get this kid’s re-eval, we've got to do this, and we you know--”. You know what I mean? It was like really, just it's constant, you know. I don't know. I never know what the right answer is or how it's, you know, but I do feel for the next couple years we’ll be like spiraling trying to, you know. You know, it's one of those like, “Oh yeah, that's right. Oh, you were in kindergarten during the pandemic. Oh okay”. Like, we’ll be looking, “Oh okay, you were, you know, you were in fifth grade during the pandemic, so you know”. You know, “Oh no, wonder you're, you know, a little behind. You know, kids talking about, “Oh well, yeah I didn't go to school at all my fifth-grade year. You know, last time I was there was the middle of my fourth-grade year and that was it”. You know. So. I don't know. You know and we, everyone can believe in their whole thing of standardized testing, but I mean I’m telling you right now watching those kids try to take the M-Step,

this year, was brutal. I mean the teachers were just so, I mean, they'd just be getting done with the M-STEP and the next thing you know "Okay let's go, we gotta do NWEA". You know. I don't know with the NWEA, I feel different about it. Like, I just feel like the M-STEP, to me, it's just so much more brutal. I mean, because I watched those third and fourth and fifth graders just sitting there, trying to type, you know, up a paragraph and respond to all these questions, those—oh it boggles me. It's just like, it's like mind blowing.

Researcher: Yeah. I was infuriated when I found out that they were going to still require. When That decision came through. I was just. Because especially you know with my with my son, you know, it was like--what does that test going to tell me? What does that mean for? You know, what you know, not even thinking of his teacher, you know, but like, yeah, just me as a parent--like what am I going to find out from? Um but yeah we're getting close to seven here, so I don't want to take too much longer, but yeah is there, any other like specific things or--?

P6: No. Like I said, I mean, it'd be interesting, you know if you ever want to follow up like next year, even to like. Because like to see, because, like I said it's really going to be interesting like next year. You know. Having some of these kids still virtual and you know, the role of my job, like how--I mean. Like I get it, that these kids can be virtual and they're going to have this virtual teacher, but you know, how--and it'll be interesting too. Like any of these kids who still have you, know, an IEP. How the Special ED teacher will incorporate this. Because it's like right now we've got that virtual time at the end of the day, you know, it's been told that we're not going to have that next year, you know. We're going to go the full day. So like, how do you incorporate, you know, they got an IEP and you've got to follow it. You know, so I don't know. Lot's to work out.

P5: Yeah so, my virtual kids are virtually not coming. So. Anyway, so it was a good end to end it. Sometimes I have one student, you know, and that kind of kills any energy might have had, you know, with the group. So. They're like "Why am I, the only one that's shown up?"

Researcher: Well, I know, with—yeah, P6 was saying the same thing with the attendance. Have kids been also signed up for like the summer stuff that's being offered or do you have any hope for--?

P5: Probably not. I mean some of mine might. My kids might for intervention, but they're completely unmotivated and I got their NWEA scores, and most of them plummeted from fall--like 14 points. Yeah, so their like, they're already--I think one kid was a 146, which is like below kindergarten. So, you know, it's just. But they're taking it at home, too, so I mean I don't know if they're just not putting forth the effort. But although my face-to-face kids. Now some went up and some still fell like more than 10 points, like all the other kids so.

Researcher: Yeah, it's kind of the story of, with NWEA because I've heard from people in other focus groups where it's like obviously the kid is getting help at home, like there, they were 2nd percentile and now they're scoring it--

P5: Yeah, now they're genius. Or they're only in second grade and they're a third grader and then you go, "What's up with you mom?"

Researcher: Yeah, it's tough to know where to--you know, what to rely on.

P5: Yeah well, my recommendation was--like they asked us a recommendation for going on virtual next year and mine was that all students should be required to come in for any of the, you know, critical assessment. So, you know that way we can keep them on task and we can like--when I was doing like a Corrective Reading test I heard somebody in the background, giving him the words so I'm writing on the test 'mom helped'. You know that's not going to be accurate, because I can hear her giving you the word, so we just need to--like you said--you know. what is the true score.

Researcher: So it sounds like they are going to have a fully virtual option that they can.

P5: They are. Okay, so [redacted] says things but they may not follow through, and if they say that if you weren't successful during this year that they won't let you do it next year. We'll see if they really hold true on that. I mean. I doubt it. So. Now, the latest thing they're saying is that, if your virtual they're going to stream the classes, so the kids won't--they will be watching the teacher live teaching. Um which I wonder like how could a

teacher be required to take care of that many students, you know, I don't know how that will actually work.

Researcher: I know from some of the [redacted] that we [redacted]. Because [redacted] and that was specifically one of the things they mentioned was that they had a number of you know, so they had 10 kids that were coming in. And they would have a group of five that were supposed to be watching them. Right well those five kids aren't. And even if they were, you know, like so even when there was a situation where it was, well, we know what good teaching looks like so you're working with different kids at different times. So, they would go to do a breakout room and something goes wrong with technology or--it just introduces like too many factors for any one person. The one teacher said that they felt like they would need actually like three adults in the classroom to be able to man a system like.

P5: I could imagine X like having a full classroom, like 20 or more kids and then you're responsible for 20 more online because they want to save all this money, but how would you even interact with the ones online when you have all these live kids you know? How would you even ask them questions? I don't even know how would you grade their papers? Because you'd be so overloaded, so I don't know.

Researcher: It's one of those things where it's like I know that it won't work, and I am so frightened that, in spite of that, knowing what past decisions have been, the people in charge will be like but we're doing it anyway so.

P5: I mean I know they got all this COVID money so I'm not 100% sure I understand why they want to cut staff, you know. Because I think they're pretty well compensated to cover this option. If you're going to offer that option, why are you going to go halfway? You know and just say "Hey you guys, plant yourself in front of this TV and we hope you understand everything the teacher says, because you won't be able to raise your hand and ask a question". You know. I don't know. So. I'm not sure what's gonna happen. I'm surprised the union isn't stepping in. But I can't. I don't know. It's not a very good year.

Researcher: Well, that was one of the things that P6 brought up in the follow up group, was we were just kind of talking about, you know, are school boards and central administration actually listening to teachers and hearing what they're going through. It's similar to what you're saying too, where they're not. Like they've got, you know, they've got these other priorities and the Union is not doing a very good job of sticking up for teachers and saying 'no'.

P5: Did you see that [redacted] guy when he resigned in front the board and his comments? So, I mean I think we're at a tipping point with us. Teacher aren't made--overall, our psyche isn't "I'm just going to throw this out there, and I'll just throw this information up there and see if it sticks. And if it doesn't Oh well. If you don't want to listen. Okay." I don't think that's the mentality of a teacher, you know. We were just so--I don't know, at least, I am. I think a lot of my colleagues are. Like we want to be effective,

we want the kids to learn, we know the consequences of them not learning. We know that the cumulative effect of our low students. So it's almost alarming, at least to me. I just think. If you continue like for year after year after year, to not making growth you're almost doomed to never be successful.

Researcher: Well, because you actually you care about kids. I would have that same conversation in the special ed realm because it was like I taught it both the element free and the high school level.

P5: So, you saw the consequences?

Researcher: Well right, yeah, if you've got a kid that is, you know, just kind of general LD. Some difficulty but not overtly severe, nothing like a cognitive impairment, or something like that. Some skills that they need to master, but we can we can figure that out. If you take that kid at eight years old and they don't--that kid at 16 they're not the most fun person to be around.

P5: Pretty angry and they're very defiant. Yeah, I mean, I do think we need to almost rethink how we're going to do school. I think, like in terms of, if you're going to mainstream, you can't have like--say I would be working in cornerstone. I have 32 kids and one of them is full blown autistic. And that Mom wants to make sure I get that child everything he needs. But he's autistic and I'm inner city, so you know the behaviors that go along with inner city, and then they're already low. Your almost like in a no-win situation, you know, like. If schools are going to mainstream, they need to take into account the high intensity of the student. Because I know at our school the teachers want to just teach to one level and anybody that's fall below that 30th percentile, they go into my room, or they go up to X's room. Well that's not really the best way to do it. It depends on why they they're falling in that 30 percentile. You know corrective reading, a lot of its decoding so if you're getting the decoding. I have to know how much I'm going to help you because I'm going to still be teaching decoding to those kids that don't get it. The same with X. You know, like so, teachers have to step up, and I know they talked about differentiation for years and years and years. It's just not happening. I don't really see. I don't know, do you see that happening in schools at all?

Researcher: No, very rarely. I mean that's one of my big critiques of Response to Intervention and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. I like them in theory. I like properly identifying kids. Or, you know, recommend kids for the help that they need, but it is like you're saying, where X would come home, and it was like—one,

P5: You shouldn't have like 15 kids in a room? what is that about when you have 24? That's not a small group, you know.

Researcher: So, for starters, yep, you have too many kids being identified. Secondly, the groups—

P5: They aren't as homogeneous as they need to be.

Researcher: But, like some of the kids it was internal behaviors that they needed help with.

P5: Yeah, like I'm pretty strict in my class, because I feel like those are all avoidance behaviors. A lot of them. So, if you ever came into my room time you'd say, 'Wow she's such a bitch'. Like you know, "Okay now we're going into our STAR rules. We're going to sit up. We're going to track. We're going to answer the signal. We're going to be respectful, which means that you know where you're at when I call on you". Like I'll go—"Adam it's your turn. Give me three sentences", and if you don't know, "Adam you're being really disrespectful to the group because you don't know where we're at. Find out where we're at cuz I'm going to call on you next," You know and then call on somebody else. So, I mean it's like you try to box them into a corner, so they can't get out because you know, the only way they're going to get better, is they have to do it. So, you have to kind of like force them into it somehow. Some kids I would say, "You didn't read for me today, so you're going to have to read during your lunch, so bring your lunch. You read to me at lunch". You know, a couple of kids that way where they'll start, you know. But um one teacher said to me, "I don't see a lot of growth from my kids that go to you" and I, I said "Okay" I'm thinking like wow that's a little--I don't know how to take that are you saying I'm not doing my job?. And I said, "Well, just remember that if you're a low reader you need more opportunities to read". Period. Them just coming to my room isn't going to do it. So they need to have more opportunities in the classroom. And she's like, "Well they don't get blends". I said "Well remember that they're in the kindergarten book, so we're not at blends yet". You know, "So if you want to know blend that's going to be something that you're going to have to pick up on because I'm following this program". I said "We're just at -ol, -er". You know we're just starting to add two letters. Two vowels. I'm doing the silent 'e' with them every day. I don't know why they don't get it, but they don't get it. Just doesn't click for them. And do a lot of extra interventions, besides the Corrective Reading to help them get certain skills that are in that range. I think teachers think that they're going to come to us and we're going to solve it and we're not. It's not. You know, cuz we're not doing grade level work, so if you think they're going to get to grade level for 45 minutes, if I have 12 kids in my room, they might read nine sentences to me. That's it. So, I mean, I have a big group already and that's not going to do it. You better make sure you do it in your classroom too. So I just think that's problem. You probably saw that was special ED too. Like some of your kids needed more experience.

Researcher: Oh yeah, when you talk, when you were talking about blends you totally reminded me of this. One of my favorite kids was there was this kid named Glenn, who was in the fifth grade. And we were still working on blends. But we're working really heavily on -ir. So I'm working with them, working with them [on 5 sentence paragraphs].

P5: There's so many things that I would I always think of, like I want to bring in. Like when you said five sentence paragraph. Have you ever heard of Shurley Grammar? Okay,

so it's a formulaic writing and at first you start off, where you always start off the same way, and you fill in a few words. And then it gives you the structure. And then you eventually take over from it. But I know teachers hate formulate things, but it really did work when I worked in [redacted]. Some kids just need that--it's the only way they seem to be able to put those thoughts in an organized way. There executive function is messed up. I find myself doing some Orton Gillingham, when I'm doing some support, and then some EBLI. And I'm just trying to pull from all these things. I'm just like trying to find the sweet spot where they'll get it, you know, I don't know what to do really too much after that.

Researcher: I found myself in a similar boat, where it was like I had been sent to like so many different PDs and been shown so many things that like after year five I was just kind of-- and the same thing with some of the executive function things. So that was kind of where I did a lot of my adaptation was pulling from some of the Orton Gillingham stuff.

P5: You're just like scrambling for anything. And like a lot of teachers are modifying their work. I understand why they're modifying it but if you don't have an IEP--I'm not sure you really should be. When I want to talk about differentiation, I talk about different ways for them to learn it, you know what I mean not and sometimes you do have to. Support with maybe stuff they haven't learned this year totally modifying their whole program like you're a third grader and you're breaking it down to a first grade level. And they're not getting special lead I don't know if that works, do you I mean, how did they catch up, how would they catch up. or close.

Researcher: Yeah, I would talk to that with teachers, a lot, when I was in the teacher consultant role. This is a kid that probably needs services. you're not doing them any favors, actually what you're doing is complicating getting them certified. very first thing that we're going to do is look at their classwork.

P5: No, yeah, I think we teachers have to maybe do more in terms of educating parents to. This grade doesn't represent your child smartness it represents their ability to meet this grade level work. For whatever reason, you know. And maybe it's a they need more help, maybe like now they're not doing any of their work. But it's not a condemnation on your child's intellect. It's just simply letting you know, are they doing grade level work. And then like I had a special ED child, I wanted to know where her weaknesses were. I will help her home. So, like X would say, do you want us to alter the grades? No, no, no, we need to know where her weaknesses are and then we need to help her with that or use your strengths to overcome this. If parents, I don't know, they're like all of a sudden, they're going to punish their child if they get a C or, you know, or D. And maybe if your child isn't doing any work, you know, maybe you need to address that. On the other hand, it's information that parents need to know. Because, especially elementary level you're just giving them A's and B's and sometimes C's, they get to middle school and it's a slam in the face, like a slap. Right? I mean they're like 'Whoa'. I thought it was okay. So. I don't know. We want to avoid trouble but we're working with kids you know and just

means trouble sometimes you know I don't know. So, you know, they didn't get any support. Now they're in middle school, and now they gotta you know readjust their thinking you know. No, no. What do you think, no, no.

Researcher: We would wind up having a lot of those difficult discussions at the elementary to middle school level. For a lot of reasons, you know parents just didn't have the information that they needed to have and socially the parents had the perception of it that they had.

P5: Yeah I sometimes I wonder if we've done favors by mainstreaming. I mean I understand the concept, but a lot of the teachers don't want to deal with all the baggage that comes with a mainstream child, you know. A lot of them don't you, just see those kids in the office or wandering the hallways. So, I have some kids pop in my room, I'm like "How many does it make it? Three bathrooms this morning? Four? How many times have I seen you in the office? In the hallway [redacted]?" And now she'll now be like "This is two," you know. "How many drinks, did you get? One? Okay, so that's three times you're out of the room". So, I'm like "[redacted], you need to stay in the room, you need to get what you need to get, stop wandering the hallway". You know. I don't know it's just almost a no-win situation. What do you think about this? So, I think, for me, I should take the cusp kids, the kids that are almost ready to get it. And I think that, though, the lowest that and the kids that get it, I think that the teacher should work with the very, very lowest. Because I can't reach them if they're blended in with the cusp kids. I think the teacher should take the very lowest. There's only a few of them, maybe one or two or three and then work with her regular kids and I take the cusp the kids that could maybe get it if we were together, and I all these kids are more homogeneous group, what do you think about?

Researcher: It's funny P6 brought up almost the exact same point. I remember us having a conversation about--maybe irony is the right word? So many of the neediest kids are behavior intensive and they're there with a para.

P5: No, but that's part of the title one roles, did you know that? The title one, which that makes no sense to me I don't get it. When I was working at cornerstone, we had somebody like me, I would give her the books, I would give her give her an outline, I would tell her what I wanted her to do, "Okay, I want to crush your phone first. Give me your damn phone. I'm gonna kill it". Because all the paras are like this, while we got a group of kids. But after she was done, I would try to grab them too, because I know the quality of my para. And if I'm forced to give her my lowest, then I still am going to have to find time for them, because that's not going to be good enough.

Researcher: The funding part of a complicates things, how a district is going to plan that out. Maybe some of this additional COVID money could at least provide--who knows how sustained it's going to be. I think there's gonna have to be a lot done. differently with how things are provided.

P5: Yeah. Cuz I don't see how you're going to. I mean you see the disparity more and more. They combined one of our schools, like they reconfigured everything. So we have this one, I was there for like two and a half years, and it was like a free for all. The principal was pretty much was under a certain philosophy--now I can't remember it--if a kid was going to trash your room. There would be no consequences. And if a kid wanted to dump a desk, maybe they'll go come back and write a note about it. Why they did it. You know, and then explain that the teacher did something that made them frustrate. So there were never consequence. So it was kind of like a whole building of non learning. Because the good kids are like "why should I behave? that looks like fun. I'm gonna dump my desk too. I'm gonna yell. I'm gonna do this. I'm going to do that". you know so it's like free for all school and it really was like that. Because you weren't allowed to give any incentives and you couldn't give any deterrences, no consequences. So you couldn't bride them. You couldn't give a consequence. So now they're dumped into this other building—so the next school is kind of like in between [redacted] and this free for all school. So, now you have all these kids together in one school, that was kind of like, the kids were really in control. I mean you saw some, but it wasn't like you know--there's no learning going on. And it's this combination of, you know, all these behaviors just like shockingly awful. That is something we're seeing now like.

Researcher: So our son X, he's got this one friend [redacted]. X was like, "Yeah just so you know, like all the stuff that he does at school, like his old school like they never cared".

P5: I know and I'm thinking like, what are you thinking? Yeah, her name was X and I was like X, we're not doing these kids any favors. Like this is, this is not real life. I'm not gonna go to my boss, and if he says something I don't like, sweep things off his desk you know. Start yelling at him. Slam the door. I mean that's not real life, we're training people. But we don't we don't do that much anymore, because we're afraid of losing students and so you know so.

Researcher: P6 talked about that a lot too. Especially with the [districts] are so competitive with each other.

P5: Our little district can't compete with anything, like I personally wonder if they're going to be around in five years. But part of that is like they could be a little boutique school, I think. But they're so concerned about losing kids, that they lose a good kids and they hold on to these--I shouldn't stay 'not good' kids--but the kids that will do this. And then they're going to keep these kids that drive other kids. Like I'm not having my kids go to that school, you know. That's kind of wrong thinking we lost our focus. So I don't know if I'm helping you at all.

Researcher: It really is. Part of what I've been realizing from the other focus groups too—COVID created a lot of new situations. But really didn introduce any new problems.

P5: It, no, exacerbated it, yeah. It just highlighted our problems, maybe a little bit more exacerbated it. Made it more in your face. And until the administrators decide-- sometimes I wonder, do administrators know what our job is? Because they're focuses on all these other tangential things, when really we're supposed to educating kids but they need to be a little bit more cohesive and a little bit more planned out. If they want their staff to produce better outcomes. Maybe listen more to their staff. I don't know. I don't know what the answer is.

Researcher: And yeah, but it goes back to your point. It does take a truly effective administrator.

P5: Yeah, I think Mr. X is. But he's always going against the main Office. Like they'll say some they'll see to do something stupid, you're like what? Like how do you even want us to do that? Or he'll bring up something, like could we focus on this or that or whatever? And no, they just resist it, you know, because he's competent and because it's a small district, not everybody is competent. I don't know, I'd hate to say that our top administration is incompetent but, I mean, we have one guy covering the technology and the professional development and the curriculum. And he actually does most of the hiring--even though you have a hiring guy and like you got this one guy not doing anything very well and you've got these two other guys that you don't know what they're doing. They're kind of a waste of space. Like X is doing Y's job and Z's job. None of its happening really well. Like we have iPads, but we have Microsoft systems and this online thing that really isn't geared towards elementary. It's always a near miss. What do you want me to do? And this doesn't work with this and Canvas doesn't really work at all because, like who learns like that? You get a 15-minute video and then let's take a quiz, you know. Like that's just stupid. Who thought that was good, you know? So, I don't know. I wonder how thoughtful things are, but maybe in your district, or maybe your schools are a little bit more thoughtful. Do you know what making meaning is? So you know it's like you teach a strategy and you tell the kids to go get a book. And now you practice that strategy. And we'll come back together we'll talk about how you learn that strategy. So, I had that for an inner-city class, I mean, I'm like are you kidding me? These guys are first grade level. I'm a fifth-grade teacher, do you think they're going to grab the level book that they need to grab? They're not gonna. They're going to save face and they go find the thickest book they can find and they're going to start pretending like they're reading and then like-- this is not for kids who can't read. Do you understand that they don't read? And they're going to pretend and it's going to be a disaster. I'm thinking I can't do that. I can't I can't do this program. so I'm like searching all over for materials at this Charter but just wonder how thoughtful people are when they buy these programs and.

Researcher: Like you can't have a teacher doing that and, again, you need at least like you need at least like three other adults in the room.

P5: Yeah, when I was at [redacted], so I'd have different levels and different novels. And then it had different groups, so I'd meet with different groups, every day, and they we're

better readers. I'm not gonna lie. A little more affluent. But I mean I had it come up with all kinds of games like, "Okay today, you're going to talk with your group and you're going to come up with two questions. And the group that has the two best questions and answers for this text you read, gets a tree. You know, like everything had to be this competitions/tree/not getting the other groups too discouraged. It was like this little juggling, balancing thing you know. And then maybe you come up with "Okay, you had the best something, but then you had the best—" You had to come up with all this shit. Just to keep them kind of like, going. And kind of like this is fun, I love to read. It's a lot of work, a lot of work. A lot of people get burnt out really fast. I think I see now that we're going to either have to lower our standards or have more support. A more majority of kids will be in support and then just this upper echelon of kids. It's really bad. You know, I had a third grader sound out the word gas. I'm like, it's a three-letter word. Who wouldn't look at it and get gas? I don't know, it's just not good.

Researcher: I think there's a number of people that were already struggling with their role as a parent. And really struggled with it during COVID. I mean their kids did not benefit from it.

P5: Well, this is what I'm thinking too. Like, are we stigmatizing them? "Oh, you're going to the reading invention and then you're in kindergarten and then he's a problem and that's passed on from teacher to teacher he's a little crazy, you know he's doing all this that and the other, you know he talks a lot. And part of me goes, are we putting a label on them so young that creates a self-fulfilling prophecy? I don't know all the answers to these things, but I would not let my child go to full day kindergarten. It was just starting to come into being when my kids were little and it's like, she still in naps. I mean no it's not going to happen. I just wonder if we've lost all of our—we're trying to compete with other countries, so we're coming up with all these silly things that aren't developmentally appropriate. I don't know if it's like doing us any good, you know. Like, there are certain concepts you're not going to get until ready to get them, you know. But some kids you know--like my kids when they got to kindergarten, actually when they went to preschool I said, do not do any academics. Don't do any letters. Nothing like that. I don't want them. They're just here to play and to just socialize. And then kindergarten was mostly play. When they hit first grade it was like, "Damn I know how to read". It made sense when somebody said it, because we read to them. Other the people read to them. Not every kid gets that experience, I understand. But even the inner city kids that are behind, you can tell when you talk to them about things they haven't been talked to a lot. Like one child, we're talking about pictures and, what is this picture? She said, "I don't know what that is. My momma eats it though". It was a pear. She was in second grade. Like, how do you not know that that's a pear? So, I wonder if, even if we increase, like in the younger grades, less stress on like what sound, what sound, what sound and then talk, talk, talk, read, read, read. And interact like that.

Researcher: This was kind of the first general question that I came up with when thinking about what a good intervention study, against the backdrop of the pandemic, would be. So, how was the experience of delivering instruction during the COVID 19 pandemic different from pre pandemic? And we can kind of tackle this in a few different ways, but I guess that was sort of my first question is just like--Is this something that you guys think interventionists would be able to answer? Or something that they would be interested in participating in?

P7: I can definitely answer it.

P8: No, when you're in your life gets turned upside down you definitely can talk about it and can elaborate on that.

Researcher: Yeah, and I mean so like and this kind of goes more towards the second question. When I'm thinking of, is there a better question to ask I guess I'm sort of asking, do you think this would be relevant? Even though we might be reaching a point where pandemic restrictions are eased, where we're able, you know, going back to face-to-face instruction. Do you think something relevant could still come out of this for the field?

P9: Yes. Because I think even going forward next year, some of the things that we're doing post pandemic are still going to play into the way we're supposed to instruct or, you know, some of the stuff that we did before we cannot do next year. For sure.

P8: Yeah, I guess, they would ask what your timeframe is because I think the sooner that obviously we're you know very much still aware and into the pandemic--even though the restrictions are easing--but a year from now, it might not be as relevant and we might not have or interventionists may not have as good a recollection or remember distinctly what they have done to change the instruction.

P7: And you're also getting educators right now that are still very like passionate and fired up about their experiences from the pandemic. I think a year from now you're going to get like less motion about it so depends on what kind of response you really want. I think while it's fresh in our minds is probably.

Researcher: And one of the other things I'm interested about is also the way that we delivered instruction was different. It moved to these virtual settings but also, I'm kind of wondering if I need to add different wording to make it clear. But because I also want to know about kind of like emotional experience--kind of like what you were talking about P7 where it's like yeah when your whole world gets turned upside down you noticed that.

You know you want to have that addressed or or something. Are you guys back to in person, are you still a hybrid or virtual or…?

P7: We're both were. For me I'm four days a week in person. Wednesday's were virtual, but they always have the option--we didn't have it obviously—but families had the option of saying 100% virtual. Which I don't know what's gonna happen next year, but it's not been the greatest thing having some kids go back and some stay 100%. I don't know that that model, there was not really another choice, but I don't know that it was the most effective thing overall.

P8: Yeah, I'm five days a week in person instruction, although I have one group, one pullout group, reading support group, a group of RTI kids that is--their second graders--and their virtual. So, we accommodated both. The in-person kid and the virtual. And actually prior to this month, two of my groups there were two kids that were Zooming in with the in-person kids. Teachers in the classroom they call it streaming. You know we didn't really have a term for us with our small groups, it was more we just like you know Zooming in with us to join the group.

P7: I've heard of called like a high FLEX model. I don't know.

P8: I don't know.

P7: There's so many different terms but yeah.

P8: Yeah.

P7: It's wild having the kids zoom in while you have kids there in person and trying to pay attention to everyone at same time.

P8: Isn't it? It's so crazy. I push in for math support, as well, and we pull out for reading and in my building. And I'm in a fourth-grade classroom four days a week for math and the teacher is streaming and so she calls the kids the Zoomies and the roomies. So, it's yeah, it's really cute. But I've watched her and I talked to her about it and how difficult it is for her to concentrate on both groups, you know. You're in the mode with your kids that are working on multi-step problems in the room, and all of a sudden she's like "All right Zoomies how are we doing?" And I think, oh my gosh I forgot they were even there. So it's really challenging. In our building K-2 has a separate, if they decided to stay remote, they had a separate remote teacher. And then 3-5 those teachers are streaming. So they have a combination of both which is really tough.

P7: I've seen different districts do that, where one person was the set virtual. We didn't do that every teacher has to do both. I don't know if it was better having just one virtual teacher, it seems like it would be. Bless these classroom teachers. Like I know what we do is really hard, but I can't imagine having 25 kids. But I'm like at the same time I have 120. You know, there's different challenges for every role.

P9: We are five days a week in person, and we have certain grades from each building that are remote. So I have one virtual group that I do as well. So kind of similar to what P7 was talking about, but we are K-12 where you could have chosen and they each have their own.
teachers.

P8: So what districts are you in? I'm sorry I missed the early chatter conversation when I was dealing with my tech issues.

P7: I'm in [redacted].

P9: I'm in [redacted].

P8: Okay, all right I'm in [redacted].

Researcher: Yeah, I mean other thoughts on this anything from your guys own experience that you think maybe isn't getting covered by how this is phrased?

P7: Do you want it specifically to be about delivering instruction? That's the focus that you want?

Researcher: To me, when I talk about delivering instruction, you know it was always also about those relationships that I had with those kids and all of the other things that were going around.

P8: The way you phrased it—how is the experience, how was the experience of delivering instruction--and you didn't say how was the methods of delivering instruction. Experience broadens it. And then, like you said, the social emotional aspect of the teacher can also be included, I think, in that question so I think it's phrased well.

Researcher: Oh right, so I have, then the second one kind of goes more into--I was trying narrow in on, things that changed and which parts of it were things that like would stick around. Like things that you'd want to see carried over into the next year, then things that we're glad that they're gone and hope to never see them again.

P7: I'm still like in the headspace where I'm like just trying to get through the end of the year. But I'm starting to like reflect and starting that process of what do I want to take with me and from this is there things and I think there are, for sure.

Researcher: Do your districts have a are you guys all using reading recovery or does your to your districts have a specific reading intervention that's used? Or math intervention?

P8: For our district is using LLI. Fountas and Pinell.

P9: So are we.

P7: So I switched schools actually during the pandemic. Little bit of a crazy thing. I'm pretty much down the street, I was in [redacted] here before, and then I switched to [redacted]. So literally, [redacted] we used LLI, [redacted] they don't really have anything. So it's been quite a year trying to create from different sources. So yeah it was definitely bit of a crazy thing to do, but a good thing.

Researcher: Do you think those interventions were pretty adaptable to virtual?

P9: I think, doing the whole LLI lesson for my grade level was hard, because I don't have enough time necessarily to do it 100% with fidelity. And the materials they didn't have. So you have to adapt and tweak and improvise I guess with LLI. that's what I found.

P7: So much like any type of word work you'd want to do or dictated writing. Like you can't really write when you're on Zoom. I had kids who didn't have notebooks or paper and look we're trying to use the whiteboard option on zoom. And it just like that factor had to go out the window a little bit.

P9: And my groups, because I still do LLI with my virtual group, they don't have the books so it's just reading it online. And you know when the kids got their face right in the camera because they're reading off of an iPad, that's a challenge. Just little things that I took for granted--obviously, having them in person.

P8: And I hundred percent agree. Came up with the same challenges with the LLI. We did attempt to send home some books at the beginning, but we knew that they were probably not coming back and most of them have not come back. But I think what was difficult for me was--it was just really hard to do anything besides like Round Robin reading, which is just not, at all, it's just not the best way. It’s not the best method. But it was just you you ask students to read silently, independently, over a screen and they turn their screen off. You can see they're literally twirling in their chair. Like you know it's just not happening. So one of the other intervention teachers in our building she had suggested she had her kids read the page first. Silently read the page first and then we would take turns reading. And then discuss each page or parts of the book and things like that. You do the best you can, but it was so difficult to see what they were getting out of it. It was really like, in person we can do all the follow up work, we can read one on one. Over Zoom we could definitely talk about you know all of the sound it out strategies and you know everything, but it's it was just definitely challenging. To say the least.

P9: In my group too, because I have a group of first graders, they’re are different levels. But I have one shot. And so my higher kid is reading a lower book. Which is great to practice their fluency. But the lower kid, it's just very hard for them to be able to do the high levels. And honestly I try and make sure we get to a shorter page and I don't--I’m just like “Here’s the word”, because otherwise you've lost the meaning--the other kids are bored.

P7: I ran into a big issue with every month when I would progress monitor all my kids, I would want to rearrange the groups because that's what I would normally do if it was a regular school year. I probably should have let that one go, but I tried it for the first few months of the year. And getting, when we were completely virtual, I'm seeing groups all day, every day. And getting the parents to have to switch the time. And it was a mess. It would take like four days for them to adjust to the new time and apparently setting that alarm on their iPad is very challenging. And, but that was one of those things I'm like do I let this go or do I not? Because I hate when I'm not teaching something in the way it's not supposed to be done. I don't want to have a kid in a group that they shouldn't be in.

P9: Right, and my in-person kids are the same way, because we cannot cross classroom. So, my cohorts that I have are not even in the groups they should be in necessarily. It's the same challenges.

P8: I found myself using my Doc Cam a lot, too, I think that was pretty helpful. And then the kids at home, we had sent home with them, with their classroom teachers--we kind of tagged on to materials pickup and drop off--where we would have a word workbook and then a writing notebook too. Which we would use for like the follow up activities. But you have no idea if they are doing that. I mean you can have them hold it up in front of a screen, but again it's you know, could be like this, waving around. You can't tell exactly what they've done, you know, what they're what what's challenging for them. What they're not getting. So it's you know again not ideal.

P9: No, and like we interventionists were not given doc cams. So you were just kind of at the liberty of using your laptop. And that was that was it.

P7: I wasn't even given one and I'm one of those crazy people that went out and bought one. Cuz I'm out of my mind and kinda do stuff like that.

P9: I didn't start LLI until later--and I'm sorry if this isn't even relevant to you, please stop me. We have a hierarchy of phonemic awareness skills that we work on. So, once they master this skill, then you go to the next one, then you go down to the next one, and then we're building up to get to reading. So, if they don't have those skills, we have to work on those first. So, it's just something our district does. But that's good because you're giving them the foundational skills of knowing how to read a CVC word, knowing how to stretch out words, how to blend words, knowing their sight words all those things. Before we can get to reading.

P7: That's essentially all I ended up doing this year. I had phonics groups. I had a CVC group, I had blends and digraphs, vowels. And that was—we used Sharon Walpole I think it's called 'How to Differentiate Reading Instruction', but we ended up using that. And it worked out okay. When you're going from doing LLI for multiple years to not it was something else.

P9: And normally I'm a kindergarten interventionist. But then, at the start of this year, they took the kindergarten interventionist and we worked with first grade until the middle of the year. And the first-grade person went to the second grade, and the second to third. So, we've been adjusted and now I have got one first grade group virtual. One first grade in-person. The rest of mine back in kindergarten--so even my whole mindset of learning the first-grade way of learning and doing things is different than just doing the kindergarten letters and sounds kinds of things. But it's neat because you can see the progression and why you're doing what you're doing.

Researcher: But yeah, so are there other parts of a of you know pandemic teaching that you think are really important or really insightful or-- change the way that you think about intervention at all?

P7: I mean, I think that social emotional piece was more important than ever. And it just sort of really changed my teaching, practice in general. How I work with the families and it's really opened my eyes to a lot of things um, I think, for the good.

P9: I think it made families more aware of where their child is academically because often parents were sitting right there, and after we would do something, the parent would come on and say "Oh my gosh, you know, I'm sorry they don't know this, what can I do to help them?" Whereas before they were just like at school and it was your situation to deal with. So it was kind of nice to have the parents involved and hearing what was going on and wanting to be more involved.

P7: To a point. I feel like I got here it's messaging me all day. Every day. It was excessive at times. I've never talked to this many parents in my life about reading intervention. But it is nice that they actually realized what it meant for your child to be in a reading group and why does my child actually need this extra support?

P9: And there's the flip side, where the child is there and the parent is like--you could hear, "I'm not helping you! I'm out here doing adult things!" We had that happen. You know, so then you're like, okay now I understand more of what the child is coming from and the home life. So when they are in person you get a little bit more too from understanding, I guess.

P8: Something our school principal has always done, that I really haven't ever really truly paid attention to until this year, is twice a day she does a mindful moment. Get the kids kind of centered. And she just has a brief activity for the kids to--or just say like what you know produce snake breathing or something. It's been you kind of walk through it. So one of my coworkers had some mindful moments sticks and she said that she was using those with her kids to kind of get them grounded and focused before group began. And so I started doing those too and having the kids pick. You know each day someone knew it was their turn to like pick a stick, and I would pick too, from you know, and hold up in front of the screen and say "Okay, do you want, you know snake breath, or do you want balloon breath?" That kind of thing you know and I think that was really helpful with

them not being physically in front of you. To just try to get them centered and focused. Try to eliminate some of those distractions in the home. And they looked forward to it too. And to tell you the truth, I thought I was going to continue it and I did the first week and then I realized that that five minutes that we were spending on this, we you know--not getting into panic mode, but you come back and you're like “Oh we've got a lot to do”. So I did stop doing that, but I think that's something for next year that I think I would like to start off my groups by doing that mindful moment. Kind of getting him in that that learning mode.

P9: That's a really good idea. I like that.

P8: Yeah, I can send you the information if you want to.

P9: I would love that.

P8: Yeah, it's great and the kindergarteners really--you said you work with the younger kids--they really get into it. By the time you to the fifth graders in the building they kind of roll their eyes, like a mindful moment you know. But it's good. I mean, I even find myself sometimes to like me, “Oh, that was really nice. I needed to kind of just take a breath”. Take a step back and try to figure out, you know, what I’m what I’m doing, and where I’m going, and take a little time so.

Researcher: Yeah, I feel like especially too with the return. It feels like things have accelerated. Now come back. Now do M-STEP.

P8: Oh right, NWEA. All the testing. Like it's all.

P7: I’ve been doing DIBELS all day.

P8: Oh, my gosh. Or Acadience.

P8: That's my agenda for next week.

P7: It's hard doing the testing online. And I felt bad cuz I have kids in-person. And I feel like I can't test the kids in person, even though I want to. Some of the kids aren't. And you know that some of scores would be different, obviously. But that is one thing that can stay in the pandemic, is testing virtually. It’s so hard.

P9: We found that a lot of scores have gone drastically down because the parents were sitting there with them at the beginning of the year. And it's messing up the teachers rate of growth and they’re evaluated on that essentially. That’s one thing we noticed.

P7: Or parents taking the NWEA for them.

P8: Exactly they score in the 99 percentile when they're a tier 2 kid.

P9: And some kids didn’t get service because they scored so high. Because we can't justify it. Even though we know. But, at the beginning of the year, when we were trying to figure everything out, we couldn't serve as some of the kids that we knew absolutely needed to be serviced.

P8: What criteria do you use to determine which kids you are going to service?

P9: We use Fast Bridge. We just switched to it. Kindergarten and first grade are similar and then we do CBM in second grade and and third grade, fourth and fifth actually, as well.

P7: We just use the data from NWEA, DIBELS, and F&P. And if there are three areas, if their red, they’re intensive.

P8: And that's exactly what we do. And then this Fall it was interesting too because the F&P takes longer and we weren't quite sure, with the Spring, being them out of school, we weren't sure where to start them with an F&P level in the Fall. So we ended up just doing LLI running records on the kids that we serviced last year. And went with that. Not ideal, but that's what the best that we could do.

P7: One thing that I found really interesting at the beginning of the year, when determining who needed services, was first grade this year--they the missed half of kindergarten, we know that--you know, spring was not the same, you know, last spring. Virtual learning was not what it was this year, for every district. And I think had almost 90% of first grade that qualified. How do you have your entire grade level is tier three? So, it was really then going back to our tier one instruction and we really had to rely on our instructional coaches to push into those classes. It just sort of changed the way the general classrooms were teaching cuz they never had to teach in that, such an intensive manner before. They had a new reading curriculum too--they just rolled out Into Reading in our district--that was just a lot all at once for those first-grade teachers.

P8: Absolutely. We found the--I usually don't typically, don't work with kindergarten and first grade. And I actually usually don't work with second grade either, but I took over a maternity leave this year. And I knew she wasn't coming back so I did get to work with second grade, which has been which has been fun. I’ve liked it more than I thought. But I just lost my train of thought, what I was thinking. Oh, we have found that our second graders. We have a group of second graders who are really, really, really struggling and its they missed that chunk, that three-month chunk, at the end of first grade where there's a huge amount of growth too. That's where we've--it just, I mean there's lots of kids struggling at every grade, but just in general that's kind of what sticks out for our building, at least. So, and the thought of these kids going into third grade next year. So scary.

Researcher: My wife and I were talking the other night, and she still has about six or seven kids just getting letter knowledge.

P9: And we even have a couple of first graders that are supposed to go virtual and should have been in person and they don't even have their letter and sound knowledge yet. They're now going into second grade and they can't read. And that's a struggle, because they don't come to Zooms and so, how do you get them to come to a Zoom? You can't. And in our district, if you show up for 10 minutes for the whole day your counted as present. So, it's a struggle for sure.

P7: Ours they don't even have to be present at all, as long as they have some sort of contact with them as they do a asynchronous work that counts as if they were there.

Researcher: In some of the other groups, people were you know talking about that too. Camera would be off and then they'd go to call on them, and of course they're not there.

P9: There's another challenge right? I have a kid sitting right here, and brother's sitting here. So I can hear that teacher talking to the kid or the tv's on and you know all the background noise. That's something that's been crazy. I can't even stand it when I'm listening to them, try and read with our LLI group and the girls got the TV on here, and the sister is trying to learn with the teacher over there. Like, I have to mute her when she is done because it's too much for the other kids.

Researcher: Um well yeah so I'm that kind of I mean I think sort of brings things to a close, for this group unless there's anything, is there any other?

P7: I have something. From like, from a special ed perspective. So, I'm one of the leaders for the child study team at my school and I found that that has been my biggest headache this year, because the pandemic is now a factor that can lead to children, that when we're talking about kids going to third grade that don't their letters and what not. Unfortunately, we're butting heads with someone in the special ed department, for kids that need to be evaluated, that this is a reason that they're not going to be because of the pandemic and, they need more time. They need more data but like they're virtual, so like they're going to third grade and they still can't read life.

P8: It's so frustrating. I'm glad it's not just our building.

P7: I've literally been in tears fighting for some of these kids because it's--when you've been doing it long enough that you know what child needs more support than you're able to give them and now then now there's another reason to not--and I'm not quick to want to label kids--but if a kid needs more support then they need it. It's been a bit of a nightmare for me this year.

P8: Yeah and on the flip side to it. I work under the learning specialist at our school and she had said to, you know, she said there's actually been more kids this year, though, that

have gotten referred for evals then we had last year. And her theory was that, because it wasn't from us begging them to evaluate these kids, it was from parents that were concerned at home and really for the first time seeing how much their kids struggled. And most parents that really care and are really cognizant of their child's education, they were the ones that that pushed it and said “Listen, like this is not working here so”. You just have to get all the parents of those kids to push because that's what makes it happen. It doesn't happen with the learning specialist and myself saying--or even the classroom teachers sometimes raising the red flags--it's kind of like, “We need more time. Let's try another intervention”. Okay.

P7: At least for me, the kids that that have come back, I can sort of justify more “Okay well I tracked this once they came back and it’s still an issue”. For those kids that are still virtual, that are still, like, I sometimes feel like I’m failing those kids. That's really hard.

Researcher: It depended on who our school psychologist was. Some were going to and then others we're going to only rely on this one assessment or something like that.

P7: That is a big challenge. My battle is with the school psychologist and her not wanting kids to have a learning disability label or whatnot. But it's not always what's best for the kids to not give them that type of support. The idea is to grow out of your IEP. I don't know the right terminology, but it's not necessarily going to stick with you for life. But the reason the Grade Three law is a joke sometimes is that all these kids are just all still moving on.

P8: Our psychologist has been using the least restrictive environments terminology a lot too. Which I do understand, and I do know that we have to respect that and follow that but, at a certain point, though, too, they do need the services and they need the support.

P9: We have some battles that we're fighting too because we are a schools of choice school, and so we draw a lot of kids from [redacted]. Those kids are the ones that need the service, but then we don't look good because they fit a certain, you know, area. I mean and the parents have made the effort to bring their kids, they're bringing them and picking them up every day. But they need the service and they're the ones that would qualify but because our district is, you know, we look like we're classifying kids if you will. And so that doesn't look good for us which doesn't look good for the state, and so, then the trickle effect is well we can't qualify kids because. Because it doesn't look good.

P7: Well, I know and if they do get the qualification then the home district doesn't always want to release the funding and it's a whole--

P9: Yes, we have a boy that's in kindergarten and he is six and a half and he's being retained because he cannot go to first grade. He’s a three-year-old or four year old. And it's a battle of do you retain him? Do you not retain him? But how do you send him when he they won't qualify him to first grade, and he can't I mean, he can’t count to 10. And at this point, you know he's going to end up hating school, and he doesn't right now.

P7: I see that too you with the kids that are really struggling. Like especially my third graders. They're starting to pick up on the fact that they're struggling and they're virtual and I feel like they hate school more than ever. Because it's hard for them. At least when they're in person, they get that social factor.

P9: And you can pull them out when it's really a hard thing, and you can you know figure out something else to do with it or modify an assignment, but when they're virtual you can't. And they're sitting there lost. And that's when you get the behaviors spinning in the chairs or turning of the cameras and whatever they're doing.

Researcher: My wife, has seen a lot of the behavior. Issues flare up more so than she seen in previous years, when kids came back face to face.

P9: Well and they've had no social interaction for a year, almost, and they don't even know how to play with each other.

P7: If they go back next year first grade is essentially going to be kindergarten for them. So, you wonder what like what the long-term effect is going to be? Is every grade gonna--how long are we going to have to play catch up for?

P9: I'm just thankful that I didn't have little kids that I had to help through this whole process. My youngest one was, well we had a sophomore and a senior last year. I'm like you guys—and we had two in college. So, I didn't have to be the parent and try and teach and do all this stuff. So, bless you that had to do that because it was a challenge. of a two-year-old it's Like. yeah.

P7: I have a two-year old. It's been a little challenge. And I'm pregnant, so there's that.

P8: My boys are in sixth grade and ninth grade, but they are actually they've been in school almost the entire year because they are in Catholic school. So those schools opened the door. For the most part, I was able to do my job without--and they're older too. But those couple of weeks, where they were home--I don't think it was fun for anyone. So P7 then with your two-year-old, how did you manage that? I'm just so curious.

P7: So, in the spring, that was right after he turned one-- like it's hard to believe like he was just baby when this all happened-- and he was home with me all spring. But he wasn't moving like--but once I knew what my new position was going to be and I'm like he has to go to daycare like there's just no way. Once he was on the move. I couldn't have done both.

P8: Well, I'm so glad you're able to find a daycare that was open because I wasn't even sure how that was working for people. I wasn't sure that daycares were even open, or if

parents were going to be sending kids. I'm kind of out of that realm. Hearts go out to those with the younger kids.

P7: It was nice, though I guess being at home, like if he was sick, like I didn't have to take a sick day. Like I was able to--there was a lot more flexibility. So, I will miss that.

Researcher: One of the main things I was just curious about is particularly around the assessments and trying to figure out what is reliable and what is not. And I was curious if you if any of you have, like are your districts have adapted procedures.

P7: So, we have, one kid comes to mind that fall and he took NWEA and he scored like a middle school level, and the second grader when he doesn't know any of his letters. And so it was very clear that his parents took it. So it's like we only we know the kids, we can take data like that, and just sort of throw it out. with me. We can't really accuse the parents of doing that, but then, once he came back In January, like we had him do it in front of us, and that was a reliable source. Like it's just, it was really frustrating because that happened to so many families. And we didn't know all the kids like we knew this kid so sometimes, especially with first grade, that we just couldn't use it at all these didn't know these kids.

P9: Yep we have the same kinds of things where our kids scored really well in the Fall and we knew that those were skewed scores. Now we have, they have to grow, for instance in kindergarten and first grade, they have to go one data point on our Fast Bridge Assessment and on our Developmental Spelling. But if they had help in the Fall, they're not going to grow and then the teachers, your growth benchmark, that they have to meet isn't going to be me. So we had to do some adjustments and things like that to take that into account.

P7: I've definitely heard from a lot of the classroom teachers they're having anxiety about end of the year evaluations because they're having to submit their data and it's not accurate. And I think most administrators like they understand it, but unfortunately like things haven't been changed that they still have to submit it so.

P9: Right and it's on record right because it's in your, like ours is in Fast bridge, as 'thing' and now we're going to track that data next year, in the next year and it's hard to say well, whatever.

P7: So, a lot of teachers who are normally highly effective will not be highly affected this year, unfortunately, because of this, and it seems very unfair.

Researcher: I was really disappointed when they didn't pause test requirements.

P7: It was crazy with M-STEP especially because it was optional for the virtual kids that they wanted to come in and do it or not. So, of course, most of the parents didn't. But then we had some kids who they did come in and do it. And then the scores are being used against them, because we have kids that are then be pulled up for the third-grade retention law, and now the parents have to fight it and it's like what was the point of--they

say wasn't it being used for anything but it was. They now have to like write letters, district, and like.

P8: Right. How many how many of the, at least in your building, how many of the third graders did get flagged?

P7: I want to say seven. But that's like a lot of the kids didn't take it. Definitely a handful and they were all my kids too, so I was able to you know justify most of them. A lot of them were ESL kids and. It's challenging.

Researcher: Similar things in your guys' district were there with the third-grade retention?

P9: Not in our building.

P8: We had one or two that one or two third graders that potentially we're going to be flagged and then--I can't remember what the principal decided to do. If they if the parents were going to get the letter or if they were--I can't, I you know I honestly, can't remember how.

Researcher: Like as your districts have been developing their plans and like how are we going to respond to COVID do you think that school boards and central administration has been effectively consulting interventionists and teachers about what is actual best practice and what and what should be done?

P7: I don't mean to laugh, but no, no way. Like this, this is awful honestly. I was just saying this the other day. They forgot to do my end of the year evaluation but my principal has never observed me the entire year and I was a new staff member. And I was just saying to someone like what that was really awful? She wouldn't have known like that's a little, like, they seem to like care about what is going on and what I'm doing. I love the autonomy, but I'm also like I don't think that's the way you should run a school. I think you should know what your staff is doing especially with if we have kids that were talking about like retaining and whatnot when do you want to know what has been done to help them throughout the year. Very strange to me.

P9: The people that were over my program before always came in one time a year--usually in December--and just sat in on a group and observed and that was the only time they came in. And slowly those people shifted to somebody else taking over and this year, I had to do a self-evaluation. Which is the first year since the start of this program that we've done that we've done that and we started in 2011. And my evaluation is the same one that's a secretary's fill out and it's the same one that the lunch ladies fill out. Or the staff associates fill out. So the questions, maybe aren't--I mean, and one of the questions on there is, how do you feel that you dress? Is it, you know--and you rank yourself in four categories like--Okay, whatever. But it's not the same as what the teachers fill out, so I think that's interesting. I filled it out, and then the principal and I sit down and we discuss it. But as we're listening to us, so it's interesting because

interventionists are the only group in our district that do not have a union or an organization or something you know. So, we talk amongst ourselves, if you will. You know there's no one. If you ever problem you just talk to each other and figure out who you're going to, who's in charge of your program. When there's three people it's kind of--you play through the ranks. But our superintendent did have a roundtable this year, and there was a building representative from every building that was chosen to sit at the round table. My principal asked me if I would do it this year, so I did. So, there was a very small, small voice of myself that got to talk, but most of the stuff that we talked about were teachers because it was the teachers that were there. There were two building sites that represented their building. So even the stuff that I said, when I could bring one positive thing from the week, or one do over, and not two--not three, it's just one of each thing. So often, it was a teacher concern that was brought but probably already was voiced through [other groups] so were we heard, maybe? But not really.

P8: I actually have never had an evaluation completed from the three years that I've been there, which is, I guess kind of crazy. I don't know if it's because I'm not a contracted teacher and I paid through X. I'm not sure.

P7: But P8when we talked last week about how when I was teaching last year, X was the same thing. So, then I was never evaluated because I am a contracted employee like they have to. And they just didn't.

P8: Yeah so I mean I just kind of rely on like the learning specialist that I report to in my building. And she's wonderful to work for and I just occasionally just say, you know, "Like well, let me know if there's any red flags or if I should be doing other things, or if I'm not meeting the expectations and things like that". But in terms of overall, our district did survey the teachers. The superintendent did survey teachers before the kids came back in the building and basically asked are you comfortable coming back? What protocols, safety protocols, do you want in place? So they did try to get some idea of the teachers feelings and mentality going back. But I don't know how much.

P7: Did they ask you, though?

P8: I was include that survey yeah. So that was that was good, I kind of put my two cents in. Because there's such a huge spectrum of people--there's the people that are totally locked down, then there's two teachers in our building know had pre-existing conditions or an autoimmune condition, and didn't come back. They decided to teach virtual. And then you have the other end of the spectrum, but for the people that said, like "Everyone should come back. There should be a room full of you know 25 kids and I won't get vaccinated". It's just extreme. But I felt good that I could kind of put my two cents in you, I was more middle of the road, anyway so it wasn't too concerning.

P9: We had a survey as well, but sometimes you're a little cynical. You're like we're filling out a survey but are you really doing this? Or are you doing it to make you feel like I'm giving you a say and really we already determined what's happening?

P7: I worry about all those surveys cuz I'm like I feel like they can see who's filling it out and I don't want anything ever be used against me.

P9: Sometimes you're weary of filling out surveys.

P7: Actually, letting your opinion be known.

Researcher: Yeah I did that with we got when I was teaching in East point at the time and we got sent a survey and it required you to it was not anonymous you had to give your district email and so I didn't fill it out.

P7: Honestly, like it was really interesting when we were like debating whether to come back to school in February, sitting in on the board meetings. It was a five-hour board meeting with them going back and forth with the Union. And we gave a lot of reasons why at that point, like we weren't comfortable and it was very much swept under. So it's like we filled out all the surveys and it didn't really matter how we felt at the end. Even one of the board members had said, we're giving the families an option to stay home, but the teachers don't have the option? And our superintendent literally said they have an option if they don't want to come to work. They don't have a job anymore. Wow not an option, okay, cool.

P8: They didn't even offer to accommodate those teachers that wouldn't feel comfortable coming back and saying, well, maybe we can find something--a virtual position for you or something like that?

P7: Every district was so different with how did things.

Researcher: [in another focus group] the Board's discussion was basically like, but if we don't go back to in person, then they're going to go to [another district]

P9: I firmly believe that, even though we gave those opinions that they had already made their mind up to satisfy the parents, because there's a few squeaky wheels. And those parents won out. And the parents that didn't want to go back didn't really voice their concerns their concerns all over social media, like the ones that thought it was all ridiculous and whatever.

P7: We definitely, I think there is something to be said about schools that have a lot of school of choice kids and them going with what the board and what the families want, versus what's necessarily--like they don't. I don't know if you guys see a connection with that, but I know P9we had talked about we both have a lot of kids from Pontiac that come to our districts. And they don't want to lose those guys.

P9: They don't.

P7: We're a really tiny district, and it would be a problem if we lost them.

Researcher: We're seeing some of that in Clawson with when it comes to discipline.

P7: I taught in charter schools for five years and that was what we lived in brief bio is what the parents wanted and it's a nightmare it's not--

Researcher: I was just curious if there are social emotional areas you think will need to be addressed?

P7: And I think definitely with my zoom groups. I think once the virtual came back, like obviously we check in at the beginning, but then they were usually good. When they're at home and I see what's going on in their backgrounds it brings up a whole another can of worms and they need to tell me what's going on and that becomes half of the time. So that was a huge impact for those kids that have been virtual the entire year.

P9: And the kids at school they can walk up to the teacher at random times of the day, and tell them something like "Hey you know, this is what we did last night," And teacher can say, "yes", but when you're in a Zoom they can't just do that. They don't get that interaction and the conversation and so at the beginning of our Zooms we spend five sometimes 10 minutes talking about what they did last night, what they did over the weekend, what they just did and making those connections. And we wrapped up our Zooms yesterday, with our virtual groups. And to of the kids were, you know, "Tell me your favorite part about first grade?" said "Coming to this, coming to this intervention". And I thought you know that was really good because they needed extra help but I think it was nice because it was just are little group of the five kids and myself. And they would say, "Can we say on with you?" "Sure, we can stay on and talk for a few minutes". I mean, how do you say no to them? You know and just end the meeting on them. I think it's important to be able to do that with the kids and give them that social emotional.

P8: I hundred percent agree. I do the same thing. Sometimes I felt like we really didn't get through what I wanted to get through because we did spend five to 10 minutes talking about the weekend. You know, even the kids getting a chance to kind of like chat with each other in a small group. I mean they had their breakout room groups with their teacher in math and reading but it's not--they're trying to get work done, we are too, but it's a it was just good community building and just a chance let everyone know kind of what was going on with them. Or like you know we pets, I mean we had so many days, where it was like here's my cat, here's my dog. But kind of make do make the best of it right.

P7: About halfway through the year I realized the kids like don't ever get a chance to just talk and like have a recess with each other. Usually once or twice a week I would do lunch bunch and I would just like leave my zoom open during the half hour lunch I have. And if they wanted to talk, like I didn't like plan anything. It's hard being a kid--even for the kids at school, like it's just not normal, they don't get to socialize and they don't get

to--I really wonder what the long-term impact is going to be on some of these kids. Like, especially the little ones that didn't get to develop the same social skills that you normally would in kindergarten and first grade.

P8: We were talking about class placement and those have already been done and the list came out and the second grade teachers are--well, I mean each year obviously they do a good job of mixing up the kids and not putting all the kids with the IEPs in one class and not putting all the behavior problems together, and you know splitting it up trying equally between boys and girls and things like that--but there was a second grade teacher who I heard who felt like she had gotten an interesting group and more so than the others. And these are the kids that are really needy too. Academically really needing that support and have had the tier two support and will get that again next year for sure. So, my learning specialist that I work for, she just kind of reassured her that we will start support as soon as we can. Like, normally we'd kind of ease into the school year and we test, and we do this, but we were talking about the kids that we know that will need support--that we have been working with this year, that are not making the progress that they should, we talked about starting to pull the second week of school.

P7: Imagine how daunting that would feel? Like knowing that you have disruptions than having to go through the whole summer. Like a feeling of dread and that's awful.

P8: I think in our in our building, I think the support for the neediest kids, the ones that are really below where they should be, is going to start much sooner than it has in the past. Because we just we can't afford that month long process of "Let's let them ease into the classroom. Let's get all the assessments done. Let's analyze the assessments. Let's talk about scheduling. It needs to happen fast".

P9: I think, next year will be harder than this year because everybody stopped last year, right? Whereas this year, we have some that did virtual and some that came in person in and some that joined virtually. So, you're right. Like starting right away it's going to be very imperative. Because they're going to be all over the board.

P7: I saw today and that my district has a posting for a social emotional learning teacher. They created a new position, and I was reading the description, because I was curious in a very much sounds like a like a behavioral interventionist. Like similar to like what a social worker would do, but I don't know if they're going to like have it as a special like they just said, you had to be a certified teacher.

Researcher: One of the things that I heard that I didn't know was a few districts have off a fully virtual option for next school year.

P7: We're not going to have teach the virtual kids anymore. But I think they're going to be like an Edmentum sort of thing like a solid base. And they have to commit to like a full semester to do that. But they could come back in January, if they want to I guess, but

I think it'll be interesting to depending on when the vaccines roll out for the younger kids. If that's something that districts, will be able to justify or not.

P9: We had each grade level had to commit to a full year for us, especially in the elementary because of adjusting class sizes and then getting teachers in. And we did some wonky things I think for this year. But we will not have K-1 taught by our own teachers, because there were not enough, students that signed up. It's a two/three split and a four/ five split. And there's a couple options, but right now we don't have enough. But X has a great virtual academy so I think we're looking to now build our academy. But I believe that there were only 60 to 80 for all three of our middle schools that signed up for virtual. And 100 in our high school which out of you know 2500 kids isn't a large percentage for next year to be virtual. And obviously the elementary were very low.

P7: I wonder with high schools like, with some of these districts rolling out a permanent virtual academy, if that would affect dropout rates or not? Because I could see a lot of the high schoolers that have had some issues and whatnot it being a really positive thing.

P9: We do have a transitions program at our in our district, and maybe you guys do as well. For kids that aren't going to make it through high school. But this is just a better place for them to--for whatever reason, whether it's because you're missing a lot because you're sick or because it's just really a hard program to do the high school--that they can still get their diploma. Its just a different way of going about it.

Researcher: It tends to break down along class lines. Some of our friends who can afford to work from home, you know it's like will keep them virtual because you know it's safe for them.

P7: I don't know what X ended up deciding on but because I live here--people have been talking about because we don't have a busing system that's why they want to keep a lot of a lot of the families want to keep their kids home. Because right now they would have to leave work in the middle of the day, like three o'clock to go pick up their kids or then pay to have them go to latch key. It's not free when you're in a public district that doesn't have bussing.

P8: They are on a shortened day as well. Their day it's like 8:30 until two. My neighbor was telling me that. And then Fridays they don't have school. When the state came out with that mandate that said you have to offer at least 20 hours per week of in person instruction to receive that funding. They really rushed back at least faster than they thought they were going to release had the kids come back full time or faster than they thought. But so they really kind of did the minimum of that too so again, how does that affect the kids?

P7: My district did that, too, we just spent every day at one o'clock. And we don't have Wednesdays.

P9: We did a shortened day in the elementary. And then we went back to mostly a full day. Our high school is 9:30 to 2:30 because they do not serve lunch. Normally were 7:30 to 2:30 so my high schooler's loving his schedule. lunch, you know because. They have the snack line open but there's not enough room to keep the kids socially distanced while they're all eating. But on a normal year they go 7:30 to 2:30 Monday, Tuesday Thursday, Friday and Wednesdays a shortened day from 9:30 to 2:30 and they don't get lunch that day anyway.

Researcher: I wanted to ask at some point, how is the baby doing?

P7: I'm like already trying to figure out because I didn't start pulling groups this year till beginning of October. My son was three weeks early, so i'm like if that happens again like I gotta start planning my maternity leave now.

P8: And then it's a whole nother twist into next year for you too.

P7: Trying to write sub plans has been crazy because, like I don't even know what I do. Let alone trying to explain to someone else.

P9: Bring the baby with you to work. It'll be fine.

Researcher: Yeah, they're not going to be looking to get rid anyone so. You're just like nope this baby is here with me today. So. Like overall like what did you guys think of it? Like have you done focus groups before was this enjoyable or all of those kinds of things.

P7: I really enjoyed talking to you guys.

P9: I had never done one. I thought it was interesting even last week when we chatted just for the 15 Minutes. It was nice to see like what each other is doing at their building.

P7: It felt like therapy, you know.

P9: Yes!

P8: Yeah, cuz I think with our positions--there I don't want to say isolated but we're not--

P7: But they can be for sure--

P8: Right and we're not at a team. Like we're not teaching third grade, and we have two or three other teachers, that we can plan with. And talk to and bounce ideas off--so I thought this was really great. It's interesting to see what the other districts do to. Obviously with the in person versus virtual and the format of the intervention position. I thought it was great I've never done a focus group before, but I will do another one for sure.

APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP SCRIPTS

Focus Group Script

Name of Project: Designing Meta-Paradigmatic Research

Time of Focus Group:	
Date:	
Place:	
Facilitator:	

Opening script:

(a) **Welcome the group**: Thank you for joining us today. I want to make sure to relay how much I appreciate your willingness to help and assist in this study.

(b) **Introduce the purpose of the study and go over the content of the consent form:** The purpose of the research study is to consider how interventionists altered their practice during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this first group, we will also look at potential research questions for a future study and consider whether these are good questions. I am interested in hearing about your experience and your recommendations for improvement.

(c) **We will audio record the session** to make sure we accurately transcribe comments. Once we transcribe your responses, subsequent analysis will use transcripts only, unless we find the need to go back to the recordings for clarifications. If you do not want to be audio recorded, please feel free to leave at this time (make sure to inform volunteers beforehand).

(d) **I am skipping individual introduction** to save time, but everyone has their first name on screen.

(e) **Confidentiality.** Your data will be kept confidential, as outlined in the Information Sheet you all received. Please only use first names during the session to maintain confidentiality. Please remember to keep discussions confidential.

(f) **Length of the focus group**: We have approximately 60 minutes for discussions so let's get started.

- Turn on the audio (or video) recording device and test it.

Questions:

I would like your feedback on the following questions. For each question, please consider if you think this is a question that interventionists could help a researcher answer and whether there is a better question that a researcher should ask?

1) How was the experience of delivering instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic different from pre-pandemic instruction?
2) How did instructional practice change and how was it effective or ineffective?
3) Additional thoughts/feedback

Closing script: Thank you very much for your time. Are there any last comments? In the next focus group, there will be the chance to reflect on any responses or experiences you feel were not addressed in this group. Do you have any preferences on scheduling the next group?
Please contact the Principal Investigator, Adam LeRoy, with any additional thoughts or questions that you may have.

Focus Group Script

Name of Project: Designing Meta-Paradigmatic Research

Time of Focus Group:	
Date:	
Place:	
Facilitator:	

Opening script:

(a) **Welcome the group**: Thank you for joining this second focus group. I want to make sure to relay how much I appreciate your willingness to help and assist in this study.

(b) **Introduce the purpose of the study and go over the content of the consent form:** The purpose of the research study is to consider how interventionists altered their practice during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this second group, we will mostly reflect and consider any experiences or other information you feel should be discussed.

(c) **We will audio record the session** to make sure we accurately transcribe comments. Once we transcribe your responses, subsequent analysis will use transcripts only, unless we find the need to go back to the recordings for clarifications. If you do not want to be audio recorded, please feel free to leave at this time (make sure to inform volunteers beforehand).

(d) **I am skipping individual introduction** to save time, but everyone has their first name on screen.

(e) **Confidentiality.** Your data will be kept confidential, as outlined in the Information Sheet you all received. Please only use first names during the session to maintain confidentiality. Remind participants to keep discussions in the focus groups confidential.

(f) **Length of the focus group**: We have up to 60 minutes for discussions so let's get started.

- Turn on the audio (or video) recording device and test it.

Questions (3 to 4 open ended questions):

1) What did you think of the structure of the first group?
2) Are there additional things you would like to share about pre-pandemic vs. pandemic instruction?
3) What other additional information do you think is important to consider about this topic?

Closing script: Thank you very much for your time. Are there any last comments? If there are additional things you would like to share, you can contact me at any time. Would anyone find it beneficial to convene a third group? Please contact the Principal Investigator, Adam LeRoy, with any additional thoughts or questions that you may have.

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