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PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SELF-EFFICACY: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

by

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A Doctoral Dissertation

Submitted to Graduate Faculty

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for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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May 2022

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5/5/2022
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Title Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions of Self-Efficacy: From Theory to Practice

Department Teaching and Learning

Degree Doctor of Philosophy

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Yvonne Helene Overn Cannon
May 2022

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

An educational journey is a cycle of experiences and reflection. Mine has been a personal and passionate journey to be a change agent and advocate for all who strive to learn. This opportunity has proven to me repeatedly that there is a struggle in the learning process and that many people played a vital role in supporting me in reaching this achievement.

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the relationship of pre-service teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy and functioning to their confidence in their teaching abilities before the student teaching experience. This phenomenological study with a sequential mixed-methods approach seeks to answer the following research question from a sample of pre-service teachers completing the final semester of coursework before student teaching: How do pre-service teachers describe their lived experiences of their relationships between self-perceptions of teaching efficacy and functioning to their confidence in their teaching abilities? Additionally, the study attempts to identify emerging gaps in the transition from coursework to fieldwork to assist Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) as they continue to make ongoing curricular changes in response to pre-service teacher needs and educational reforms.

This dissertation contains three articles that examine the intersectionality of perceptions of self-efficacy and functioning with teaching confidence across the areas of (a) Student Engagement, (b) Instructional Strategies, and (c) Classroom Management. The first article presents key findings of the measures of self-efficacy and confidence levels, the second article discusses the measures of the quantitative survey with the interview data, and the third article highlights only the qualitative data and the perceptions of pre-service teachers in the transition from theory to practice.

The data from the survey showed moderately low levels of self-efficacy across all three constructs and provided initial descriptive statistics prior to the interviews. The survey and interviews confirmed a relationship between perceptions of self-efficacy and confidence to the

ability to successfully carry out knowledge, skills, and dispositions from theory to practice. Each interviewee identified supportive relationships from mentor teachers and university supervisors as central to feeling a sense of belonging and security as they began introductory field experiences. Additionally, all pre-service teachers expressed a sense of excitement in beginning to work in the field with "real" students. The disparity emerged when they noted that their perceptions of teaching did not align with the realities of the profession they experienced. This concern illustrates a correlation between task proficiency and experience. The research indicates the need for EPPs to continue to address the need for more transparency of the expectations and complexities of the teacher's role in their curriculum in the bridging between coursework and field experiences.

The audiences for these articles include EPP faculty, co-operating teachers, pre-service teachers, and other stakeholders. These articles connect current literature related to self-efficacy to the survey and interview responses, highlighting the impact of the findings on the responsiveness of Educator Preparation Programs.

Keywords: pre-service teacher, teacher candidate, educator preparation programs, self-efficacy, confidence, stress, anxiety, self-perception, psychological well-being, mental well-being, dispositions, standards.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Research demonstrates two main issues facing pre-service teachers are psychological and social-emotional well-being and lack of training on how to cope with teaching pressures (Akinsola, 2014; Brackenreed & Barnett, 2006; Daniels, Clifton, Hall, Mandzuk, & Perry, 2006; Daniels, Mandzuk, Moore, and Perry, 2011; Eksi & Yakisik, 2016; Grudnoff, 2011; Murray-Harvey, Russell, Banfield, Lawson, Silins, & Slee, 2000; Ozen & Ozturk, 2016). Pre-service teachers experience increased anxiety, lack of confidence, and stress, similar to their full-time teaching counterparts. Teacher candidates worry about observations, evaluations, relationships with cooperating and supervising teachers, adequate preparation, and managing classroom behaviors (Daniels et al., 2011; Ripski, LoCasale-Crouch, & Decker, 2011). Lever, Mathis, and Mayworm (2017) cite considerable research of conditions that lead to teacher anxiety. The conditions encompass the following features: high-stakes testing, large class sizes, behavior challenges, inadequate resources, physical space, workload, responsibility for student care and well-being, bureaucracy, long hours and workload, few advancement opportunities, and the existing gap between pre-service training expectations and actual work experiences.

Through course and program assessment, Educator preparation programs (EPPs) cyclically reflect and make ongoing changes to respond to teacher candidate needs and educational reforms. "The process of preparing, training, and supplementing pre-service teachers with the basic skills of teaching is considered to be one of the most important tasks in faculties of education" (Akinsola, 2014, p. 41). However, since there is no single commonly adopted universal approach to teacher preparation, addressing mental well-being in pre-service teachers is

problematic (Daniels et al., 2011). In-depth reviews of teacher preparation frameworks address identified themes in pre-service teacher issues, including stress, anxiety, efficacy, commitment, resilience, responsiveness, dispositional traits, and relationship to students. This study focused on the pre-service teacher's lived experiences of their relationships between self-perceptions of teaching efficacy and functioning to their confidence in the transition of theory to practice.

Purpose of the Study

Research studies have long indicated that pre-service teachers experience various stressors that impact their mental health (Blazer, 2010; Hanson, 2013; Lever, Mathis, & Mayworm, 2017). Ultimately, poor mental health generates the perceptions of low self-efficacy, promotes a lack of confidence, impairs relationships with students, and negatively affects teacher performance and student academic success (Seton, 2019; Smiley, 2020). Therefore, exploring the phenomenon of pre-service teachers' mental health specific to perceptions of confidence related to self-efficacy beliefs may assist pre-service teachers in the transition to fieldwork by identifying components that would provide for new skill development in EPPs.

This phenomenological study with a sequential mixed-methods design discerned the self-efficacy perceptions of a sample of pre-service teachers across one upper Midwestern state majoring in elementary education and the relationship of perceived confidence levels related to those self-efficacy levels. In addition, the study explored perceived gaps in support for pre-service teachers that would increase self-efficacy levels as they transition to student teaching.

Significance of the Study

To better understand how pre-service teachers present individual self-efficacy beliefs, a primarily phenomenological study design was implemented to provide participants an opportunity to share their lived experiences of self-perceptions of teaching efficacy and preparedness. The shared lived experiences added to the authenticity and credibility of the study by allowing access to multiple personal perspectives. In addition, themes from the research provide insights into emerging gaps in the literature and offer opportunities to assist Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) to reflect and respond to pre-service teacher needs.

Current research indicates the rising importance of this work. Pre-service teachers experience stress and anxiety as they begin their fieldwork; however, little information directs educator preparation programs on how to provide specific supports to bridge inferred gaps for transitioning from coursework to fieldwork. Teacher education programs cannot perfectly match the coursework preparation provided to what teacher candidates will experience in real-time (Grudnoff, 2011). Responsiveness of EPPs is essential in the ongoing motivation and confidence of pre-service teachers. Teacher candidates that have prior knowledge of the intricacies of daily classroom expectations and responsibilities have greater confidence and efficacy moving into their field experiences. An increase in confidence levels of self-efficacy positively impacts student achievement (Brackenreed & Barnett, 2006; Daniels et al., 2011; Geng, Midford, & Buckworth, 2016; Grudnoff, 2011; Harmsen, Helms-Lorenz, Maulana, & van Veen, 2018; Harris, 2011; Lever et al., 2017; Murray-Harvey et al., 2000; Ozen & Ozturk, 2016; Ripski, M. B., LoCasale-Crouch, J., & Decker, L. 2011; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). The connection between

pre-service teacher preparedness and levels of self-efficacy is intertwined. Aybek and Aslan (2019) state the following:

> Pre-service teachers' readiness for teaching or their level of readiness is crucial to how well they will cope with the problems they will face in their profession and to what extent they will be successful in their teaching career (Brown, Lee & Collins, 2015). Likewise, pre-service teachers with a high level of self-efficacy beliefs can be said to achieve success and cope with the problems they encounter when they start teaching (Bandura, 1993). This paves the way for a relationship between the pre-service teachers' preparedness to teach and their self-efficacy beliefs. (p. 28)

The responsiveness of EPPs to this research can have long-lasting and positive impacts for all stakeholders. Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, LePage, Michelli, Pacheco & Youngs (2005) posit that schools and universities need to work in tandem to create a program that will implement best practices. Working together allows pre-service teachers to prepare for their transition from knowledge and theory to fieldwork in the schools with agreed-upon support from both the university and collaborative school (Dennis, 2016). Many of these collaborations have led to teacher residencies where current EPPs partner with local districts to implement innovative partnerships for supporting pre-service teachers and improving preparation and retention (Pike & Carli, 2020). In a report by Mueller and Hindin (2011), most pre-service teachers indicated that they used what they learned in their courses, field experiences, and personal experiences to navigate various teaching scenarios. Teacher preparation courses do make a difference in developing pre-service teacher dispositions. Additionally, the report suggested that "pre-service

teachers are often most influenced by what they see their cooperating teachers do or by their own memories, and often these teacher models are not ideal" (p. 31). Finding cooperating teachers who possess and exemplify effective dispositions will positively impact pre-service teachers' ability to develop and hone their skills. The collaboration of all stakeholders within an educator preparation program can have long-lasting effects on the attrition of practicing teachers, confirmation of career choice, and overall job satisfaction.

Research Questions

The focus of the study was on selected elementary education pre-service teachers enrolled in universities across one upper Midwestern state and currently admitted into an accredited educator preparation program. Research questions are listed below.

Primary Question: In the semester prior to student teaching

1. How do pre-service teachers describe their lived experiences of their relationships between self-perceptions of teaching efficacy and functioning to their confidence in their teaching abilities? (interviews)

Secondary Questions: In the semester prior to student teaching

1. How do pre-service teachers experience the transition from coursework to fieldwork relative to self-efficacy? (survey and interviews)
2. What behaviors and symptoms emerge as co-morbid to stress and anxiety concerns? (interviews)
3. How do elementary pre-service teachers perceive self-efficacy of teacher performance related to levels of stress and anxiety? (survey)

4. What is the prevalence of self-perceived stress and anxiety issues in a sample of upper Midwest pre-service teachers? (interviews)
5. What perceived gaps in coursework do pre-service teachers identify before the student teaching experience? (survey and interviews)

Assumptions and Limitations

One research limitation is that individual differences are challenging to measure in a study. These include personal interpretations of school climate, the difficulty of daily classroom behaviors, and workload. These interpretations directly affect perceptions of self-efficacy and explain why some pre-service teachers are more vulnerable than others to negative perceptions of mental well-being and lower levels of confidence in the same educational institution.

Secondly, it is difficult to consider all types of pressures related to the teaching profession. This study's focus is central to analyzing the lived experience of the relationship between self-perceptions of teaching efficacy and functioning to the confidence of teaching abilities. There is some agreement among researchers that individual factors can influence how a teacher may self-assess their psychological well-being that relates to varying confidence levels. Some of those factors include resiliency, existing support networks, and perceptions of self-efficacy. However, there are still contradictory findings on which variables contribute to these declining perceptions.

Thirdly, the study was limited to pre-service teachers in universities enrolled in EPPs in across one upper Midwestern state. A bigger and broader sample size may allow additional themes and insights to emerge in the data.

The primary assumption of the research was that pre-service teachers would be able to self-assess and be self-aware of their abilities to take what they have learned in theory and put it into practice. Continued research on EPP's effectiveness and alignment to standards will be necessary to determine if coursework helps or impedes the pre-service teachers' capabilities to meet realistic expectations of the teaching profession.

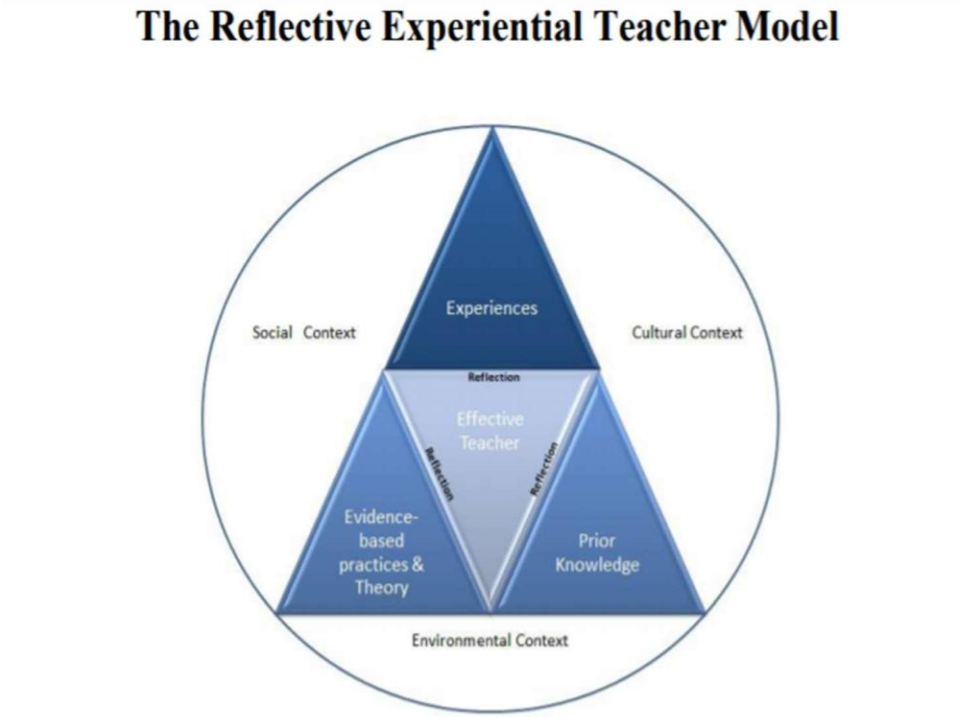
CHAPTER II: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Overview

The conceptual framework for this study is modeled after the Reflective Experiential Teaching Model (Mayville State University Division of Education, 2021) and Self-Directed Learning Theory. The Reflective Experiential Teaching Model Framework (see Figure 1) is grounded in the reflective application of current research findings, best practices, and theoretical knowledge. "Candidates learn how to use inquiry to question and test hypotheses in simulated and clinical experiences with subsequent reflective exercises that develop their ability to analyze and think critically" (Mayville State University, 2021). This reflective model promotes growth across knowledge, skills, and dispositions (KSD) to positively impact teaching and learning within social, cultural, and environmental contexts. Also, the framework guides improvement in the educator preparation program in meeting Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards through required coursework criteria and application.

Figure 1

Reflective Experiential Teacher Model



Note. This model was developed by faculty in the Division of Education in 1990, summarizing the framework of factors influencing an effective teacher. From *"Teacher Education Handbook,"* 2021, Mayville State University Division of Education, p. 7. Reprinted with permission from Mayville State University Division of Education.

Reflective practice for pre-service teachers offers opportunities to debrief with mentors throughout the EPP to improve skills, increase understanding of the complexities of the profession, and master concepts. The literature review emphasizes a connection between pre-service teacher supports to demonstrating appropriate dispositions, improving instructional

practices, and fostering growth mindsets. Additionally, continuous reflective practice increases confidence and raises feelings of efficacy. "Reflecting on personal areas of strength and weakness should challenge teachers to adjust their practices to benefit student learning, as well as one's own growth" (State of NJ Department of Education, n.d., p. 1). This study was implemented to understand the lived experiences of pre-service teachers' perceptions of supports and reflective practices to identify how they relate to feelings of teaching efficacy.

The second theory in the conceptual framework, Self-Directed Learning Theory, complements the Reflective Experiential Teaching Model. Kurt (2020) states that in the Self-Directed Learning Theory (see Figure 2), developed by Malcolm Knowles in 1975, adults become active participants in self-learning. Brockett and Hiemstra (as cited in van der Walt, 2019) identify self-directed learning as an overarching concept encompassing external and internal factors. External factors facilitate taking on the responsibility for learning, while internal factors are defined as personality traits that prompt acceptance of responsibility. Knowles (as cited in van der Walt, 2019) provided the following definition:

> In its broadest meaning, *self-directed learning* describes a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes. (p. 2)

The reflective component of this theory is primarily brought into play during the responsibility stage of the model, where self-monitoring and reflection come together to help

pre-service teachers analyze and evaluate performance. During this time, debriefing allows teacher candidates to discuss strengths and uncover gaps needing further practice to achieve mastery. After debriefing, the next development steps provide pre-service teachers with an opportunity to modify and adjust strategies to improve teaching practices. Reflection allows each pre-service teacher to apply self-directed learning processes to determine personal areas requiring growth. For this study, participants used self-reflection to complete the Teacher Sense of Self-Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran, n.d.) to indicate individual levels of confidence and efficacy across the areas of student engagement and classroom management and instructional strategies. The interview process gathered further data to identify emerging themes and patterns of preparedness and growth as a professional related to their transition from theory to practice.

The breakdown of the data collected from the survey and the interviews can assist EPPs in guiding pre-service teachers through the practice of self-directed learning to become more effective educators. This study can assist EPPs in differentiating supports for pre-service teachers based on self-awareness of teaching behaviors and practices. Implementing the reflective practice promotes self-directed learning by encouraging each teacher to monitor and evaluate their performance and adjust strategies to improve essential skills.

Figure 2

Self-Directed Learning Theory Stages

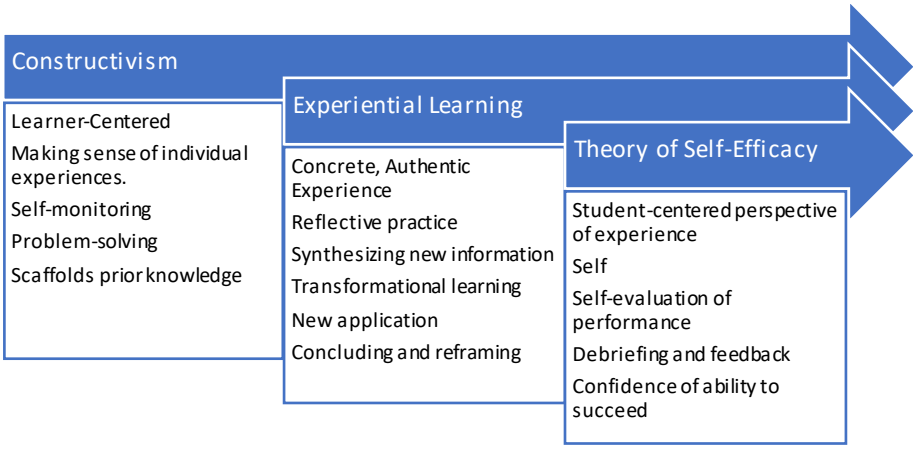
Note. This model illustrates the stages of self-directed learning. From "Leveraging a Personalized System to Improve Self-directed Learning in Online Educational Environments," by R. Kim, L. Olfman, T. Ryan, and E. Eryilmaz, 2014, *Computers & Education*, *70*, p. 151. Copyright 2013 by *Computers and Education*.

The conceptual framework is supported by three related theories. The first of these, Constructivism, is the overarching theory that is learner-centered and driven by self-monitoring and problem-solving (Olssen, 1995). Each learner has unique experiences and prior knowledge that they build on to gain new insights and meaning. Further experiences and understandings transform what learners know into new information. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory provides a secondary supportive structure to the conceptual framework. Experiential learning is also unique to each learner, is authentic in nature, and is transformative (McLeod, 2017).

However, it provides reflective practice to apply new knowledge and reframe information. Lastly, the Theory of Self-Efficacy provides the core support for this study. The student is the center of control (Bandura, 1977). It fits within the theoretical framework by providing self-evaluation of performance, but additionally, it gives the learner an opportunity for feedback to improve confidence levels and skillsets. These three theories come together to illustrate the importance of the pre-service teacher as the central figure for consideration within the conceptual framework.

Figure 3

Theoretical Framework Model



Note. This model illustrates the connections between the three theories used to support the conceptual framework (Cannon, 2021).

Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium Standards (INTASC)

The Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) provides ten standards to support pre-service teachers and define teaching effectiveness and dispositions

across multiple areas of planning and instruction (CCSSO, 2013). According to the CCSSO (2013) Model Core Teaching Standards articulate what effective teaching and learning look like in a transformed public education system – one that empowers every learner to take ownership of their learning, that emphasizes the learning of content and application of knowledge and skill to real-world problems, that values the differences each learner brings to the learning experience, and that leverages rapidly changing learning environments by recognizing the possibilities they bring to maximize learning and engage learners. (p. 3)

Educator Preparation Programs embed these standards in courses and align them to student learner outcomes, course objectives, and adequate teaching dispositions. The measures include the following expectations for teaching and learning effectiveness:

1. The teacher understands how children learn and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences.
2. The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that allow each learner to reach their full potential.
3. The teacher works with learners to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, encouraging positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

4. The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make these aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners.
5. The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical/creative thinking and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues.
6. The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to document learner progress, and to guide the teacher's ongoing planning and instruction.
7. The teacher draws upon knowledge of content areas, cross-disciplinary skills, learners, the community, and pedagogy to plan instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals.
8. The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to build skills to access and appropriately apply information.
9. The teacher is a reflective practitioner who uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (students, families, and other professionals in the learning community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner.

10. The teacher collaborates with students, families, colleagues, other professionals, and community members to share responsibility for student growth and development, learning, and well-being. (CCSSO, 2017)

Since this study explores and examines pre-service teachers' self-perception experiences related to efficacy, it is essential to highlight the students' expectations based on the standards. Standards allow the pre-service teachers to set goals and apply reflective practices to interpret individual preparedness and self-efficacy perceptions (see Appendix D). The standards also provide multiple opportunities over diverse areas in teaching and instructional methods for the teacher candidates to reflect on current progress for KSDs requiring improvement and growth. These practices relate directly to the overarching conceptual framework of the Reflective Experiential Teaching Model (Mayville State University, 2021). Additionally, attention to the InTASC Standards intersects with the Theory of Constructivism. Constructivism taps into prior knowledge and builds on schema allowing pre-service teachers to synthesize new information for transformational learning.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This chapter describes a primarily qualitative design using a sequential mixed-methods approach from a purposive sample of pre-service teachers completing the last semester of coursework immediately before student teaching. The lived experiences of this group of pre-service teachers was explored to gather data for EPPs and other stakeholders to support the transition from coursework to fieldwork effectively. "In a sequential design, the quantitative component precedes the qualitative component, or vice versa" (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017, p. 113). Implementing a mixed-methods approach allowed me to seek "convergence, corroboration, and correspondence of results" (p. 110). The sequential mixed-methods design enabled me to gather initial quantitative data across the themes of student engagement, instructional practices, and classroom management for analysis before engaging participants in interviews. Using a survey first and follow-up interviews to gather qualitative data provided a complementary approach to strengthen the studies' findings.

This study used The Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001), a long-form quantitative survey, to gather initial data of pre-service teacher self-perceptions of their capabilities in three areas: instructional strategies, student engagement, and classroom management. Second, qualitative data was collected through two semi-structured interviews with each participant to better understand the quantitative data collected. Creswell (2009) posits that a strength of qualitative research is the validation of the research accuracy as reviewed by the researcher and participants. The interviews consisted of a

set of open-ended questions to gather information related to the self-perceptions of pre-service teacher self-efficacies associated with transitioning to teaching across the areas of student engagement, instructional practices, and classroom management. These three areas align with the constructs of the TSES. Two sets of pre-service teacher semi-structured interviews were conducted to help reach a saturation level of the data. Saturation of the data is a norm in which no additional data is identified, and similar responses emerge (Saunders, Sim, Kinstone, Baker, Waterfield, Bartlam, Burroughs, and Jinks, 2018). Finally, the survey data was merged with the interview data during the analysis stage by comparing the statistical results with the qualitative themes (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 562). The rationale for adopting a mixed-methods approach is confirmed by Tashakkori and Newman (as cited in Hafsa, 2019):

- Complementary- to blend in two diverse but related responses to a single research question using quantitative and qualitative approaches.
- Completeness-for achieving a holistic view of the research phenomenon by integrating quantitative and qualitative investigation findings.
- Development-to utilize the initial phase of the investigation to develop the research questions, data sources, or sampling decisions necessary for the later stage of the study.
- Expansion-to expand the findings derived from the first phase of the investigation.
- Corroboration/confirmation- to validate the quality of conclusions derived from one type of study by checking it against mixed designs.
- Compensation- to balance the shortcomings of one method utilizing the supremacy of the other method.

- Diversity- to analyze the varied depictions of the same phenomenon. (p. 47)

The phenomenological sequential mixed-methods design strengthened the trustworthiness, validity, and reliability of the findings of the individual lived experiences of pre-service teachers in this study.

Phenomenology

The research questions were answered primarily using the methodological lens of phenomenology. Phenomenology is both a philosophy and a method of inquiry (Qutoshi, 2018). Lester (1999) states that the phenomenological approach gathers experiences through first-person perspectives based on personal knowledge and subjectivity. As a philosophy, phenomenology works as a theoretical framework to understand phenomena related to subjective reality.

> "Probably, this philosophical framework or the theory of subjective reality plays a key role in understanding the actor or the subject regarding a particular event or phenomena relating to his/her life. The researcher can adopt interviews, observations, and discussions as data collection strategies within a phenomenological method of inquiry; therefore, phenomenology has both philosophical and methodological stances" (Qutoshi, 2018, pp. 215-214).

There are three general steps in phenomenology: intuiting, analyzing, and describing. Intuiting is the process of understanding the phenomenon, the connection with the informants, and avoiding criticism, evaluation, or opinions on the data collected. During the analyzing stage, the researcher explores relationships between data and phenomena and identifies the meaning of the phenomena. The third stage, phenomena describing, communicates critical elements based on

classifying and clustering the phenomenon. In this stage, the researcher shares the importance and significance of the experience. (Umanailo, 2019).

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) provided the framework that defined phenomenology as a science of consciousness where the first-person viewpoint was the essence of the phenomenon and central to understanding personal realities. The movement's common beliefs include the following (Oiler-Boyd as cited in Donalek, 2004):

- Phenomena appear through perceptions embedded in experiences.
- Phenomenology is access to truth, and the truth is the foundation of knowledge.
- Meanings are given by perceptions and modified in the analysis.
- Perception offers people access to experience the world.

The phenomenological approach allows me to bracket out biases to focus on the individual lived experience (Beyer, 2020). Husserl defined bracketing as setting aside the question of the actual existence of the contemplated object to get at the pure phenomena from the user's point of view (Beyer, 2020). Bracketing of bias, triangulation of collected data, member checks to account for the accuracy of the reported narrative, and transparency in developing the findings and theories and promotes internal consistency in the study.

A phenomenological method was chosen to collect rich, descriptive data to gain insights into what pre-service teachers perceive as barriers to transitioning successfully into their student teaching experiences. The research identifies the prevalence of self-reported stress and anxiety issues in pre-service teachers, the types of obstacles they experience, and self-efficacy and confidence level perceptions. Self-reporting of confidence levels by pre-service teachers is

central to this study. The first purpose of this study is to reveal gaps in current educator preparation programs that aid in education preparation program reform to minimize the psychological and physical effects of stress for pre-service teachers and maximize teacher functioning. The second purpose is to use the data to help implement specific program dimensions that scaffold the complexities of the teacher's role and create authentic opportunities to build teacher candidates' confidence and efficacy perceptions before completing their fieldwork. Implications for educator preparation programs are to make informed decisions that close the disparities noted by this research from the transition of pre-service teachers' coursework to field experiences—identifying the sources of stressors that teacher candidates face to provide valuable information for universities to reform current Educator Preparation Programs.

Sampling and Recruiting

This study utilized the method of purposive sampling to obtain its data for the survey and the interviews. Merriam (2009) explains that a typical sample "reflects the average person, situation, or instance of the phenomenon of interest" (p. 78). Participants represented elementary pre-service teachers enrolled and accepted in an accredited educator preparation program completing their last semester of coursework before the final student teaching experience. The purposive sample was drawn from an upper Midwest pre-service teacher population. This selection process allows me to draw from and gain access to a set of pre-service teachers from various geographical locations from multiple universities. A professional student educator organization was utilized to gain access to the gatekeeper of the listserv to call for voluntary

participants in this study. When the listserv did not provide enough candidates, a snowball sampling sampling to identify additional participants to complete the research pool of interview candidates. Snowball sampling is a nonprobability sample that supports exploratory research of a specific group of individuals during qualitative research (DeCarlo, n.d.). Snowball sampling allowed the gathering of individuals recommended by participants who meet the needed sampling criteria. The location for volunteer participants was across universities in one upper Midwestern state. Pre-service teacher participants responded virtually to the survey and were interviewed virtually through a computer video conferencing program.

Participants

Participants taking the initial survey in this study were 19 elementary pre-service teachers enrolled in universities across one upper Midwestern state. These participants were completing their final semester of coursework and preparing to begin their student teaching field experiences the following semester. These participants were chosen to examine the lived experiences of pre-service teachers who are in the transitional space between coursework and culminating fieldwork, allowing self-perceptions of efficacy and preparedness to emerge from the data. The survey was sent out electronically using Qualtrics via a listserv and through gatekeepers of EPPs. The introduction, the study overview, and the survey link were sent to the gatekeepers of the listserv and EPPs. The gatekeepers sent the provided information to the listserv members and EPP students with the survey link.

Volunteers from the participant survey pool were contacted to conduct the two sets of interviews. Eight volunteers answered the call from the bank of survey participants and were

selected for the interviews. Participation was voluntary with consent, and no incentives were provided for participating in the study. Pre-service teacher participants responded virtually to the survey and were interviewed virtually through a video conferencing program.

Data Collection Methods

Survey

The measurement instrument to assess pre-service teacher self-efficacy across the constructs of student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management was the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). "Teachers' Sense of Efficacy is the belief in their capability to make a difference in student learning, to be able to get through even to students who are difficult or unmotivated. The Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (see Appendix A) long-form asks teachers to assess their capability concerning "instructional strategies, student engagement, and classroom management" (Tschannen-Moran, n.d.). Saldaña (2016, p.27) supports the use of paradigmatic corroborations as it provides a "reality check" of the analytical work. "It also provides two sets of lenses to examine the data for a multidimensional and more trustworthy account" (p. 27). Corroboration of qualitative data with quantitative data adds dimensionality to the study, creates a richer pool of data for me to draw from, and strengthens the research findings.

The survey was sent out using UND Qualtrics (see Appendix B). Participants rated their level of agreement on 24 questions using a 9-point Likert scale with 9 = A Great Deal, 7 = Quite A Bit, 5 = Some Degree, 3 = Very Little, and 1 = None At All. Ratings on the scale of 6-9 indicate some form of agreement, and ratings of 1-4 indicate some form of disagreement. A

rating of 5 indicates a neutral position. This survey is designed to identify what issues create the most difficulties for teachers within an average school day. There are short (12 items) and long (24 items) forms. Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy (2001) recommend that the long 24 item form of the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale is administered when surveying pre-service teachers. Since the participants in this study are pre-service teachers, the long-form was administered.

Interviews

In addition to the survey, semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit the first-person perspective needed in this phenomenological sequential mixed-methods study. Interviews are a valuable data collection method to gain access to rich descriptions of the "lived experience." Weiss (as cited in Maxwell, 2013, p. 103) states, "Interviewing gives us access to the observations of others. Through interviews, we can learn about places we have not been and about settings in which we have not lived." Two sets of interviews were conducted virtually. All participant identifiers were removed to ensure anonymity. All interviews were transcribed and given a participant number. Reported research findings use participant number identifiers, and the confidentiality of the participants, participant names, and coordinating numbers are stored in separate locations.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted. The interview process was guided by a set of primary questions with a list of secondary topics and follow-up questions that were implemented depending on the flow of the individual interviews (see Appendix C). The interview process was grounded in the techniques developed by Seidman (2006), who suggests implementing a set of

three interviews to help reach the depth and breadth needed to elicit rich data. The first interview focuses on the "participants' life histories" (p. 17), the second on the "concrete details of the participants' present lived experience" (p. 18), and the third on "asking participants to reflect on the meaning of their experience" (p. 18).

Although Seidman (2006) deems it necessary to adhere to the structure of three separate interviews, interviews one and two (life history and experience details) were combined as the first interview and followed up with the "reflection and meaning" interview as the second interview to be respectful of the participants' time as well as keeping motivation and engagement in the study.

Data Analysis

Creswell and Guetterman (2019) state that it is necessary to "take the data apart" to make sense of the responses and then "put it back together" to provide a summary of the findings (p. 10). The primary data collected from the TSES provided initial information that confirmed the relationship between pre-service student teachers' levels of confidence and perceptions of self-efficacy. The numbers generated from the TSES assessment tool were coded in a table format to develop numerical support towards the themes represented in the coding of the interviews. The qualitative data gathered from the interviews provided the themes that revealed other contextual findings to support the quantitative studies' data.

Figure 4

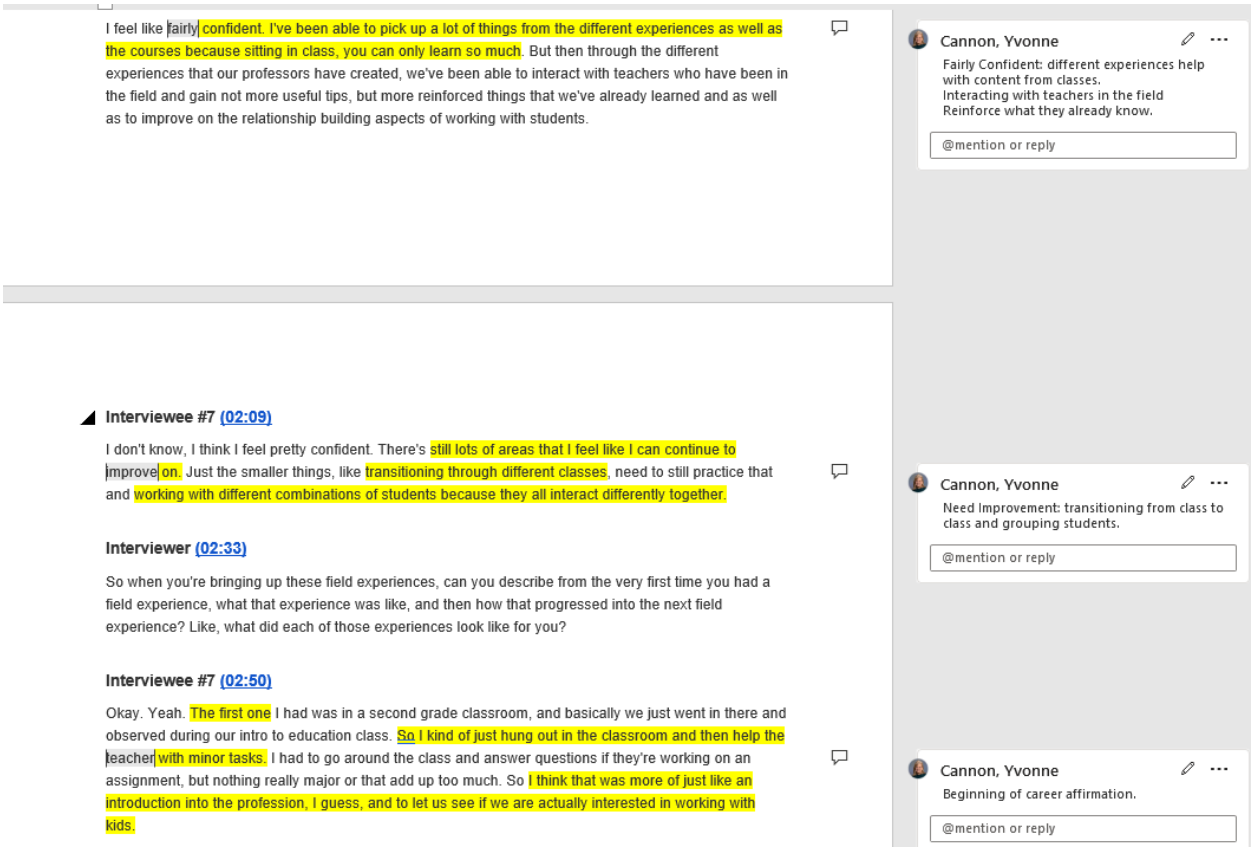
TSES Initial Survey Statistics

Statistics

		q1	q2	q3	q4	q5	q6	q7	q8	q9	q10	q11	q12	q13	q14	q15	q16	q17	q18	q19	q20	q21	q22	q23	q24
N	Valid	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		6.26	6.47	6.37	5.63	7.84	7.05	6.11	6.89	6.53	6.47	6.47	6.95	7.00	6.37	6.32	6.26	6.26	7.37	5.95	6.00	6.05	5.74	6.00	6.32
Std. Deviation		.991	1.020	.895	1.300	1.015	1.129	1.049	1.487	1.172	1.020	1.020	1.224	1.247	1.499	1.250	1.240	1.447	1.383	1.026	1.453	1.649	1.408	1.291	1.336

Figure 5

First Cycle Coding of Transcripts



Survey

The percentage of some form of agreement, the mean, and the standard deviation for each factor were calculated. The independent variable was Elementary Education majors. The dependent variables were the constructs of student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. Each of the constructs in the survey for the long-form has eight items. The unweighted means of the items that align with each factor are computed to determine the subscale scores. Items 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 14, and 22 were averaged to obtain the construct of efficacy in student engagement. Items 7, 10, 11, 17, 18, 20, 23, and 24 were averaged to obtain the construct of efficacy in instructional strategies. Items 3, 5, 8, 13, 15, 16, 19, and 21 were averaged to obtain the construct of efficacy in classroom management (Tschannen-Moran, n.d.). Cronbach's alpha was run to confirm internal consistency.

Interviews

Synthesizing the interview data assisted in breaking down the rich data collected through coding and categorizing it into theory development (Saldaña, 2016). The full verbatim transcripts were coded using Saldaña's (2016, p. 14) "streamlined codes-to-theory model for qualitative inquiry." This method leads from the real/particular to the abstract/general. The data is first coded, then categorized, then merged for themes and concepts, and finally, assertions and theory are developed (Creswell 2009; Merriam, 2009; Saldaña. 2016,). Srivastava & Hopwood (2009, p. 76) speak of iteration in qualitative data analysis as a "reflexive process." The reflexive analysis uses three questions as reference points to frame the iterative process of making meaning and gaining insights:

1. What is it I want to know?
2. What is the data telling me?
3. What is the dialectical relationship between what the data tells me and what I want to know? (p. 78)

The qualitative analysis offered several opportunities to listen to or read the data multiple times to tune into the phenomena and develop categories and themes. Strauss and Corbin (as cited in Srivasta & Hopwood, 2009) posit that qualitative analysis is inductive. Patterns and themes "emerge from the data rather than being imposed on them prior to collection and analysis" (p. 77). The analysis process presented for the interviews provides transparency for the audience regarding how the findings and theories were developed in the audit trail according to initial coding and categorizing. Sometimes multiple categories were discovered within the coding. Figure 6 illustrates how keywords were pulled from the codes, arranged them into initial categories, and then refined the categories to determine themes.

Figure 6

Significant Statements, Codes, Notes, Categories, and Themes

Significant Statements	Codes	Reflections, Notes, Connections, Questions	Initial Category	Category	Theme
I dropped out of the program. I said, I don't want to do this anymore. And it was nothing about the program. **It seemed like a lot of work for what I was doing, and I didn't feel that I wanted to be in education again .**	It seemed like a lot of work. I didn't want to be in education again.		Hopelessness	Feelings	Efficacy
It was fortunate, but it was also very stressful at the same time, especially because it was right before our finals week started, and the kids were six weeks into their quarter and it was an adjustment for all of us.	Fortunate but stressful at the same time.	Conflicting feelings: fortunate but stressful for both teacher and students. Multiple responsibilities in play.	Fortunate and Stressful	Feelings	Efficacy
You don't know what those kids go through before they come to school or what they're going to go home to. I had one little boy who looked at me and told me that it was such a long way until he could get to come back to school. **I was anxious to send him home on the bus.** It was a struggle to get him to the bus and get him to leave the classroom at the end of the day. I guess that was just something that...I worried about him and his siblings.	You don't know. It was a struggle. I worried about him and his siblings. I was anxious to send him home on the bus.	Keen observation of students.	Anxiety, worry, anxious.	Feelings	Efficacy
And it's a job that can be unforgiving when things aren't working and you get buried down on yourself as a teacher because most good teachers want their kids to obviously succeed. Of course they do. **And it can be a very draining job, the emotional side of things that you don't realize.**	Realities of the profession emerge.		Draining and Emotional	Feelings	Efficacy

Trustworthiness/Validity Techniques

Cope (2014) defines trustworthiness as truth value in research and transparency of the study from beginning to end. Trustworthiness is connected to the validity of the study. Validity is essentially at the core of research. Robson and McCartan (2016, p. 169) state that validity is about research being "accurate, or correct, or true." Threats to validity include sources of bias that ultimately can lead to questionable findings and results (Maxwell, 2016). Throughout this research study, validity threats were identified and addressed to provide an accurate account of an individuals' "lived experience" (phenomenology). The following strategies were used to ensure validity and increase trustworthiness in the study.

Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling was necessary for this study to explore the lived experience of pre-service teachers. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), purposive sampling is a trustworthiness technique that confirms the transferability of findings to other contexts and respondents. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify purposive sampling as a means to determine the extent of transferability of results to different contexts and respondents (p. 124). This type of sampling "involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest." (Creswell & Plano Clark as cited in Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015, para. 6).

Purposive sampling was used to extract themes of self-efficacy perceptions across a population of pre-service teachers completing their last semester of coursework before transitioning to student teaching. Purposive sampling was essential for this study to focus on

self-efficacy perceptions and confidence levels unique to pre-service teachers that are about to transition into completing their final student teaching experience before graduation and professional licensure**.**

Rich Data

Rich data is "detailed and varied enough to provide a full and revealing picture of what is going on" (Maxwell, 2016, p. 126). Rich data was collected through two sets of individual interviews with each participant. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Notes were created from the first interviews to find emerging themes. Then, those notes were used, along with the second set of interview questions, for another opportunity to reach saturation of the "lived experience" related to pre-service teacher perceptions of self-efficacy. Maxwell (2016) confirms the use of rich data as a component to ensure validity in a study.

Transcriptions

The verbatim transcriptions allowed access to the entire interview for review, reflection, and revisits. Lofland, Strauss, and Wolcott (as cited in Saldaña, 2016, p. 17) feel that "every recorded fieldwork detail is worthy of consideration, for it is from the patterned minutiae of daily, mundane life that we might generate significant social insights." By leaving out some of the conversations, the researcher is in danger of deleting a part of the story that could help merge ideas and themes (p. 17). Verbatim transcripts are a part of the analysis process to prove validity (Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001, p. 533). In this study, full verbatim transcripts were used to code and categorize recurring concepts and themes and corroborate data from the surveys.

Bracketing

Bracketing (or epoché) is foundational in phenomenology research (Smith, 2013). "Bracketing is a method used in qualitative research to mitigate the potentially deleterious effects of preconceptions that may taint the research process" (Tufford & Newman, 2010). To bracket out biases, personal experiences, beliefs, and preconceptions were identified and separated to ensure that the phenomenon of pre-service teacher perceptions of efficacy is the focus experienced by the participants. Bracketing out the researcher's perspective is part of the analysis process and presentation of findings to ensure the study's validity (Whittemore et al., 2001, p. 533).

Triangulation

Data was triangulated through an initial survey and subsequent individual interviews. Triangulation is "collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings using a variety of methods" (Maxwell, 2016, p. 128). The use of triangulation reduces systematic biases and chance associations and creates a "better assessment of the generality of the explanations that one develops" (p. 128). Initial survey data was gathered from three teaching areas: instruction, student engagement, and classroom management and used interviews to pull out rich, descriptive data to look for emergent themes. The survey allowed a broader view from a larger pool of participants to gather numerical data about self-efficacy and confidence levels. The interviews offered individual perspectives and narratives from the "lived experience" across eight volunteer participants. After completing the first interview, the data was compared and

corroborated between the two sources to prepare for the second round of interviews. The purpose of the second round of interviews was to reach a level of saturation in the data.

Audit Trail

Overall, the audit trail is a "detailed chronology of research activities and processes; influences on the data collection and analysis; emerging themes, categories, or models; and analytic memos" (Morrow, 2005, p. 252). Providing a detailed audit trail can support transparency in presenting findings to validate the research (Whittemore et al., 2001, p. 533). The audit trail is a complete and explicit record documenting the inquiry process from beginning to end. "Thus, the process through which findings are derived should be explicit and repeatable as much as possible (Morrow, 2005, p. 252). Audit trails include "raw data (transcripts of interviews, field notes, memos, research logs, development of the data collection, and data analysis details" (Robson & McCartan, 2016, p. 172). Evidence gained from the use of the audit trail helps avert validity threats (p. 172). Detailed and explicit documentation of the research process was used to provide transparency of the process and the steps taken to arrive at the findings to protect the study's validity.

Interview Saturation

Interview saturation impacts the quality of a study and is related to content validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Fusch and Ness (2015) state three criteria to reach saturation: when there is enough information to replicate the study, when the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained, and when further coding is no longer feasible (p. 1). Interview

saturation is achieved at different time rates depending on the size of the population and study. Two semi-structured interviews across eight participants were used to gain saturation. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (as cited by Fusch & Ness, 2015, p. 1410-11) state that "Interview questions should be structured to facilitate asking multiple participants the same questions; otherwise, one would not be able to achieve data saturation as it would be a constantly moving target." A set of primary questions was constructed for the initial interview. A second set of questions was then crafted to support the primary questions and data collection across the three construct areas of instructional strategies, student engagement, and classroom management. The coding process was aligned to the study's purpose, questions, and goal (Saldaña, 2016).

Researcher Reflexivity

Patnaik (2013) describes researcher reflexivity as a process that involves much more than reflection. "This involves consciousness of the self by the researcher in order to understand how one's own experiential location might influence the choice of subject, methodology, and themes" (p. 101). Maxwell (2016) writes about reactivity, "a term that Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) called "reflexivity" when situated within the context of interviews. "The fact that the researcher is part of the world he or she studies—is a powerful and inescapable influence; what the informant says is always influenced by the interviewer and the interview situation" p. 125.

Researcher reflexivity enhances the transparency of the process to illustrate how decisions were made throughout the study. "Rather than attempting to control researcher values through method or by bracketing assumptions, the aim is to consciously acknowledge those values" (Ortlipp, 2008, p. 695). Journaling and memoing are strategies within the audit trail that

allow other external auditors to follow the researcher's process throughout the study while helping to maintain validity.

Memos

Maxwell (2016) posits that memos are a tool for thinking through research. "The term refers to any writing that a researcher does in relationship to the research other than actual field notes, transcription, or coding" (p. 19-20). It allows the researcher to capture ideas as they come and enable the researcher to revisit those ideas for further development. "In memos, the researcher explores hunches, ideas, and thoughts and then takes them apart, always searcher for the broader explanations at work in the process Memos help direct the inquirer toward new sources of data, shape, which ideas to develop further, and prevent paralysis from mountains of data" (Creswell & Gutterman, 2019, p. 450). Saldaña (2016 p. 55) suggests that analytic memo writing and coding are cyclical and intertwined throughout the study process. As the data from multiple sources was reviewed, memoing allowed for writing ideas in the moment for later reflection and extension of concepts (Figure 7). Memoing was necessary to develop findings and uncover new codes pointing to unique and essential themes within the data.

Figure 7

Memos, Insights, and Notes from Interviews

Memo/Insights/ Notes from Interviews	
#1	Building connections is important. Nervous meeting new people. Relationships with students and mentor teachers.
#2	Empathy is important to teaching. Challenging times for the profession.
#3	The realities of the profession are both exciting and scary.
#4	Trust needs to be developed early on with all stakeholders.
#5	Get the students into the classrooms during their coursework to help with confidence. Building trust ahead of time and building relationships with mentor teachers/students.
#6	Knowing the names of students and adult stakeholders is important. When they know who you are, it makes you more comfortable. No surprises.
#7	Pre-service teachers often feel 'imposter syndrome.' Comment: Seeing it is different than reading about it.
#8	Realities of the profession often include parenting students. Need to have control over your emotions. De-escalation of behavior scenarios. Where is the support for this in the coursework? Trauma-sensitive training? Behavior management in action?
#9	Other considerations from pre-service teachers include complexities they seem unprepared for such as parent-teacher conferences and IEP meetings. What are other dimensions of teaching that are being missed in coursework?
#10	Social media paints two sides to teaching: everything is great in the classroom and students are successful VS classrooms are out of control and teachers are burned out. How do EPPs discuss this with pre-service teachers? What is real VS not real?
#11	Criticism from students, parents, and other stakeholders can be devastating.
#12	Feedback needs to happen throughout coursework and any type of field experience. Mentor teacher feedback is critical and should not be summative at the end of the experience.
#13	We talk a lot about teaching dispositions in our coursework, but where is the transition of these dispositions in relation to field experiences? How are they carried out? Are dispositions explicit or inferred?
#14	Mentor teachers are crucial. Placements for field experiences need to be with highly qualified teachers.
#15	There is struggle in the learning. Struggle for the pre-service teacher and struggle for their students.
#16	While there are many similarities of responses in the interviews, each individual has unique self-perceptions of confidence and teaching abilities and need individualized supports.

Bias

Personal educational experiences make it necessary to be conscious of and set aside any biases and remain open-minded throughout the research process. According to Dixon (2018, p. 1), "Reflexivity is the process of reflecting upon the bidirectional between researcher and research. It is a continual reflection upon the research process by a researcher; at the heart of reflexivity is the idea of self-awareness." Reflexivity was implemented in conjunction with bracketing to reduce bias throughout the study. This process allows the participants' lived experiences to emerge in the research.

Areas of concern for personal bias included removing personal experiences from the interview questions and in the execution of the interviews. First, the interview questions were developed to avoid influencing the participants' responses. The open-ended questions encouraged the interviewees to describe what they felt and experienced. First and second-round interview questions were purposefully created to bracket out any opportunity to ask leading questions. Also, the format of the questions was edited and adjusted to remove any verbiage that would cause the participant to infer that they should respond in a preferred manner.

The second area of concern was that of bias from the researcher. According to Borowska-Beszta (2017), bias generated by researchers relates directly to their personal qualifications. It was important to focus solely on the participants' experiences while bracketing out any preconceptions, assumptions, or prejudices that would narrow the scope of the interpretation of data. Using reflexivity and bracketing throughout the study while attending to the processes of

journaling and memoing assisted in guarding against bias and confirmed the accuracy and the essence of the participants' lived experiences.

Limitations

The sample size was limited to 19 survey participants and 8 interviewees from the survey pool across various universities in one upper Midwestern state. The results of this study may not fully represent the pre-service teacher population in other universities across the nation. Additionally, data collection and analysis were completed within a two-month period. A longer length of time may have added to the depth of the data analysis.

Another consideration is that individual differences are challenging to measure in a study. These include personal interpretations of school climate, the difficulty of daily classroom behaviors, and workload. These interpretations directly affect perceptions of self-efficacy and explain why some pre-service teachers are more vulnerable than others to negative perceptions of mental well-being in the same educational institution.

Also, it is impossible to consider all types of pressures related to the teaching profession. This study's focus analyzed the lived experience of the relationship between self-perceptions of teaching efficacy and functioning to mental well-being. There is some agreement among researchers that individual factors can influence how a teacher may assess their psychological well-being. Some of those factors include resiliency, grit, existing support networks, and perceptions of self-efficacy. However, there are still contradictory findings in the literature on which variables contribute to declining perceptions of mental well-being factors.

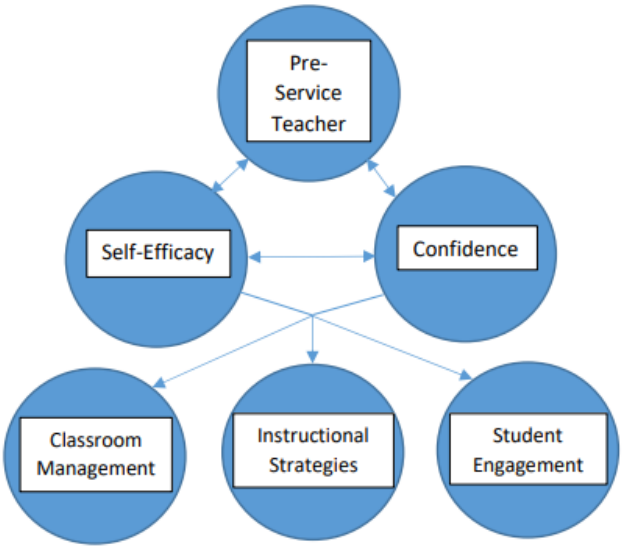
Finally, continued research on EPPs effectiveness and alignment to standards will be necessary to determine if coursework either helps or impedes the pre-service teachers' capabilities to meet realistic expectations of the teaching profession.

CHAPTER IV: SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY AND FINDINGS

The following articles focus on capturing the essence of the lived experiences of pre-service teachers as they prepare to transition from theory (coursework) to practice (student teaching). Because of the study's design, topics emerged from the data to report various findings to multiple stakeholders involved in the preparation of pre-service teachers. These articles add to the current empirical evidence to support the need to identify gaps in Educator Preparation Programs that break down pre-service teacher perceived barriers and raise confidence levels. Article #1 collected data and measured confidence levels of self-efficacy, Article #2 identified self-perceptions of pre-service teachers' confidence and readiness for teaching, and Article #3 analyzed the data with a lens and insights directed at the pre-service teacher. The key findings of this work include: (a) the relationship between confidence levels and efficacy; (b) the importance of collaborative support and feedback to raise pre-service teacher confidence levels before student teaching; (c) considerations for current EPP reforms; and (d) action steps for the pre-service teacher to promote self-efficacy and increase confidence levels before the student teaching experience. Figure 8 illustrates the interconnectedness of the pre-service teacher, self-efficacy, and confidence.

Figure 8

Pre-Service Teacher Relationships of Self-Efficacy and Confidence



Note. This model illustrates the interconnectedness of the pre-service teacher's perceptions of self-efficacy and confidence to the areas of classroom management, student engagement, and instructional strategies (Cannon, 2022).

Article #1: Pre-Service Teachers' Sense of Self-Efficacy: Measuring Confidence Levels Using the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale

This article explored the quantitative data collected from the Teacher Sense of Self-Efficacy Scale. At the time of the study, the research participants were enrolled in universities across one Midwestern state. Nineteen pre-service teachers met the criteria to complete the survey regarding confidence levels across the constructs of instructional strategies, student engagement, and classroom management. The survey was analyzed by determining some form of

agreement for each question and for each construct. The results from the survey indicated a moderately low form of agreement of confidence levels and perceptions of self-efficacy as pre-service teachers prepare to transition to student teaching. The findings provide considerations for Educator Preparation Programs to reframe current supports to increase teaching effectiveness from theory to practice.

Article #2 Voices from the Field: Perspectives of Pre-Service Teachers In the Transition from Theory to Practice

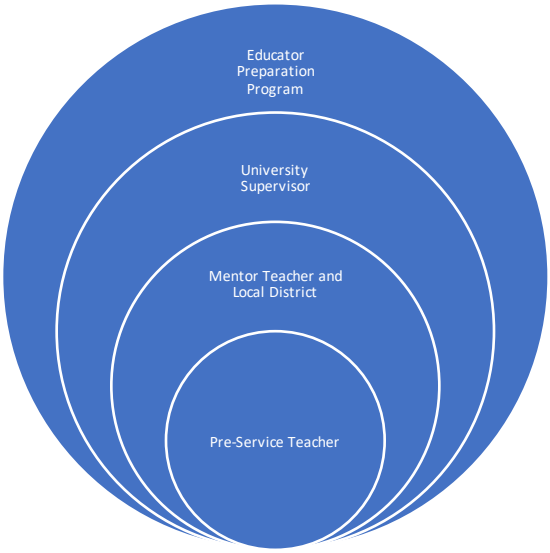
This qualitative mixed-methods study highlights the self-perceptions of pre-service teacher readiness the semester before the student teaching experience. At the time of the study, the research participants were enrolled in universities across one upper Midwestern state. Nineteen participants completed an initial survey and eight of those participants came forward to complete two rounds of interviews regarding self-efficacy perceptions of their teaching abilities as they begin to transition from theory to practice. The survey gathered self-efficacy data across the constructs of instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement. A phenomenological lens was used to interpret and analyze the lived experiences of the pre-service teacher's relationship between self-perceptions of teaching efficacy to their confidence in teaching abilities and was corroborated with the survey results. The findings provide insights and action steps centered around emerging themes from the study for the transition from theory to practice directed at the pre-service teacher.

Article #3 Insights from Pre-Service Teachers: The Journey from Theory to Practice

This qualitative study explored the perceptions of the pre-service teacher in the semester prior to their student teaching experience regarding perceptions of confidence levels of teaching readiness. At the time of the study, the participants were enrolled in universities across one upper Midwestern state. The study included two rounds of interviews of eight pre-service teachers in addition to 19 pre-service teachers who completed the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Survey (Tschannen-Moran, n.d.). A phenomenological lens was used to analyze the data and give voice to the lived experience of their teaching efficacy and functioning in relation to their confidence levels. This research emphasized the importance of collaborative support and feedback for pre-service teachers with the following stakeholders: professors teaching methods courses, university supervisors, mentor teachers, and district administration. The findings provide information for considerations in Educator Preparation Program reform.

Figure 9

Collaborative Supports for Pre-Service Teachers



Note. This model illustrates the collaborative supports of stakeholders for pre-service teachers for field experiences (Cannon, 2022).

CHAPTER V: ARTICLES

Article #1: Pre-Service Teacher Perceptions of Efficacy: Measuring Confidence Levels Using the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale

Abstract

This quantitative study measured elementary education pre-service teachers' perceptions of confidence in applying course concepts in practice. A population of upper Midwest pre-service teachers completing their last semester of coursework before beginning their student teaching experience was administered the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES). Qualifying participants completed the survey across Student Engagement, Instructional Strategies, and Classroom Management constructs. The pre-service teachers reported moderately low percentages of agreements in confidence across the constructs of student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. Further tests revealed statistical significance to indicate a positive correlation between pre-service teachers' self-perceptions of efficacy and their confidence in their abilities to apply content knowledge in the field.

Keywords: Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale, Educator Preparation Programs, pre-service teachers, elementary education, knowledge, application, instructional strategies, classroom management, student engagement, confidence levels, stress, anxiety.

Introduction

There is a growing concern about pre-service teachers' psychological health and self-perceptions of mental well-being and self-efficacy. Zeidner (as cited by Daniels, Mandzuk, Moore, and Perry, 2011) states that anxiety is experienced regularly by pre-service and practicing teachers. Teacher candidates worry about observations, evaluations, relationships with cooperating and supervising teachers, adequate preparation, and managing classroom behaviors (Daniels et al., 2011; Ripski, M.B., LoCasale-Crouch, & Decker, 2011). Lever, Mathis, and Mayworm (2017) cite considerable research that leads to teacher anxiety that encompasses the following features: high-stakes testing, large class sizes, behavior challenges, inadequate resources, physical space, workload, responsibility for student care and well-being, bureaucracy, long hours and workload, few advancement opportunities, and the existing gap between pre-service training expectations and actual work experiences.

Faculty involved in teacher preparation programs are aware that various stressors impact pre-service teacher performance from coursework to fieldwork. What is unknown in the research is how Educator Preparation Programs (EPP) can support pre-service teachers within their perceived abilities to transition from theory to practice. Identification of self-efficacy confidence levels across the constructs of Student Engagement, Instructional Strategies, and Classroom Management is essential in responding appropriately to reframing current teacher training to prepare students for the realities of the profession.

Identifying support areas to build confidence in pre-service teachers is critical in the EPP's continuous programming review to meet ongoing educational reforms for teacher

preparation. "The process of preparing, training, and supplementing the pre-service teachers with the basic skills of teaching is considered to be one of the most important tasks in faculties of education" (Akinsola, 2014, p. 41). Harris (2011) identifies the implications of stress concerning the teaching profession regarding the individual teacher, the teacher's students, and the school system. He states that pre-service teachers can obtain skills for managing occupational stress if teacher preparation programs develop and implement formal coursework support. Teacher preparation programs are responsible for responding to pre-service teachers' abilities related to management and providing them with the necessary skills to cope with the psychosocial demands as they begin to practice in the classroom. This reform requires a review of the existing research in tandem with the teacher preparation framework to create a connection between awareness of mental health issues of the profession, and the skills and resources needed to manage ongoing, chronic stress of teacher candidates before entering fieldwork. Responsiveness of teacher preparation programs is essential in pre-service teachers' developing motivation and confidence. Teacher candidates that have prior knowledge of the intricacies of daily classroom expectations and responsibilities have greater confidence and efficacy moving into their practicums and student teaching experiences.

The primary research question was: Is there statistical significance in the relationship between pre-service teachers' perceived confidence in content knowledge and their ability to apply it across the constructs of student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management? The Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) (Tschannen-Moran, n.d.) was used to measure this relationship based on the confidence of content knowledge and ability to apply it in

field experiences and provide data for EPPs to respond to pre-service teachers' needs in their transition from coursework to fieldwork. The knowledge gained from this study can assist in identifying and addressing perceived gaps in current programming to better help prepare pre-service teachers for the professional realities they will encounter during field experiences.

Literature Review

Teachers across all areas and grade levels experience some degree of stress that inhibits teacher functioning and harms psychological health and well-being. This study examined the connection between pre-service teachers' confidence levels to perceptions of self-efficacy and functioning. Evidence from the literature review revealed the following themes: self-efficacy, stress, and anxiety.

Perception of Self-Efficacy

Discussions surrounding mental health and well-being in schools usually refer to students. However, there is a heightened response to include teachers and other school staff under this umbrella. Current research shows a direct link between high levels of stress and teacher psychological and physical well-being (Lever et al., 2017; Seton, 2019; Smiley, 2020). The data reveals problematic consequences for districts in teacher attrition, job satisfaction, links to anxiety and depression, and higher absentee rates. Studies show that pre-service teachers experience the same stress levels as they move through their teacher preparation programs. Pre-service teachers' self-efficacy reveals that the self-perceptions of beliefs are related to control and its connection to confidence levels, interactions with students, and student achievement

motivation (Aybek & Aslan, 2019; Daniels et al., 2011; DeMauro & Jennings, 2016; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Self-efficacy links directly to pre-service teachers' competence and career certainty (Aybek & Aslan, 2019; Daniels et al., 2006; Daniels et al., 2011; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990).

Self-Efficacy and Stress

Stress is a normal response to change that can be positive or negative. Studies have identified several reasons for stress in pre-service and full-time teachers. A central theme is the perception of an imbalance between educators' pressures and the ability to cope with those demands. "How we weigh these demands and resources depends whether our brain signals to the rest of the body that a threat is at hand, triggering the stress response" (McCarthy, 2019, pp. 10-11). One of the most identified triggers of stress for pre-service teachers was their ability to manage classroom behaviors (Brackenreed & Barnett, 2006; Daniels et al., 2006; Harmsen, Helms-Lorenz, Maulana, & van Veen, 2018). Pre-service teachers may have feelings of inadequate abilities to control classroom or individual behaviors and ineffectiveness in motivating students to learn, leading to distancing themselves from students and questioning their career choice.

Providing teacher candidates with coping strategies throughout coursework prepares students for challenges related to the profession they are entering. Other research of stress in pre-service teachers points to inconsistencies in evaluation, lack of preparation for transitioning theory into practice, varying expectations of performance, and variations in feedback from supervising teachers (Murray-Harvey, Slee, Lawson, Silins, Banfield, & Russell, 2000; Harmsen et al., 2018).

Self-Efficacy and Anxiety

While anxiety can result from prolonged stress, anxiety and stress are different. Stress comes from any event that can cause an individual to become angry, frustrated, or nervous. In contrast, anxiety has these same feelings, but they are related to a forthcoming event with an uncertain outcome. Like stress, intermittent bouts of anxiety are a natural response to either positive or negative events (Beaseley, 2022). However, it is problematic when fear is uncontrollable and interferes with normal functioning. Pre-service teachers can experience ongoing chronic stress as they navigate the teacher education program and identify with feelings of anxiety related to their teaching experiences.

For pre-service teachers, anxiety can begin as early as enrolling in methods courses. Reasons for the onset of self-perceived anxiety can manifest in the following forms: difficulty understanding the pedagogical methods and course concepts, poor relationship with the instructor, feelings of inadequacy, overwhelmed with coursework, low grades, low evaluations, and difficulty navigating the Learning Management System (LMS).

Pre-service teachers can begin experiencing ongoing anxiety symptoms as they transition from coursework to field experiences (intro hours, practicums, and student teaching). Eksi and Yakisik (2016) identified the following anxiety increases in practicum students: classroom management, disruptive students and misbehavior, lack of student motivation, un-notified visits, being evaluated, and putting theory into practice. Methodology courses could put opportunities in place for guiding students through each of these anxiety stressors, offering specific strategies and techniques before completing any field experiences.

Anxiety is also often caused by a perceived idea of what teaching looks like to pre-service teachers. When teacher candidates arrive in the field, they are often overwhelmed by the gap between what they thought to be accurate and the totality of what the teaching profession truly encompasses (Daniels et al., 2006; Akinsola, 2014; Ozen & Ozturk, 2016; Daniels et al. 2011; Eksi & Yakisik, 2016). Early perceptions of pre-service teachers' career competency and certainty may directly affect immediate achievement, motivation, long-term commitment, and attrition. Anxiety negatively impacts competence and certainty (Daniels et al., 2006). The teaching profession is unpredictable. Therefore, teacher preparation programs should consider offering opportunities throughout methods coursework to address various high-stakes scenarios to increase pre-service teacher confidence levels for the transition from theory to practice.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to answer the question: Is there statistical significance in the relationship of pre-service teachers' perceived confidence in content knowledge and their ability to apply it across the constructs of student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management? The Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran, n.d.) assessed this association based on the confidence of content knowledge and ability to apply it in field experiences and provide data for EPPs and other stakeholders to respond to pre-service teachers' needs in their transition from coursework to fieldwork.

Method

Participants

A listserv and snowball sampling were used to e-mail surveys to pre-service teachers enrolled in universities across one upper Midwestern state. All participants were completing their final semester of coursework before their required student teaching experience. Twenty-nine pre-service teachers responded, and of those, nineteen met the criteria to complete the survey.

Instrument

The measurement instrument to assess pre-service teacher self-efficacy across the constructs of student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management was the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran, n.d.). Teachers' sense of efficacy is the belief in making a difference in student learning and getting through even to difficult or unmotivated students. The Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale asks teachers to assess their abilities across the constructs of instructional strategies, student engagement, and classroom management.

Participants rated their level of agreement on 24 questions using a 9-point Likert scale with 9 = A Great Deal, 7 = Quite A Bit, 5 = Some Degree, 3 = Very Little, and 1 = None At All. Ratings on the scale of 6-9 indicate some form of agreement, and ratings of 1-4 indicate some form of disagreement. A rating of 5 indicates a neutral position. This survey is designed to identify what issues create the most difficulties for teachers within an average school day. There are short (12 items) and long (24 items) forms. Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy (2001) recommend administering the long 24 item form of the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale when

surveying pre-service teachers. Since the participants in this study are pre-service teachers, the long form was administered per the author's recommendation.

Analysis/Design

The percentage of some form of agreement, the mean, and the standard deviation for each construct were calculated. The independent variable was elementary education pre-service teachers completing their last semester of coursework before their student teaching experience. The dependent variables are the constructs of student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. Each of the constructs in the survey for the long-form has eight items. The unweighted means of the items that align with each factor are computed to determine the subscale scores (Tschannen-Moran, n.d.). Items 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 14, and 22 are averaged to obtain the construct of efficacy in student engagement. Items 7, 10, 11, 17, 18, 20, 23, and 24 are averaged to obtain the construct of efficacy in instructional strategies. Items 3, 5, 8, 13, 15, 16, 19, and 21 are averaged to obtain the construct of efficacy in classroom management.

Procedure

A listserv and snowball sampling were used to reach pre-service teachers currently completing the last semester of coursework before their student teaching field experiences to complete twenty-four survey questions e-mailed out by Qualtrics. There were twenty-nine respondents, and of those, 19 participants met the criteria and completed the survey for analysis. Cronbach's alpha was run to confirm internal consistency.

Results

The percentage of some form of agreement, mean, and standard deviation are shown in Table 1 for each question. The data showed a moderately low percentage of some form of agreement for most pre-service teachers' individual questions. The two individual areas of least form of agreement were in the areas of student engagement: the ability to motivate students and the ability to assist families in helping their children to do well in school. Overall, the construct of classroom management had the highest average of agreement at 78.95%.

Table 1

Percentage of Some Form of Agreement for Confidence in Student Engagement, Instructional Strategies, and Classroom Management

	Question	% Some Form of Agreement	M	SD
C1. Student Engagement				
q1.	How much can you do to get through to difficult students?	68.4	6.3	1.0
q2.	How much can you do to help students think critically?	84.2	6.5	1.0
q4.	How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork?	47.4	5.6	1.3
q6.	How much can you do to help your students value learning?	94.7	7.1	1.1
q9.	How much can you do to foster creativity?	78.9	6.5	1.2
q12.	How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?	84.2	7.0	1.2
q14.	How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?	68.4	6.4	1.5
q22.	How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?	52.6	5.7	1.4
C2. Instructional Strategies				
q7.	How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?	63.2	6.1	1.0
q10.	How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?	73.7	6.5	1.0
q11.	To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	73.7	6.5	1.0
q17.	How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?	68.4	6.3	1.4
q18.	How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	89.5	7.4	1.4
q20.	To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	63.2	6.0	1.5
q23.	How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	68.4	6.0	1.3
q24.	How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?	78.9	6.3	1.3
C3. Classroom Management				
q3.	How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	78.9	6.4	1.0
q5.	To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?	100	7.8	1.0
q8.	How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	78.9	6.9	1.5
q13.	How much can you do to get children to follow rules?	89.5	7.0	1.2
q15.	How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	73.7	6.3	1.3
q16.	How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	84.2	6.3	1.2
q19.	How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?	63.2	6.0	1.0
q21.	How well can you respond to defiant students?	63.2	6.0	1.6

The questions were then grouped into each of the construct areas to calculate the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation. Table 2 shows the mean response for Student Engagement was M=6.4, the mean response for Instructional Strategies was M=6.4, and the mean response for Classroom Management was 6.6. The mean responses in all three areas indicate a slight agreement of confidence as a score of 5 indicates a neutral response.

Table 2

Calculated Means for Constructs of Student Engagement, Instructional Strategies, and Classroom Management

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Engagement	19	5.00	7.75	6.3750	.89365
Strategies	19	5.13	7.38	6.3750	.76149
Management	19	5.25	7.88	6.5855	.77174
Valid N (listwise)	19				

The reliability and correlations for each construct are shown in Table 3. The correlation between Student Engagement and Instructional Strategies was $r = .74$. The correlation between Student Engagement and Classroom Management was $r = .76$. The correlation between Instructional Strategies and Classroom Management was $r = .54$. This illustrates a high level of correlation between the three constructs.

Table 3

Correlation of Subscale Constructs and Measures of Internal Consistency for Survey Data

Construct Number	Subscale Constructs	Question Numbers	C1.	C2.	A
C1.	Student Engagement	q1, q2, q4, q6, q9, q12, q14, q22			.87
C2.	Instructional Strategies	q7, q10, q11, q17 q18, q20, q23, q24	.74*		.75
C3.	Classroom Management	q3, q5, q8, q13, q15 q16, q19, q21	.76*	.54*	.77

*$p < .05$.

The purpose of this study was to measure elementary education pre-service teachers perceived confidence in the knowledge of content and perceived ability to apply the content knowledge. One-sample *t*-tests were used to help determine statistical significance.

Table 4 shows the results for each of the areas from the one-sample T-tests revealed p values less than .05, which is statistically significant: Student Engagement $t(18) = -12.804$, $p < .05$; Instructional Strategies $t(18) = -15.026$, $p < .05$; and Classroom Management $t(18) = -13.637$, $p < .05$

Table 4

Mean and Standard Deviation for the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale Constructs

One-Sample Test						
					Test Value=9	
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Engagement	-12.804	18	<.001	-2.62500	-3.0557	-2.1943
Strategies	-15.026	18	<.001	-2.62500	-2.9920	-2.2580
Management	-13.637	18	<.001	-2.41447	-2,7864	-2.0425

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to measure confidence levels of elementary education pre-service teachers' knowledge of content and perceptions of efficacy in applying content knowledge. The sample showed moderately low confidence levels on the effectiveness of content application across the constructs of Student Engagement, Instructional Strategies, and Classroom Management. The data emerged as statistically significant and affirmed a relationship between pre-service teachers' perceptions of content knowledge and their ability to effectively apply it across the constructs of student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. The maximum mean of responses across all questions was 7.54, and the minimum was 5.29. The range of scores across all questions was 2.29. The mean of the responses across all areas of Student Engagement, Instructional Strategies, and Classroom Management was 6.44, indicating a confidence rating on the TSES slightly above a neutral ranking.

Implications for Practice

A concern between the parallels between pre-service teachers' perceptions of efficacy and confidence levels of application has emerged from the research. As pre-service teachers move into their student teaching roles, they spend extended time with their students and begin to feel the pressures that coincide with full-time teaching. The self-perception of teacher candidates' confidence in their knowledge of content and abilities to apply that content directly affects their performance in the classroom (Aybek & Aslan, 2019; Daniels et al., 2006; Daniels et al., 2011; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990) and has a direct connection to their students' success (Aslan & Aybek, 2019; Daniels et al., 2011; DeMauro & Jennings, 2016; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). This study demonstrates the need for EPPs to explore various aspects of confidence levels related to self-efficacy perceptions in teacher candidates. Considerations for reframing EPPs are intended to build confidence in pre-service teachers to raise self-perceptions of efficacy as they transition from coursework to fieldwork.

First, building innovative collaborations with K-12 schools can offer ongoing stability with relationships, environment, and procedures. Multiple opportunities to work in the same environment while forming collegial relationships with mentor teachers provide a level of support built on consistency and trust for the pre-service teacher. Feedback can be presented by both mentor teachers and university supervisors in real-time to help the pre-service teacher identify strengths and areas of improvement (Akinsola, 2014). Opportunities to debrief reinforce the connection of learning objectives in coursework to instructional planning, student engagement, and classroom management in the field. Additionally, addressing the feelings those

pre-service teachers experience across each of these constructs fosters opportunities for conversations to support growing confidence levels and success in the transition from theory to practice.

Second, giving pre-service teachers specific training to deal with complex behaviors can mitigate challenges before the field experience. Offering various scenarios where pre-service teachers can role play may help them identify and respond appropriately. The university professor can assist in scheduling classroom observations and debriefing with the hosting teacher. Additionally, demonstration videos can be reviewed, evaluated, and analyzed for practice to build feelings of confidence in the areas of classroom management and student engagement.

Third, the development of coursework related to the complexities of teaching and transparency of expectations can prepare pre-service teachers for the realities of the teaching profession (Akinsola, 2014; Daniels et al., 2006; Daniels et al. 2011; Eksi & Yakisik, 2016; Ozen & Ozturk, 2016). Using the K-12 collaborative relationships can provide a platform for current issues and trends to be discussed candidly by practicing teachers. These discussions encourage the pre-service teacher to display favorable professional dispositions while still engaging in their coursework. Also, authentic conversations help pre-service teachers ask questions about what practicing teachers perceive as important focus areas to make further connections to course concepts.

Finally, a theme brought forth in the literature that affects perceptions of self-efficacy is mental health. EPPs can use various campus supports and highlight resources already in place for

the teaching profession. Having access to mental-health resources before the transition to fieldwork can help pre-service teachers be proactive in navigating the challenges they may encounter in maintaining a positive work-life balance (Eksi and Yakisik, 2016).

Attention to the above and critical conversations of EPPs about their frameworks can help close the disconnect between theory and practice, increase student confidence, maximize self-efficacy, and affirm teaching as a career choice.

Further Considerations

A consideration of the findings from this study for the next steps would be to survey a larger participant pool. The limited number of subjects may not accurately represent the larger pre-service teacher population. Also, administering the survey to pre-service teachers who are just beginning their student teaching experience (in contrast with those completing their last semester of coursework) would provide another perspective in the transition from coursework to fieldwork. The additional data collected would offer important information for EPPs in adding support and adjusting programming to meet the ongoing needs of teacher candidates.

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Article #2: Voices from the Field: Self-Perceptions of Pre-Service Teachers in the Transition from Theory to Practice

Abstract

This primarily phenomenological mixed-methods study explored the lived experience of the pre-service teacher regarding perceptions of confidence levels and self-efficacy of teaching abilities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight pre-service teachers completing their final semester of coursework prior to student teaching across one upper Midwestern state. The emerging themes from this study are highlighted with special attention to the connection of the data to considerations for pre-service teachers to proactively prepare for the realities of the profession. The implications generated from this study help identify disparities between learning pedagogical practices and the implementation of those practices in fieldwork.

Keywords: pre-service teacher, self-efficacy, confidence, grit, resilience, Educator Preparation Programs, disparity, dispositions

Introduction

Recent research has heightened the awareness of various stressors that impact pre-service teachers as they prepare to transition from coursework to fieldwork. According to Melnick and Meister (as cited by Nahal, 2010), the expectations of first-year teachers are different than the realities they encounter, and the education profession is more complex than they anticipated. Barrett Kutcy and Schulz (as cited by Nahal, 2010) report "there was a disparity between their teacher education programs and the 'real' teaching world."

A critical role of the Educator Preparation Program is to support the pre-service teacher transition from theory to practice. "The process of preparing, training, and supplementing the pre-service teachers with the basic skills of teaching is considered to be one of the most important tasks in faculties of education" (Akinsola, 2014, p. 41). According to Harris (2011), implications of occupational stress in the teaching profession can be identified in terms of the individual teacher, the teacher's students, and the school system. Implementing opportunities for pre-service teachers to learn about and discuss various job factors affecting the teaching profession may help prepare them for what they will experience in their practicums and when they student teach.

Additionally, the psychosocial demands that pre-service teachers experience may be a predictor of pre-service teachers entering the field. This is an important consideration that relates to the current critical teacher shortage. Dos Santos (2021, p. 530) found that "Many pre-service student-teachers indicated that they were not going to join the teaching profession after completing their training due to the nature of jobs, administrative style (upper management and

support), and uncertain career development." Dos Santos (2021) also noted that self-efficacy was strong during the coursework stage, but that it declined during the field experiences. Pre-service teachers noted unfairness, unmotivating work environment, and disregard for their roles as teachers as negatively impacting their perceptions of self-efficacy and making them question teaching as a career choice.

Educator Preparation Programs can examine these issues within their teacher training programs to better prepare pre-service teachers for the realities of the profession.

Literature Review

Individuals who become teachers are predisposed to the profession because of how they view the role of the teacher and their love for ongoing learning (Ahnorn as cited by Nahal, 2010). Attention by Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) to enhance pre-service teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions (KSD) assists in graduating quality candidates who are fully aware of the professional expectations. However, the literature suggests a disparity between what pre-service teachers conceptualize about the profession in their coursework to the profession's realities they experience in their fieldwork.

Action steps addressing teaching complexities may avert any feelings of imposter syndrome that pre-service teachers may experience once they transition to student teaching (Nahal, 2010). Imposter syndrome can be tightly associated with feelings of anxiety (Clance & Imes, 1978). Keavney and Sinclaire (as cited by Daquilanto, 2015) identified that teachers are prone to Teacher Anxiety (TchA) which includes stressors specific to the profession: length of experience, long work hours, classroom scenarios, administrative duties, evaluations,

standardized testing, interactions with parents, and other distinct tasks. Daquilanto (2015) aligns imposter syndrome to symptoms of feeling fraudulent, conferring a sense of skill set beyond reality, and fear of exposure. The connection of imposter syndrome to anxiety is important. High teacher anxiety has been connected to negative teacher and student performance (Seton, 2019; Smiley, 2020). A review of the literature notes the importance of Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) to examine, identify, and cultivate skills that support psychological well-being and competencies to prepare pre-service teachers for the realities of the teaching profession (Akinsola, 2014; Brackenreed & Barnett, 2006; Daniels, Clifton, Mandzuk, & Hall, 2006; Daniels, Mandzuk, Moore, and Perry, 2011; Dos Santos, 2021; Eksi & Yakisik, 2016; Grudnoff, 2011; Murray-Harvey, Slee, Lawson, Silins, Banfield, & Russell, 2000; Ozen & Ozturk, 2016). The following themes were identified from the literature: teaching dispositions, self-efficacy, mental well-being, stress, anxiety, the responsiveness of EPPs, as well as grit, resilience, and self-compassion/care.

Teaching Dispositions

Educator Preparation Program courses require students to demonstrate professional knowledge, skills, and appropriate teaching dispositions (KSDs). The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (as cited by Masunaga & Lewis, 2011, p. 36) defines dispositions as "professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities." Dispositions can be challenging to measure as they are subjective in nature and refer to the "attitude, motivation, inclination, and desire" (Splitter, 2010, p. 203) of the

individual. While dispositions are identified and aligned to professional knowledge and competencies standards, dispositions connect to the kind of traits that make up one's character based on personal "beliefs, attitudes, desires, and values" (Splitter, 2010, p. 210). Dispositions are only one of the three dimensions used to assess and measure the scope of teaching preparedness. However, dispositions are equally essential to teaching efficacy and the mastery of the dimensions of knowledge and skills (Narayanaswamy Iyer & Soled, 2007).

Studies confirm that teaching credentials alone show little predictive significance as to which teachers are the most successful (Hanushek & Rivken; Pianta & Allen as cited by Ripski, LoCasale-Crouch, & Decker, 2011) and that personality traits (separate from teacher training) have significant predictive value of attitudes, behaviors, performance, and success (Ones, Dilchert, Viswesvaran, & Judge as cited by Ripski et al. 2011).

Pre-service teachers may present similarities on paper, but individual personality traits bring out varying desired and expected professional dispositions levels. Henninger and Ensign (2020) emphasize the importance of dispositional qualities across applicants for selecting quality candidates to fill vacant teaching positions. Reflective practices in EPPs play a crucial role in assisting pre-service teachers to gain proficiencies in professional dispositions. Several studies confirm the importance of learning to be a reflective educator as one of the essential characteristics in the teaching profession (Ballard & McBride, Napper-Owen & McCallister, & SHAPE America as cited by Henninger & Ensign, 2020).

Pre-service teachers find that mastering dispositions can be difficult. In the transition to field experiences, pre-service teachers take on a dual role: university student and pre-service

teacher. Pre-service teachers may feel conflicted as they try to navigate expectations from two separate institutions identifying with the role of the student more than the role of the professional (Henninger & Ensign, 2020). EPPs may assume that teacher candidates already know what the expected dispositions are and how to apply them. However, it is a collective responsibility between pre-service teachers and faculty to communicate, reflect, and improve dispositions throughout the EPP experience before transitioning to field placements. During field placements, cooperating teachers continue to build and model developing dispositions through mentoring and collaborative feedback.

Skourdoumbis (2019) identifies that the acquisition of dispositions enhances student achievement. In the transition of theory to practice, pre-service teachers begin to see the connection of dispositions to managing and monitoring multiple facets of the teaching day. A large part of this reality is the expectation that their students need to master grade-level standards. "Teacher performance dispositions are the pedagogic behaviors of teachers needed to enhance student achievement in an era of accountability and audit" (Skourdoumbis, 2019, p. 12). Ongoing professional pressures related to raising standardized scores rely on the ability of the teacher to motivate and engage their students. Pre-service teachers' dispositions are affected by their field placements. In a study by Masunaga and Lewis (2011), pre-service teachers presented with challenges in field placements had significantly lower self-ratings on dispositions than those who did not experience challenges. The variable of classroom challenges is a prominent factor in how the pre-service teacher views self-efficacy during the translation of theory to practice.

Assessment of pre-service teacher dispositions is an ongoing reflective process to build self-awareness of strengths and areas of improvement in the pre-service teacher. The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) introduced dispositions in the early 1990s to explain "predictive patterns of action" that exemplify an effective and successful teacher (Schussler, Stooksberry, and Bercaw, 2010, p. 350). Growth in dispositions of pre-service teachers is measured by these predictive patterns to help raise awareness of favorable behaviors in the teaching profession. Standards allow the pre-service teachers to set goals and apply reflective practices to interpret individual preparedness and self-efficacy perceptions. The standards also provide multiple opportunities over diverse areas in teaching and instructional methods for the teacher candidates to reflect on current progress for areas requiring improvement and growth.

Perception of Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1977) described self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their capacity to accomplish specific goals. Pre-service teacher perceptions of efficacy beliefs relate to competence and career affirmation which include autonomy and connection to confidence, student interactions, student motivation, and student achievement (Aybek & Aslan, 2019; Daniels, Mandzuk, Moore, & Perry, 2011; DeMauro & Jennings, 2016; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Self-efficacy is not a specific measurement, but rather individual perceptions of confidence in any given situation (Jamil, Downer, and Pianta, 2012). Perceptions of self-efficacy directly affect pre-service teacher performance during field experiences and may have a connection to high numbers of novice teachers leaving the profession within the first five years (Nahal, 2010).

Studies have shown that self-efficacy links directly to pre-service teachers' perceptions of competence and career certainty (Aybek & Aslan, 2019; Daniels, Clifton, Mandzuk, & Hall, 2006; Daniels et al., 2011; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990)

Pre-service teachers may experience a phenomenon known as imposter syndrome (Clance and Imes as cited by Nahal, 2010). Imposter syndrome occurs when a disconnect arises between what is expected and what actually happens to cause feelings of inadequacy. Imposter syndrome is linked to images of low-self efficacy, illegitimacy, and generalized anxiety because pre-service and beginning teachers may feel unprepared to execute the KSD provided by their undergraduate teaching programs. Since pre-service teachers have already taken the coursework, they may feel embarrassed to share those feelings and ask for additional support when transitioning to student teaching.

Self-Efficacy and Stress. Stress is a normal response to change that can be either positive or negative. Studies have identified several reasons for stress in teachers. A central theme is the perception of an imbalance between educator pressures and the ability to cope with those demands. "How we weigh these demands and resources depends on whether our brain signals to the rest of the body that a threat is at hand, triggering the stress response" (McCarthy, 2019, pp. 10-11). As pre-service teachers begin to transition to fieldwork, they begin to connect to various stressors in the profession. Some of these include small physical space, insufficient resources, class size, number of classes assigned, lack of teacher training, and comparison to teaching peers (Lever, Mathis, & Mayworm, 2019; McCarthy, 2019). Pre-service teachers are also likely to experience negative and psychological symptoms of teacher stress such as loss of

enjoyment, pessimism, illness, fatigue, problems creating boundaries, and difficulty making decisions (Saakvitne et al. as cited by Lever et al., 2017).

One of the most identified triggers of stress for pre-service teachers was their ability to manage classroom behaviors (Brackenreed & Barnett, 2006; Daniels et al., 2006; Harmsen, Helms-Lorenz, Maulana, & van Veen, 2018). Other research points to inconsistencies in evaluation, lack of preparation for transitioning theory into practice, varying expectations of performance, and variations in feedback from supervising teachers (Murray-Harvey et al., 2000; Harmsen et al., 2018). Pre-service teachers may become aware of their lack of effective practices in motivating their students to learn causing them to avoid difficult situations (Blazer, 2010; Yasar & Demir, 2015).

Research points to a wide variety of work-related pressures caused by chronic stress and factors leading to anxiety. As pre-service teachers move into their student teaching roles, they spend extended amounts of time with their students and begin to feel the pressures that coincide with full-time teaching.

Self-Efficacy and Anxiety. While anxiety can be a result of prolonged stress, anxiety and stress are not the same. Stress comes from any event that can cause an individual to become angry, frustrated, or nervous. In contrast, anxiety has these same characteristics, but they are related to a forthcoming event with an uncertain outcome. Experiences of anxiety that occur from time to time are not a significant concern. Just like stress, intermittent bouts of anxiety are a natural response to either positive or negative events (Beasley, 2022). However, when anxiety is uncontrollable and interferes with normal functioning, it is problematic. Pre-service teachers can

experience ongoing chronic stress as they navigate the teacher education program and identify with feelings of anxiety related to their teaching experiences.

For pre-service teachers, anxiety can begin as early as enrolling in methods courses. Reasons for the onset of self-perceived anxiety can manifest in the following forms: difficulty understanding the pedagogical methods and course concepts, poor relationship with the instructor, awareness of inadequacies, overwhelmed with coursework, low grades, poor evaluations, and difficulty navigating the Learning Management System (LMS).

Pre-service teachers can begin experiencing ongoing symptoms of anxiety as they transition from coursework to field experiences (intro hours, practicums, and student teaching). Eksi and Yakisik (2016) identified the following anxiety increasers in practicum students: classroom management, disruptive students and misbehavior, lack of student motivation, unnotified visits, being evaluated, and putting theory into practice.

Anxiety is also often caused by a perceived idea of what teaching looks like to pre-service teachers. When teacher candidates arrive in the field, they are often overwhelmed by the gap between what they thought to be accurate and the totality of what the teaching profession truly encompasses (Akinsola, 2014; Daniels et al., 2006; Daniels et al. 2011; Eksi & Yakisik, 2016; Nahal, 2010; Ozen & Ozturk, 2016;). Early perceptions of pre-service teachers' career competency and certainty may directly affect immediate achievement, motivation, long-term commitment, and attrition. Anxiety negatively impacts both competence and certainty (Daniels et al., 2006).

Resilience, Grit, and Self-Care/Compassion

Three additional themes were evident in the literature: resilience, grit, and self-compassion. Dweck and Legget identify these (as cited by Porter, Catalan Molina, Blackwell, Roberts, Quirk, Duckworth, and Trzesniewski, 2020, p. 5) as mastery-oriented behaviors that include the "seeking of challenging tasks and the maintenance of effective striving under failure." The literature indicates strong ties between teaching success and longevity to the presence of resilience (and perseverance), grit, and the ability to implement mental well-being self-care practices (Damico, 2020; Eskreis-Winkler, Shulman, Beal, & Duckworth, 2014; Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015; Ozen & Ozturk, 2016; Perkins-Gough, D., 2013; Usher, 2019). Cultivating a climate that models and supports dispositions of resilience, grit, and self-care promotes lasting impacts in teacher longevity and affirmation of career choice.

Resilience. Resilience has more than one specific definition. Duckworth (Perkins-Gough, 2013) provides three different meanings with one common underpinning:

1. Optimism-appraising situations without distorting them
2. Bouncing back from adversity (cognitive or otherwise)
3. Referring to individuals who come from at-risk environments and thrive, nevertheless. (p. 14).

Duckworth identifies the commonality of the three as a positive response to adverse situations or failure. Mansfield, Beltman, and Weatherby-Fell (2020) affirm that non-cognitive capabilities such as resilience are necessary for pre-service teachers to develop confidence and increase self-efficacy perceptions when faced with challenges. Whitfield and Wilby (2021) identify self-doubt,

fear of failure, and imposter syndrome as factors that undermine resilience. Pre-service teacher social and emotional competencies are crucial in perceptions of self-efficacy and student success (Rodriguez Alcocer, 2019). Determination is an additional attribute that promotes resilience and retention (Eskreis-Winkler, Shulman, Beal, & Duckworth, 2014; Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015; Shih & Maroongroge, 2017;).

Damico (2020) states that research on promoting and nurturing resilience in teachers may help them reduce stress. Resilience needs to be learned and cultivated through the development of social and emotional competence. Techniques for increasing resilience include reflecting each day on gratefulness and setting clear limits and boundaries (Damico, 2020, pp. 54-55). In a study by Usher (2019, p. 113), the modeling by the cooperating teacher of "practice, purpose, attitudes, and values" is critical to the development of resilience and adaptability of the pre-service teacher. However, teachers' resilience is an individual trait, and there is no way to predict the extent that teacher candidates can learn it. EPPs can respond to social and emotional competencies by supporting reflective practices that identify sources of challenges and introducing resilience training into undergraduate coursework.

Grit. Whitfield and Wilby (2021) equate grit to the term "mental toughness" (p. 4) and name the following as attributes: stamina, determination, persistence, endurance, achievement orientated, optimism, and excellence (p. 4). Grit is identified as a trait that assists individuals in persisting through various adverse situations and challenges. Grit combined with a growth mindset (Dweck, 2015) allows students to view learning as a process to attain long-term targets and promotes resilience and retention (Eskreis-Winkler et al. 2014; Hochanadel & Finamore,

2015; Shih & Maroongroge, 2017). A growth mindset can encourage grit in pre-service teachers through the implementation of reflective practice and the realization that mastery of skills is a long-term process that moves through a continuum of development. Creating an environment that encourages students to press through complex learning challenges can increase engagement and motivation to enhance grit and growth mindset (Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015).

According to Duckworth (as cited by Perkins-Gough, 2013, p. 14), a component of grit is to be "resilient in the face of adversity." Resilience is the ability to bounce back and continue working towards a goal over an extended time. This includes "choosing to give up other things in order to accomplish the goal over the long term" (p. 15). Resilience consists of a commitment to persevere through adversity until success is attained and includes learning from previous setbacks, reflective practices, support resources, determination, confidence, autonomy, and optimism (Whitfield & Wilby, 2021, p. 5). These traits relate directly to the teaching dispositions, professional knowledge, and competencies expected of the pre-service teacher. The pre-service teacher can utilize the combination of growth mindset and grit to develop dispositions that support pushing through various challenges faced as they transition from course work to fieldwork.

Self-Care/Compassion. Discussions surrounding the topic of mental health and well-being in connection with schools usually refer to students. However, there is a heightened response to include teachers and other school staff under this umbrella. Current research shows a direct link between high levels of stress and teacher psychological and physical well-being (Lever, Mathis, & Mayworm, 2017; Smiley, 2020; Seton, 2019). The data reveals problematic

consequences for districts in teacher attrition, job satisfaction, links to anxiety and depression, and higher absentee rates. Studies show that pre-service teachers experience the same stress levels as they move through their educator preparation programs. Seton (2019) states that teachers need to forgive themselves on days they "miss their mark" to promote self-care. Harris (2011, pp. 106-107) posits that "stress management reflects learning about the nature of stress, understanding how to recognize stress, and developing strategies to prevent stress, along with interventions to address existing stress." These strategies cover a broad range of mental well-being: cognitive and perceptual, affective and emotional, physiological, and behavioral (Harris, 2011).

Whitfield and Wilby (2021) weigh in on support for teacher well-being to include an awareness of emotional balance. Emotional balance is the "ability of mind and body to maintain equilibrium and flexibility during times of adversity, stress, and change" (p. 5). They identify emotional balance as the key to developing resilience and for successful self-care management. As certified teachers model responses to classroom challenges to pre-service teachers, it is essential to discuss the source of the stressors. Attention to the dispositions of mindfulness and emotional regulation becomes critical at this stage to respond to individual feelings with intentionality rather than reflexive responses (Whitfield & Wilby, 2021). Divine (as cited by Whitfield & Wilby, 2021) offers the following emotional resilience framework:

1. Learn to recognize negative feelings as they start to arise and appear
2. Identify the root cause of the negative emotion
3. Intentionally transfer the negative root emotion to a positive counterpart

4. Engage the new positive emotion with self-talk, helping to divert attention to focus on something more positive. (p. 6)

These strategies encourage positive self-talk that challenges unfounded thoughts while supporting and developing resilience habits.

Blazer (2010) compiled the following tips for managing chronic stress and promoting self-care: learn your own emotional and physical stress signals, recognize your limitations, set boundaries between home and work, relax after work and cultivate outside interests, learn coping strategies, practice stress reduction techniques, take several short breaks, create new ways to complete tasks, collaborate often, discuss issues with colleagues, accept that you can't solve all of your student's problems, prioritize self-care, assess career goals, and seek professional help if needed. In educator preparation programs, resilience and self-care strategies taught in tandem with a growth mindset (Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015) can help pre-service teachers learn coping methods before anxiety issues begin and help students transition smoothly to their field experiences.

Methodology

The purpose of this primarily qualitative phenomenological mixed-methods study was to explore themes that emerged from pre-service teachers' self-perceptions of efficacy and levels of confidence. Themes were identified to determine disparities between pre-service teacher program experiences and the realities they face when they begin their field experiences.

Study Design

This research used a primarily phenomenological sequential mixed-methods approach to explore the lived experiences of a group of pre-service teachers. Phenomenology is a "…science of consciousness where the first-person viewpoint was the essence of the phenomenon and central to understanding personal realities (Beyer, 2020). The phenomenological approach gathers experiences through first-person perspectives based on personal knowledge and subjectivity (Lester, 1999).

A mixed-methods approach was used to collect both quantitative initial data to correlate with the qualitative interview responses. The preliminary findings from the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale assessed initial perceptions of self-efficacy and preparedness across the constructs of student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. These three areas collectively represent the major responsibilities of the teacher. This initial quantitative data was completed by participants prior to interviews and helped to capture initial descriptive statistics and to measure if the correlation between self-efficacy and confidence levels to the ability to carry out teaching knowledge, skills, and dispositions was statistically significant.

The interviews allowed for the emergence of the lived experience of the transition from coursework to fieldwork. The personal experiences in the qualitative data provided rich descriptions that give additional context and critical information to support the quantitative survey data. George (2022) states that using the quantitative and qualitative data together offers the opportunity to analyze the more personal and detailed insights of the interviews with the more generalizable survey results to assist in increasing the validation of the study.

Two semi-structured interviews were utilized to collect data from a sample of pre-service teachers. A phenomenological lens was used to analyze the data from the lived experiences of the participants. This ensured biases and judgments about the data were removed (Finlay, 2009) and that meaning emerged by gathering data from participants' stories.

Therefore, a survey and semi-structured interviews were used to gather data and answer the following research question: How do pre-service teachers describe their lived experiences of their relationships between self-perceptions of teaching efficacy and functioning to stress and anxiety in the transition from theory to practice?

Participants

This study utilized the method of purposive sampling to obtain its data for the survey and the interviews. Merriam (2009) asserts that a typical sample "reflects the average person, situation, or instance of the phenomenon of interest" (p. 78). This study involved participants from various universities in one Upper Midwestern state. Participants represented elementary pre-service teachers enrolled and accepted in an accredited educator preparation program and were currently completing their last semester of coursework before their final student teaching experience. These participants were chosen to examine the lived experiences of pre-service teachers who are in the transitional space between coursework and culminating fieldwork, allowing self-perceptions of efficacy and preparedness to emerge from the data. The purposive sample was drawn from a pre-service teacher population who belong to or are connected to a professional student educator organization. This selection process allowed me to draw from and gain access to a set of pre-service teachers from various geographical locations across the state.

Using a professional student educator organization provided access to the gatekeeper of the listserv for the organization to call for voluntary participants in this study. Additionally, snowball sampling was used to identify additional participants to complete the research pool of candidates. Snowball sampling is a nonprobability sample that supports exploratory research of a specific group of individuals during qualitative research (DeCarlo, n.d.). Snowball sampling helped to gather individuals as recommended by participants that meet the needed sampling criteria.

Nineteen pre-service teachers completed the initial survey and eight of the survey participants (two males and 6 females) came forward to be interviewed (Table 5). The participants represent a broader population of preservice teachers across the Upper Midwestern state. Six of the participants were female and two were male. Six of the participants were noted as on-campus students and the other two categorized themselves as online-distance learners.

Table 5. **Pre-service Teacher Interview Synopsis**

Male Participants	Interviewees #2 and #7
Female Participants	Interviewees #1, #3, #4, #5, #6, and #8
On-Campus	Interviewees #2, #4, #5, #6. #7, #8
Online	Interviewees #1, #3,

Data Sources and Analysis

Data was collected first by an initial survey and then with semi-structured interviews. The instrument used to assess pre-service teacher self-efficacy perceptions was the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). The responses were indicated on a 9-point Likert scale to indicate some form of agreement to 28 questions across the constructs of student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. In

addition to the survey, semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit the first-person perspective needed in this phenomenological sequential mixed-methods study. The interview process was grounded in the techniques developed by Seidman (2006), who suggests implementing a set of three interviews to help reach the depth and breadth needed to elicit rich data. Interviews one and two were combined (life history and experience details) as the first interview and followed up with the "reflection and meaning" interview as the second interview to be respectful of the participants' time and to keep their motivation and engagement in the study.

Surveys were sent out via gatekeepers and completed online through UND Qualtrics. The percentage of some form of agreement, the mean, and the standard deviation for each question and construct were calculated. Interviews were conducted and recorded by the Zoom video conferencing application and then transcribed by a service for analysis. Preliminary notes were recorded. Significant statements were organized into categories and themes through the implementation of open coding, in vivo coding, and process coding.

This iterative process allowed new ideas and connections to develop during the analysis stage. An audit trail was created to show the transparency of the coding process and memoing was implemented to think through the research. Saldaña (2016, p. 55) suggests that analytic memo writing and coding are cyclical and intertwined throughout the study process. As data were reviewed from multiple sources, memoing was used to write ideas in the moment for later reflection and extend concepts necessary for the development of findings to uncover new codes within the data pointing to unique and essential themes.

Findings

The themes discovered in this study give voice to the lived experience of the pre-service teacher in the semester prior to student teaching. This is a critical semester in the transition from theory to practice because pre-service teachers are wrapping up final coursework and preliminary fieldwork requirements.

The TSES survey data reported the maximum mean of responses across all questions at 7.54 and the minimum at 5.29. The range of scores across all questions was 2.29. The mean of the responses across all areas of Student Engagement, Instructional Strategies, and Classroom Management was 6.44, indicating a confidence rating on the TSES slightly above a neutral ranking (See Table7).

Table 6. TSES Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Dev.**
Engagement, Strategies, Management	**19**	**5.29**	**7.54**	**6.4452**	**.71902**
Valid N (listwise)	**19**				

Six themes were developed by closely examining the written transcripts from the interviews and aligning those with the survey data allowing for rich descriptions to emerge that accurately portray the complexities of transitioning from theory to practice from the lens of the pre-service teacher. Findings from this research indicate the importance of self-perceptions of efficacy and confidence levels as essential to success in field experiences. The following themes

were gathered from the data to highlight action steps for pre-service teachers as they transition from coursework to fieldwork.

Participants' perceptions regarding feelings, dispositions, relationships, teaching expectations, teaching strategies, and confidence levels for student teaching readiness were captured from the data (see Figure 10). Quotes presented throughout the themes use assigned respondent numbers to protect participant identities.

Figure 10

Pre-service Teacher Themes from Interviews

Note. This model illustrates the themes that emerged from the interviews related to perceptions of self-efficacy and confidence levels (Cannon, 2022).

Feelings

Research participants expressed a wide range of feelings related to their confidence in the methods and practices of teaching. While feelings and emotions are sometimes used

interchangeably, Farnsworth (2020) reports that emotions are bodily reactions and feelings are a conscious experience of those reactions. All pre-service teachers indicated unique situations that would pull out different responses based on individual interactions experienced up to this point in their coursework and practicum involvement and indicated conflicting emotions that gave way to both positive and negative feelings.

Positive. Participants who indicated positive feelings relayed a connection to career affirmation and a love for the profession. There were two main categories: happiness and excitement. Feelings of happiness included joy, cheerfulness, loving, a sense of belonging, and luck. Feelings of excitement included determination, perseverance, interest, encouragement, motivation, and accomplishment. The main motivator for these feelings was the students. Many participants indicated interactions and relationships with students as the reason for their feelings of happiness. Interviewee #2 stated:

> When they finally get something. There's really no better feeling than when the kid [student] gets something and they just start to run with it. Things really start to click. That is where the joy comes out. You see the smile on their face because things are finally making sense.

Interviewee #4 echoed this same sentiment:

> I think being joyful is important. The students often mirror that. When you see students accomplish something, you know you had a part of that. It just fills you with joy.

Participants further indicated that they get excited when the students are excited to see them. When pre-service teachers have field experiences, comments and reactions from students help them become motivated and excited about the profession. Interviewee #4 comments,

> I would come into the room and the students would say, "Ms. X, are you teaching today?" and I would say, "No, just observing," and they say, "Dang it! I want you to teach. You're such a good teacher! Comments like that make you so happy.

Interviewee #4 stated that she gets eager for field experiences because she gets to "apply the concepts that you learned in class." Interviewee #5 states, "…seeing some of the realities of what comes with teaching…that's exciting because it's not all perfect." Another comment from Interviewee #8 confirms hopes of her dreams turning into reality, "So, personally, I've wanted to be a teacher for so long. So, to finally be able to be in the classroom and get to work with kids…" is what makes her excited for teaching. Having the opportunities to put the theory from coursework into practice with practicum experience provides pre-service teachers with a glimpse into how complex teaching and learning can be from both student and teacher perspectives.

Overall, participants indicated that positive student interactions and affirmations elicit feelings of ongoing motivation, determination, and perseverance and are directly linked to their own mindsets of success and confidence.

Negative. Participants also recognized negative feelings associated with the realities of the teaching profession from their introductory work in the field. Many of the descriptors indicated an association with social-emotional well-being: stress, anxiety, nervousness, feeling overwhelmed, hopelessness, worry, sense of feeling emotionally drained, fatigue, and sadness.

Other descriptors fit into a group of uncertainties such as feeling frustrated, irritated, scared, challenged, unsure, and unprepared. While positive feelings were linked directly to student successes both academically and in building good relationships, negative feelings were linked to student behaviors and the unknowns of teaching expectations both academically and emotionally.

Many participants indicated two areas as frustrating and irritating: challenging student behaviors that affect academic performance and working with struggling students. Interviewee #7 asserts this in his description of working with challenging behaviors:

> There have been different students who have been very, just try to push your buttons and try to make you upset. So, just from working with them and trying to get them to, I don't want to say cooperate, but get them to do what the rest of the class is doing, and they just try making a big scene about it and just keep refusing.

The second area identified was students who struggle academically. This narrative depicts an inner struggle created from reflecting on the core issue of why a student may not be understanding concepts. Many participants talked about self-reflective practices as a way to navigate their individual teaching challenges, whether academic or behavioral.

Interviewee #2 provides this explanation of working with a student struggling academically:

> …and then the kid [student] becomes frustrated and you become frustrated because it is just not clicking for them. I think that's where I'm learning to really figure it out. It takes a long time for a lot of kids to figure out basic skills…then you just need to really sit back and think, "Is it how I'm teaching?"

In addition to the variables of working with students, the participants talked about how they personally identified with various types of stress and anxiety. According to the American Psychological Association (2022), both are emotional responses, but stress is usually caused by an external trigger that eventually goes away, and anxiety is defined by ongoing worries, dread, or fear even after the stressor has passed. The interview data revealed that the number one response was feeling overwhelmed with the response of nervousness coming in second. Both of these reactions can fit into the categories of either stress or anxiety Several of the participants indicated triggers of stress or anxiety with the following: unfamiliar with the school and materials, felt unprepared to handle situations in the spur of the moment, felt unsure about planning and implementing lessons, needed more time for mental preparation, were not comfortable with the assigned level of responsibility, and noted a shift in work-life balance. Interviewee #3 gives her perspective of the shift she experienced:

> From the beginning looking in, I felt very overwhelmed. I'm not going to lie. I was like Holy cow! How am I going to do this and also work my job and do homework? It was very overwhelming outside looking in.

Venturing into the unknown is also stressful. A number of pre-service teachers indicated that teaching is emotional and that they carried a mental load of worry around with them. They worried about inequities between students and student resources and were concerned about some students after the school day was over. Interviewee #2 details this kind of worry over a student he interacted with during his practicum experience and reveals how reflective opportunities are a valuable aspect of working with students:

> I said, "I just want to bring this one kid home because I know he's going to go home for two weeks, and I don't know if he's going to eat for more than half of those days." There's a big emotional side that goes into teaching that people don't understand when they're not in the school because they don't see it.

Another example was described by Interviewee #6 in her narrative of a scenario dealing with classroom behaviors and the way the students viewed her as a substitute teacher:

> But when she [mentor teacher] would leave, the kids [students] would think, "Oh, there's a sub in here now, so I can do different things…I can get away with different things." I struggled with figuring out a way to get them back on task and still be able to finish my lesson while keeping all students engaged and dealing with a student that's acting out.

Pre-service teachers reflected on their limited understanding of their role in the transition from coursework to fieldwork. All pre-service teachers indicated excitement for implementing what they had been learning in a controlled environment with a mentor teacher. However, there was a disparity between what the mentor teacher thought the pre-service teacher could do and the actual ability of the pre-service teacher. Interviewee #6 uncovers this disconnect:

> And I was just so overwhelmed. I had no idea if my lesson, like, reflected the standard well. And I didn't know, like, I'd never worked with 6th graders. I had no idea if the information I was presenting them with was stuff that they were going to understand, if they had any background knowledge of it or anything like that. So that's overwhelming to me.

Pre-service teachers had expectations from the university supervisor and from the mentor teacher but struggled to determine their classroom teaching role. They indicated a need to feel supported by both to help define and ease into their new position within a classroom of students. The maturity of the pre-service teacher may play a part in the transition. Interviewee #7 makes a claim that his college classes were "pretty relaxed" and then talks about the pressure to transition to a new energy demand.

> I guess just throughout the transition from taking college classes in a pretty relaxed environment where you don't really do a whole lot, you just bump throughout the day, and then you go to your classes, and then going into the school environment where you have a set schedule and conform to that, as well as like, working with and trying to pay attention to 20 different students at a time, this seems to, right away, it is tiring because you aren't used to it so you have to adapt what you do to be able to meet up with the energy demand.

Negative feelings that emerged are not necessarily bad feelings, but they do indicate concern for the pre-service teachers just beginning the transition from study to implementing the pedagogical practices that they have learned in their classes. Various pre-service teachers will experience a number of different scenarios that they will need to be able to navigate as they begin fieldwork. The question for EPPs is how to better prepare pre-service teachers to be able to successfully utilize tools, resources, and supports to mitigate difficult situations.

Relationships

All participants voiced several key relationships that either supported or affected their transitions to field experiences. Pre-service teachers indicated two types of field experiences during their coursework: introductory experiences and practicum experiences. Introductory experiences were described as opportunities to observe the interactions of the mentor teachers with their students to reflect and debrief on KSDs learned in coursework. Practicums were described as more in-depth experiences where the pre-service teacher would begin to apply course concepts into a class setting under the supervision of both mentor teacher and university supervisor. The primary roles of support came from the university supervisor and mentor teacher while classroom students played a special role in pre-service teacher learning and growth. Secondary roles originated from administration, other teachers, support professionals, and university peers. The importance of all types of relationships was critical in the pre-service teacher self-reflection process through direct involvement in the teaching system. Initial introductory and practicum experiences gave first-hand opportunities to engage in multiple relationships and determine the interconnectedness between teaching and learning processes.

Students. All participants voiced the importance of the student as the focus of their learning and experiences. Descriptions all included building positive connections rooted in trust as the center for student success. Trust emerged as an essential factor in two areas: learning and behavior management. Pre-service teachers indicated that in order for learning to take place, trust needed to be central to the relationship between teacher and student. Participants stated that this

was integrated tightly between coursework, feedback from mentor teachers, and modeled by mentor teachers. Interviewee #7 confirms the importance of trust to help manage behaviors:

> I guess I like to try to build relationships with students just because it's super important in the educational process because if they don't know who you are, they aren't going to respect you, and also because they are more likely to listen to you.

Experiences with participants varied slightly, but interviewee #2 presents a self-reflective stance on trust:

> It's got to be very difficult because it's harder for the kids to understand what you're doing when they don't trust you, and they don't feel like you care about them. And that's one thing that I don't know. It's something that I've realized is helping me out because the kids trust me.

Observing the mentor teacher relationships with their students, using feedback to build pre- service teacher and student relationships, and practicing self-reflection allows for authentic, real-time interactions that connect teacher actions to how the students learn. Pre-service teachers indicated that they knew what teaching looked like on paper, but that seeing their mentor teachers model it in action added a deeper level of understanding. Also, being able to talk about student interactions they observed with their mentor teachers was a valuable debriefing tool. Talking through the rationale and purpose for various student strategies, both academic and behavioral, gave the pre-service teacher insights they could not relate to in coursework as well as ways to improve and refine their student-teacher interactions.

Mentor Teacher. Key ideas that emerged from the interviews included creating strong connections with the mentor teacher, the importance of feedback, and the mentor teacher's years of experience. The connection with the mentor teacher was a determining factor in the pre-service teacher's perceptions of how valuable the beginning field experiences were. If the mentor teacher made an effort to welcome the pre-service teacher and actively involved them in assisting with students, pre-service teachers valued the practicum experience. Mentor teachers who were highly rated had the qualities of strong collaboration skills, opportunities for observations, real-time feedback, and providing time to work with students in small groups. The importance of these qualities is provided in the following by interviewee #7:

> The mentor teacher was in there the whole time and was seeing what I was doing and keeping up with me. Right afterward, they'd write down a note and at the end of the day, they would bring up the note from earlier. They would tell you what they thought was really good and then one thing I could try differently.

This perception also exhibits the qualities of a reciprocal relationship. The mentor teacher provides feedback, and the pre-service teacher is able to take that feedback and ask questions to refine skills. Another perspective is given by interviewee #8:

> …and the first day I walked in, the teacher was welcoming, gave me my own table in her classroom and all this stuff. Every day as I walked out, she's like, 'Do you have any questions? Do you need anything from me?' And right away, the first couple of days we sat down, and she asked what I needed to do. It just seemed way more thoughtful and just planned out.

The importance of mentor teacher preparation to support the pre-service teacher can provide valuable opportunities in beginning to put theory into practice. Working with students is a new experience for pre-service teachers that may disrupt the continuum of what they perceive teaching to be from their own expectations and experiences to what they actually will experience in real-time.

Comments concerning beginning field experiences that were less valued included: minimal relationship with the mentor teacher, confusion about their role in the experience, little to no feedback, not being able to work with students, mentor teacher inexperience, and being used for administrative-type duties. Interviewee #8 states that she never really formed a relationship with her mentor teacher, "it was just very strange. I never felt like he wanted to have a conversation." Interviewee #5 noted disappointment, "I just felt like I was there mostly to help her get her printing done…to do tedious tasks that she didn't want to do," and interviewee #1 states, "Once you set up your schedule, you showed up…I felt that was a very hands-off relationship." Interviewee #7 brings up mentor teacher inexperience, "…it was her second year of teaching, so I don't know that I learned a whole lot…" The perception of Interviewee #4 is shared about not receiving feedback, "…cooperating teachers didn't have any conversations with me really about feedback or evaluations, how I was doing, which was kind of sucky," and "…at the end of the semester when they filled out evaluations was the first time that I had heard anything from them."

These statements reflect the importance of the mentor teacher being experienced and present in the moment to support the beginning transitions of the pre-service teacher to field

experiences. The mentor teacher and pre-service teacher's collaborative effort help pre-service teachers navigate through academic, organizational, and behavioral scenarios, and increases confidence levels that may affirm teaching as their career choice. An experienced mentor teacher provides a deeper level of learning about the complexities of teaching that illustrates a comprehensive picture about the realities of the profession.

University Supervisor. The university supervisor was identified as critical to the success and support of the pre-service teacher. The university supervisor is the main point of contact between the university and cooperating district and between pre-service teachers and mentor teachers. Introductory and practicum field experiences create excitement and fear as pre-service teachers begin to process the application of theory into a meaningful classroom experience. Disequilibrium occurs as pre-service teachers process new information from the field experience into their current schema (D'Mello, Lehman, Pekrun, & Graesser, 2014). Interview participants noted that the relationship with the mentor teacher offered a way to help navigate the dual role between student and teacher. Pre-service teachers are still acting as a student from the university perspective, but also performing as a teacher from the cooperating district perspective. The university supervisor can field questions and guide the pre-service teacher through the complexity of this duality. Interview Participants noted the following favorable characteristics of university supervisors: flexibility, availability, timely feedback, opportunities to reflect through debriefing, ability to communicate with mentor teachers, supports with problem-solving, act as an advocate for pre-service teachers, and have easily approachable personalities. Some of these qualities are described in the following example by interviewee #8:

> And every time that I've interacted with a university supervisor within my field experience, they're always making sure that I'm taken care of. They ask if I have any questions. One time my university supervisor sat down with me and went through all the books to help me find an age-appropriate book for him [the student] at his level. That was just such a positive experience because they [university supervisor] could see that I was getting overwhelmed.

This perspective shows the importance of the university supervisor as a point of contact for both pre-service and mentor teachers, acting as the intermediary to help clarify questions or expectations. Interviewee #7 provides this lens:

> She just came and checked in on how things were going because the [mentor] teacher was always there helping me reflect on things. The supervisor allows you to gain more perspectives about it [field experience] as well as to get another opinion about something. So rather than having one teacher who's done it before, you'd have two of them as well as your own opinion.

Interviewee #4 stated that every university supervisor "has made me feel like I can come and talk to them if I needed help." Another statement comes from interviewee #6 about needing more feedback, "I think it [feedback] would have been helpful just because I think I needed validation...Anything would have been better than nothing at that point."

The importance of the university supervisor in the beginning field experiences is evident. The pre-service teacher relies heavily on the supervisor's guidance to navigate the unknowns of the transition and as a support contact. In addition, the supervisor's presence is comforting to

assist the pre-service teacher in knowing there is a safety net they can go to as they mitigate difficult situations. They may need immediate feedback and guidance in the moment to feel secure in their decision-making approaches. The interviewees indicated that the university supervisor's feedback is essential in helping them grow as a professional.

Sense of Belonging

All participants indicated that the school climate was important to be more confident in their transition to field experiences. The following groups were noted as part of the community from the interviews: other teachers, administrators, parents, and class peers. Class peers were important to compare experiences, share feelings, and provide support from a pre-service teacher perspective. Interviewee #1 stated that discussions with class peers gave her "ideas to manage and stay organized…and it was a big help to bounce ideas off of each other." Interviewee #3 describes her feelings,

> …honestly, the classmates in our classes…we were all so supportive of one another. We would go into our breakout rooms, and…we would talk a little bit about how we were feeling…I feel like we were a support system.

Other teachers in the building can provide a sense of community and belonging as well. Here is a perspective by interviewee #4:

> "I got to engage with a lot of the different faculty and staff at the place I was because that's just the…culture or whatever of the school. They kind of like to know everybody…all of my encounters were very positive."

A positive school climate can be seen in this description by Interviewee #6,

> And so, at that school, we [teachers] ate lunch with the students. And the teachers sat at a teacher's table, and they would all just talk to me [pre-service teacher] and ask me questions. And they were all super welcoming. And I felt really welcomed at that school as a whole. They would talk to me about college, or about what my future plans were, and my life itself, and it was really great!

Also, Interviewee #7 summarizes a sense of belonging with the following, "But overall, I feel like it creates a positive community because the teachers are able to go toe each other and talk about things."

Beginning field experiences also allow interactions with building administration. Interviewee #7 noted that conversations with his principal allowed him to get to know that school better, "I had interactions with the principal and was able to talk with her a lot…I was able to just chat and get to know about the school." Interviewee #1 appreciated that the administrator did not have a direct supervisory role but supported her in completing the required hours at the school and stated, "…they were phenomenal…As long as you get your hours done, that is what you need to focus on."

Interviewees discussed the importance of diverse relationships to their success as pre-service teachers and to the success of the students under their care in their field experiences. The perception that success increased when there were multiple opportunities to collaborate with various stakeholders. At the core of the success is the ability of the university supervisor and mentor teacher to work closely together to increase the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of the pre-service teacher in the transition from theory to practice.

In addition, the sense of belonging was important beyond the classroom; it extended to the school placement. Interviewees indicated they were pleased when they were included in multi-grade discussions, when other teachers took an interest in what they were doing, and offered assistance if the pre-service teacher needed. An inclusive environment included various stakeholders that supported the pre-service teachers' field experiences. This sense of belonging was essential in increased levels of self-efficacy and confidence.

Professional Teaching Expectations

EPPs implement supports to graduate teachers who demonstrate pedagogical competencies in knowledge, skills, and dispositions (KSDs). Professional behaviors that participants identified included: positive image and appearance; appropriate communication skills; punctuality; flexibility; collaborative skills; respect for others; teaching to individual differences; attention to diverse groups; high levels of prioritizing and organizing; self-reflection and self-regulation. Five participants chose the behavior of professionalism and looking professional as one of their top three teaching expectations. Creating an image that projects positivity brings in the disposition of self-regulation. Interviewee #2 explains how reputation is linked to the school community:

> But the teachers' lounge is a place for you to go and just to hang out with your other teachers and to talk, but you shouldn't use it as a negative type of place. And then another thing is the face that you have for your community, especially in this town, a small town If you go out to the bar and you do something you shouldn't do, everybody's going to

know about it. You are leading the future people of this community and if you're out doing things that are making you look bad, that makes your whole school look bad.

Self-reflection about how the community perceives teachers is directly connected to choices made by self-regulation. Participants indicated negative actions by teachers elicit negative responses by the receiving party. Interviewee #7 relays concern that teacher behaviors affect student perceptions of teachers:

> The first major one that comes to mind is to be a positive role model in front of the students just because you don't want to be doing things that you shouldn't be doing. So being a positive role model and maintaining professionalism; maintaining a positive role or being a positive role model, you would take care of a lot of the expectations that are instilled upon you.

Finally, mentor teachers can relay appropriate dispositions and teacher expectations both through actions and words. Interviewee #1 reflected, "My field mentor really showed me that you have to be disciplined. You need to stick to that structure, have a positive attitude, and learn to understand your emotions, and what your strengths are." There were no indications that teaching expectations bridged from theory to practice. All participants spoke about what they observed in the classroom and not what they learned in their coursework. Interviewee #3 indicated that she was scared. "More so because, like I said, I don't know what it looks like. I don't know how to do it."

Feeling afraid of the unknown before coming into the field can put pre-service teachers on high alert, create feelings of anxiety, and lower confidence levels. Identifying professional

teaching expectations in EPP coursework is important, but participants indicated that they wanted to have a sense of what these looked like before beginning field experiences. Uncovering what pre-service teachers identify as the mysteries of professional expectations would help in transitioning to fieldwork. Knowing the realities of these expectations in an authentic setting would help better prepare pre-service teachers in their growth of dispositions as well.

Pedagogy

Another area of discussion in the interview was to understand pre-service teacher perceptions of preparedness in the areas of student engagement, classroom management, and instructional strategies. Participants reported that they learned very few student engagement techniques in their coursework besides meeting various learning styles, implementing hands-on activities, and presenting hook and holds or other attention-getting applications at the beginning of lessons. Interviewee #8 connected the power of brain breaks that she learned about in her methods courses to what she observed in her practicum:

> Through the University we'd call them like brain breaks, but they did, I don't remember what they called them, but they did little breaks where they would pull up. It was on Go Noodle, I want to say. And they did yoga, or they did these... they were like these little music videos…they loved it!"

Student engagement was also connected to small-group work, offering options for flexible seating, and getting to know students' individual interests. The participants noted that they observed and collaborated with the mentor teacher to help improve their own skills in

keeping students on task and managing student engagement. Interviewee #1 shares the following:

> You can engage your different kids individually, but when it comes to a whole classroom, you need to do something that yes, every single kid is going to participate in. Their experience gives them different background knowledge. Each kid is going to have different background knowledge that they need to…incorporate into the learning that they are doing, and maybe, their experience will click better with another student. So really, just involving the students in the instruction, too.

All eight participants indicated that relationships with students and connecting to student interests were important to keeping students on-task. Interviewee #7 shared this insight:

> Bring yourself down to the kids' level as well. Just from working with different groups, just like getting down and staying on the floor with them when they're sharing out, seems like for some reason that makes them feel 10 times more comfortable with you; like allowing them to still be themselves and build personalities, but then still having them know when it's time to accomplish things and focus on what's actually at hand.

Participants were asked to identify various instructional strategies they had learned in their courses and if they observed or transitioned those to their field experiences. Participants recognized several strategies that they saw their mentor teacher carry out from their university studies. These included flexible small groups, learning centers, hands-on instruction, turn and talks, and connecting lessons to prior knowledge to support instruction.

There were definite challenges that emerged from trying to transition these strategies for implementation with real students. Participants mentioned that sometimes, they were unsure how to proceed with lesson plans because they did not know the students' abilities or background knowledge Interviewee #8 reflects:

> …challenges of the field experience…is we don't know what those students know, what they have already learned, and what they can do.

Interviewee #5 thought about her experience with lesson plans. Before the field experience, she felt confident about her abilities to create them but had a different view when trying to execute them in the classroom. She describes this scenario from a practicum subbing experience:

> Depending on the situation sometimes, it's really hard. When I was doing the subbing experience, the majority of the lessons that I taught were just given to me. I just had to look them over, whatever, and just teach them.

The interview analysis also identified classroom management as an essential area of attention. Participants mentioned logistical strategies of physical placement and organization as well as reward systems and class callbacks to help manage behaviors. Participants observed that consistency with the schedule and with behavior management was critical in providing a safe classroom space. Interviewee #7 talks about the effectiveness of class callbacks:

> Like in the one experience, the mentor teacher was all about the class calls. So, she'd do like 'class-class' or different calls like that and get the students to snap to their attention and put the focus on her.

Another strategy for classroom management is putting everything in its place. Interviewee #1 observed that labeling cut down on student questions, "…in my field mentor's room, she had a cube organizer and all the different bins were labeled….and then the kids know where everything is. It saves so much question time."

Interviewee #1 stated that talking about classroom management was difficult because "it's hard to get to know what type of classroom management you're going to employ before actually getting out into the field and doing it. That's something I've always been unsure of." However, other participants spoke to what they observed their mentor teachers doing. A common thread in the responses indicated that behavior management was the most difficult to predict and handle. They noted plans were ineffective if the teacher was not consistent with following the parameters throughout the day and week. Interviewee #7 comments about a behavior management game:

> It was called the Imposter rewards game. One thing with that, though, is that she [mentor teacher] wasn't super consistent with it. There would be an imposter every day, but she wasn't good at reminding them about the imposter and stuff. And so there just was like a disconnect. It just didn't work very well because I [pre-service teacher] didn't even know that they had an "imposter situation" until my fourth day there. That just shows you how inconsistent it just was not working.

Some participants noted behavior systems that were individual as well. These included the use of charts and stickers to help motivate students. Interviewees #3 and #4 both commented on the

power of positive reinforcement without the use of rewards. Interviewee #3 talked about breaking work down into smaller chunks to help students from being overwhelmed with work:

> I'm, oh, but look, you did this one so great! And then in 20 minutes we have a recess break, and then we're going to come back and we're going to look at these ones. So, let's do three more, and then we're going to come back to it.

Interviewee #4 shared her personal experience of watching her mentor teacher have individual conversations that helped students de-escalate and talk through behaviors:

> I thought that asking them about their own behaviors was really effective because it made them think about what they were doing. I guess, rather than me just yelling at them or something like that.

Managing behaviors emerged as a support need for pre-service teachers within the construct of classroom management. Some participants indicated that they had observed how behaviors can steal away time from instruction and hinder learning. Many participants also indicated they felt unprepared to deal with the various scenarios they encountered in their beginning field experiences. Behaviors that arise can be both small or larger concerns that require veteran teacher support to handle appropriately within the parameters of the assigned district placement policies, rules, and expectations. Making sure that there are opportunities in coursework to discuss and role play various scenarios prior to beginning field experiences is a consideration for EPPs in accommodating this need.

Student Teaching Readiness

This study asked participants to provide their individual perspectives on their overall readiness to begin student teaching. It was important to capture their perceptions of readiness and confidence to help identify disparities between theory and practice. Participants indicated a wide range of self-efficacy perceptions. Those interviewees who had obtained their subbing licensure gravitated towards higher confidence levels than those who had only participated in introductory and practicum field experiences. Those who had been subbing indicated a higher comfort level in the school with procedures, other teachers, and administration. Other interviewees talked about the fear of the unknown such as how many total weeks were required, not knowing the process of taking over the classroom, questioning the types of support they will have, and overall expectations from the university and the cooperating teacher.

Interviewee #4 indicates nervousness about the relationship she will have with her mentor teacher and whether she will be allowed to teach in her own style:

> I think the biggest thing will be how well I get along with the cooperating teacher. I know some student teachers last semester that had a hard time with their student teaching experience not because of their teaching abilities, but because of how their cooperating teacher wanted them to teach rather than how they wanted to teach themselves.

Interviewee #5 indicates low confidence in readiness moving into the student teaching experience:

> I think that right now, I am definitely not ready to be a teacher. And again, that has more to do with …being able to implement lessons and handle classroom management. So

those are things you can talk about all you want, but until you do it on your own, it's not quite the same.

The unknown aspects of student teaching seemed to reach many of the participants. Interviewee #6 states she is "nervous about the unknown that comes with student teaching. I don't know what's expected… or where I'm student teaching yet," and Interviewee #4 shares her feelings of nervousness about grade placement:

> But I think the only thing I would be nervous about for student teaching is if I got placed in a lower grade, lower than the third grade because I haven't ever been exposed to younger kids. I kind of wish that I got a lower field experience so that I could have been more ready in case I do get placed in a primary grade because it kind of worries me if I were to have to teach those concepts like reading and phonics. I've never even observed how that concept is taught.

Interviewee #4 indicated readiness based on the field experiences embedded throughout the EPP she is enrolled in. "Honestly, I'm very confident about my readiness for student teaching…I think after all of these field experiences to have all these interactions with kids that I'm ready to student teach."

Personal interpretations of student teaching readiness varied from participant to participant. Those who had already worked or were currently working in schools had stronger self-perceptions of confidence for student teaching because of their extended experiences prior to beginning teacher training. Those who were not working in schools voiced concerns for readiness based mostly on the mysteries of the unknowns of student teaching such as placement,

length of placement, particulars of expectations and applications to show mastery of KSDs, and the ability to work well with their mentor teacher and university supervisor. EPPs can attend to these unknowns by providing information in small increments and linking beginning fieldwork criterion to what is required during student teaching at appropriate points in coursework within the teacher education program.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicated disparities between EPP coursework and fieldwork. The initial findings from the TSES indicated moderately low levels of confidence in each of the three constructs: Classroom Management, Instructional Strategies, and Student Engagement. This correlated with the interview transcript analysis and identified a gap between what pre-service teachers thought teaching would be like to what they experienced in real-time in their initial introductory and practicum experiences. This learning curve illustrates a correlation between task proficiency and experience: more experience equals higher task proficiency.

The transcript analysis revealed a wide range of feelings related to relationships, dispositions, knowledge, application of best practices, and overall readiness to begin student teaching. Each participant presented their own versions of the reality of teaching and articulated their thoughts regarding self-perceptions of efficacy in making the transition from theory to practice. All participants indicated enthusiasm for the transition to field experiences noting that students were the focus of their excitement. However, the disconnect began when the pre-service teachers faced challenges they did not feel they were fully prepared for. Black, Branch, and Lamont (as cited by Murray-Harvey et al., 2000) discuss that the beginning pre-service teacher

encounters stressors that are the same if not more stressful than their licensed counterparts. As novices, they need extra support to handle complex problems. Murray-Harvey, et al. (2000, p. 19) suggest that coping with teaching stress needs to be addressed at the pre-service teacher level to "help retain capable teachers who are leaving the profession because they find their work environment to be too stressful,"

The participants believe that their students are the heart of their vocation. Having high levels of efficacy increases student achievement. The findings of this study convey the importance of the collaborative effort for the pre-service teacher between the university and cooperating district. EPPs can help break down barriers faced by the pre-service teacher when transitioning to field experiences and offer program changes to create higher levels of transparency in the teaching profession. Pre-service teachers identified needing more examples of student behavioral scenarios, more practice in executing lessons, more guidance in professional communications with mentor teachers, and more immediate feedback from university supervisors and mentor teachers to increase teaching and learning effectiveness.

Attention to these supports can offer pre-service teachers more opportunities to practice and prepare for teaching fundamentals.

Implications

The purpose of this study was to capture the lived experiences of pre-service teachers as they begin to transition from theory in coursework to practice in the field. The TSES indicated moderately low levels of confidence across three main constructs: instructional strategies, student engagement, and classroom management. The interviews revealed themes of anxiety due

to multiple stressors, love for the profession, disparities regarding participant expectations and the actual complexities of teaching, the importance of introductory field experiences, and support from mentor teachers and university supervisors. Interviewees also indicated moderate to low levels of confidence concerning their readiness for student teaching.

The literature has indicated a heightened awareness of the parallels between pre-service teachers' perceptions of efficacy and levels of confidence. This study provides additional context to the body of empirical data for EPPs to explore various aspects of confidence levels related to self-efficacy perceptions in teacher candidates. As pre-service teachers move into their student teaching roles, they spend extended amounts of time with their students and begin to feel the pressures that coincide with full-time teaching. The self-perception of teacher candidates' confidence in their knowledge of content and abilities to apply that content directly affects their performance in the classroom (Aybek & Aslan, 2019; Daniels et al., 2006; Daniels et al., 2011; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990) and has a direct connection to their students' success (Aybek & Aslan, 2019; Daniels et al., 2011; DeMauro & Jennings, 2016; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). This study demonstrates the need for EPPs to explore various aspects of confidence levels related to self-efficacy perceptions in teacher candidates and provide considerations for reframing current teacher education programming to address identified disparities. The following considerations for reframing EPPs are intended to build confidence in pre-service teachers to raise self-perceptions of efficacy as they transition from coursework to fieldwork.

Innovative Collaborations. All pre-service teachers stated in some form or another that relationships with their students were the focus of their experience. They indicated excitement

for beginning introductory field experiences because they would be putting into practice what they had been learning in their courses. However, a wide range of feelings was reported regarding support and relationships with mentor teachers and university supervisors. Building innovative collaborations with K-12 schools can offer ongoing stability with relationships, environment, procedures, and a deeper connection to the understanding of teaching dispositions. Multiple opportunities to work in the same environment while forming collegial relationships with mentor teachers provide a level of support built on consistency and trust for the pre-service teacher. A looping structure for pre-service teachers with the same mentor teacher (similar to looping in K-12 where a teacher stays with the same class for more than one year) can foster the mentor teacher's knowledge of the pre-service teacher over a longer time period. Innovations such as a looping concept can help track the progress of pre-service teacher KSDs with greater accuracy and focus on need.

Feedback can be presented by both mentor teachers and university supervisors in real-time to help the pre-service teacher identify strengths and areas of improvement (Akinsola, 2014). Opportunities to debrief reinforce the connection of learning objectives in coursework to instructional planning, student engagement, and classroom management in the field. The teaching profession is unpredictable. Collaboration and trust are critical components in supporting the transition from theory to practice. Creating clear roles and expectations with constructive and purposeful feedback in real-time was indicated by participants as necessary factors for promoting growth and success. Ongoing collaborations with schools can offer lessons

and workshops alongside licensed teachers that would support pre-service teachers' understanding of various high-stakes scenarios throughout methods coursework.

Complex Student Behaviors. Another theme that emerged from the participants was difficulty in dealing with complex behaviors. Interviewees indicated difficult students were harder to teach, keep on task, and distracted other students. They reported they were unprepared for various scenarios related to physical and emotional outbursts as well as students who were disengaged and oppositional. Providing pre-service teachers specific training to deal with complex behaviors can mitigate challenges before introductory and practicum field experiences. Offering various scenarios strategically embedded in methods coursework where pre-service teachers can role play may help with identifying and responding appropriately. The university professor can assist in scheduling classroom observations and debriefing with the hosting teacher. Additionally, demonstration videos can be reviewed, evaluated, and analyzed for practice to build feelings of confidence in the areas of behavior management and student engagement.

Other types of collaborative professional development workshops with local districts such as trauma-sensitive training, social-emotional-behavioral learning, character development, and supporting students with exceptionalities would allow for pre-service teachers to gain perspectives from licensed teachers on how training translates to classroom implementation.

Realities of the Profession. The development of coursework related to the complexities of teaching and transparency of expectations can prepare pre-service teachers for the realities of the teaching profession (Akinsola, 2014; Daniels et al., 2006; Daniels et al. 2011; Eksi &

Yakisik, 2016; Ozen & Ozturk, 2016). Using the K-12 collaborative relationships can provide a platform for current issues and trends to be discussed candidly by practicing teachers. These discussions encourage the pre-service teacher to display favorable professional dispositions while still engaging in their coursework. Also, authentic conversations help pre-service teachers ask questions about what practicing teachers perceive to be important focus areas to make further connections to course concepts. These may include, but are not limited to, struggling students, dealing with difficult parents, licensure requirements, professional development, lesson and curriculum planning, standardized testing, expectations from administration, and workload.

Providing opportunities to connect coursework to real-time professional issues assists in closing the disconnect between what individual pre-service teachers imagine teaching is like to what licensed teachers in the profession actually experience. Connections may include invitations to practicing teachers from various grade levels, licensed specialists, administration, support staff, and other educational professionals as individual speakers or as a guest panel to connect with pre-service teachers. Other considerations encompass memberships to professional educational organizations and attendance at local and national conferences

Mental Health Supports. A final theme from the study that affects perceptions of self-efficacy is mental health. All participants indicated concern about their workloads and how it affects them emotionally. Some indicated a roller coaster of feelings ranging from excitement and happiness to feelings of anxiety and nervousness. Two of the interviewees indicated that they stop and try to take breaks when they self-assess that they are trying to take on too much. One of those participants indicated that he just tries to "push through" indicating the quality of

perseverance. Another student talked about the overwhelming pressures of having to work while going to school to make ends meet. This adds another level of complexity for the pre-service teacher as a full load of coursework is like having a full-time job.

EPPs can use various campus supports and highlight professional resources that are already in place for licensed teachers. Having access to mental-health resources before the transition to fieldwork can help pre-service teachers be proactive in navigating the challenges they may encounter in maintaining a positive work-life balance (Eksi and Yakisik, 2016). Methods courses could put opportunities in place for guiding students through each of these anxiety stressors, offering specific strategies and techniques before completing any field experiences. Providing teacher candidates with coping strategies throughout coursework prepares students in advance for challenges related to the profession they are entering.

Pre-service teachers and beginning teachers face challenges that differ from veteran educators. Bjorklund, Warstadt, and Daly (2021) state, "Learning to teach is often characterized by self-doubt, strong emotions, vulnerability, and stress, which can result in pre-service teachers leaving their programs and early career teachers leaving the profession altogether." Attention to the above implications and critical conversations regarding program changes of EPPs within their frameworks can help close the disconnect between theory and practice, increase student confidence, maximize self-efficacy, and affirm teaching as a career choice. Proactive measures focusing on the benefits of long-term positive changes rooted in collaborative mentorships may boost perceptions of self-efficacy, increase resiliency, and encourage perseverance to overcome

obstacles and challenges to close the gap between pre-service teacher expectations and the realities of the profession.

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Article #3: Insights from Pre-Service Teachers: The Journey from Theory to Practice

Abstract

This phenomenological study explored the lived experience of the pre-service teacher regarding perceptions of confidence levels and self-efficacy of teaching abilities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight pre-service teachers completing their final semester of coursework prior to student teaching across one upper Midwestern state. The emerging themes from this study are highlighted giving special attention to considerations and insights that may proactively prepare pre-service teachers for the realities of the profession. The implications generated from this study help identify disparities between learning pedagogical practices and the implementation of those practices in fieldwork.

Keywords: pre-service teacher, self-efficacy, stress, anxiety, mental health, self-care, disparity, Educator Preparation Programs, Knowledge Skills and Dispositions, Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Standards

Introduction

Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) consistently review their programming frameworks for pre-service teachers to meet standards and master competencies of pedagogical practices. However, necessary attention to supports that build and boost pre-service teacher confidence and promotion of self-efficacy are often overlooked and lacking. Teacher training is grounded in proficiencies of Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions (KSDs), but as the concern for mental health rises, research has shown the connection between stress and performance (Akinsola, 2014; Blazer, 2010; Brackenreed & Barnett, 2006; Daniels, Clifton Manzduck, & Hall, 2006; DeMauro & Jennings, 2016; Murray-Harvey, Slee, Lawson, Silins, Banfield, & Russell 2000; Nahal, 2010; Yasar & Demir, 2015).

There are various stressors pre-service teachers experience when transferring theory to practice. Pre-service teachers are engaged in a dual role of both student and beginning teacher. Their situation is unique and the stressors of meeting university requirements while completing mentor teacher expectations during field experience may be difficult to balance. Types of stress that surface stem from coping with the responsibilities of both roles. These stressors include managing classroom behaviors, evaluations by supervisors and mentor teachers, developing relationships with mentor teachers and students, having adequate preparation to carry out lessons, and doing well on final evaluations (Daniels, Mandzuk, Moore, & Perry, 2011; Ripski, M.B., LoCasale-Crouch, & Decker, 2011). As stressors increase during this transition, pre-service teachers experience anxiety regularly (Zeidner as cited by Daniels et al., 2011) which can adversely affect their mental well-being and perceptions of self-efficacy (Seton, 2019; Smiley,

2020). This study reveals the perceptions of confidence and self-efficacy of pre-service teachers' narratives of their lived experiences. The data gathered from the interviews were analyzed with a phenomenological lens to explore pre-service teachers' beliefs about their transitions and identified disparities that emerged between theory and practice.

Literature Review

Barrett Kutcy and Schulz (as cited by Nahal, 2010) report a "disparity between [their]teacher education programs and the 'real' teaching world." The expectations do not match the realities that pre-service teachers encounter. This disparity creates lower confidence levels and perceptions of self-efficacy during the transition into field experiences. Dos Santos (2021) stated that self-efficacy was strong during the coursework stage, but that it declined during the field experiences. Pre-service teachers noted unfairness, unmotivating work environment, and disregard for their roles as teachers as negatively impacting their perceptions of self-efficacy and making them question teaching as a career choice.

Dos Santos (2021) also noted that psychosocial demands that pre-service teachers experience during the transition from theory to practice may be a predictor of pre-service teachers entering the field and found that many pre-service teachers decided not to enter the teaching profession after completing their training due to the nature of the job.

Anhorn (as cited by Nahal, 2010) states that individuals who become teachers are predisposed to the profession because of how they view the role of the teacher and their love for ongoing learning. Attention by Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) to enhance pre-service teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions (KSD) assists in graduating quality candidates who

are fully aware of the professional expectations. However, the literature uncovers a disparity between what pre-service teachers conceptualize about the profession in their coursework to the profession's realities they experience in their fieldwork.

Teaching Dispositions

As pre-service teachers navigate preparation programs, courses require students to demonstrate professional knowledge, competencies, and appropriate teaching dispositions. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (as cited by Masunaga & Lewis, 2011, p. 36) defines dispositions as "professional attitudes, values, and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues, and communities." Pre-service teachers are assessed on dispositions as one dimension to measure the scope of teaching preparedness. Narayanaswamy, Iyer, and Soled (2007) assert that dispositions are equally critical to teaching efficacy as mastery of professional knowledge and skills.

Mastering dispositions is not an easy task for pre-service teachers. EPPs may assume that teacher candidates already know what the expected dispositions are and how to apply them. Conversely, dissonance may occur on the part of the pre-service teacher, identifying with the role of the student rather than that of the professional (Henninger & Ensign, 2020). During field placements, cooperating teachers continue to build and model developing dispositions through mentoring and collaborative feedback.

Another challenge for pre-service teachers regarding the acquisition of dispositions is the expectation that favorable teaching behaviors enhance student achievement (Skourdoumbis,

2019). “This means that teachers must move beyond basic commitments about knowing the subjects they teach and how to teach them or managing and monitoring learning. Teacher performance dispositions are the pedagogic behaviors of teachers needed to enhance student achievement in an era of accountability and audit” (Skourdoumbis, 2019, p. 12). The ongoing pressures that occur as teachers work to increase student scores on standardized tests rely on the teacher’s abilities to motivate and engage students through developing dispositions. In a study by Masunaga and Lewis (2011), pre-service teachers presented with challenges in field placements had significantly lower self-ratings on dispositions than those who did not experience challenges. The variable of classroom challenges is a prominent factor in how the pre-service teacher views self-efficacy during the translation of theory to practice.

Self-Efficacy

Pre-service teachers' self-efficacy reveals that perceptions of beliefs are related to autonomy and its connection to confidence levels, interactions with students, and student achievement and motivation (Aybek & Aslan, 2019; Daniels, Mandzuk, Moore, & Perry, 2011; DeMauro & Jennings, 2016; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Jamil, Downer, and Pianta (2012) state that teaching self-efficacy is not a specific measurement but rather a sense of confidence in any set of given circumstances. Studies have shown that self-efficacy links directly to pre-service teachers’ perceptions of competence and career certainty (Aybek & Aslan, 2019; Daniels et al., 2006; Daniels et al., 2011; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990) and directly affects performance during field experiences (Nahal, 2010).

Clance and Imes (as cited by Nahal, 2010) identified an occurrence called the imposter phenomenon. The imposter phenomenon is linked to images of low-self efficacy, illegitimacy, and generalized anxiety because pre-service and beginning teachers may feel unprepared to execute the KSD provided by their undergraduate teaching programs. Since pre-service teachers have already taken the coursework, they may feel inadequate and embarrassed to share those feelings and ask for additional support when transitioning to introductory and practicum field experiences.

Self-Efficacy and Stress. Stress is a normal response to change that can be either positive or negative. Studies have identified several reasons for stress in the teaching profession. A central theme is the perception of an imbalance between educator pressures and the ability to cope with those demands. "How we weigh these demands and resources depends on whether our brain signals to the rest of the body that a threat is at hand, triggering the stress response" (McCarthy, 2019, pp. 10-11).

One of the most identified triggers of stress for pre-service teachers was their ability to manage classroom behaviors (Brackenreed & Barnett, 2006; Daniels et al., 2006; Harmsen, Helms-Lorenz, Maulana, & van Veen, 2018). Other research points to inconsistencies in evaluation, lack of preparation for transitioning theory into practice, varying expectations of performance, and variations in feedback from supervising teachers (Murray-Harvey et al., 2000; Harmsen et al., 2018). As pre-service teachers move into their student teaching roles, they spend extended amounts of time with their students and begin to feel the pressures that coincide with full-time teaching. Pre-service teachers may have feelings of inadequate abilities to control

behaviors and become aware of their ineffectiveness in motivating their students to learn, leading to distancing themselves from their students, avoiding difficult situations, and questioning their career choice (Blazer, 2010; Yasar & Demir, 2015). Research points to a wide variety of work-related pressures caused by chronic stress and factors leading to anxiety.

Self-Efficacy and Anxiety. While anxiety can be a result of prolonged stress, anxiety and stress are not the same. Stress comes from any event that can cause an individual to become angry, frustrated, or nervous. In contrast, anxiety has these same characteristics, but they are related to a forthcoming event with an uncertain outcome. Experiences of anxiety that occur from time to time are not a significant concern. Just like stress, intermittent bouts of anxiety are a natural response to either positive or negative events (Beasley, 2022). However, when anxiety is uncontrollable and interferes with normal functioning, it is problematic. Pre-service teachers can experience ongoing chronic stress as they navigate the teacher education program and identify with feelings of anxiety related to their teaching experiences.

For pre-service teachers, anxiety can begin as early as enrolling in methods courses. Reasons for the onset of self-perceived anxiety can manifest in the following forms: difficulty understanding the pedagogical methods and course concepts, poor relationship with the instructor, awareness of inadequacies, overwhelmed with coursework, low grades, poor evaluations, and difficulty navigating the Learning Management System (LMS).

Pre-service teachers can begin experiencing ongoing symptoms of anxiety as they transition from coursework to field experiences (intro hours, practicums, and student teaching). Eksi and Yakisik (2016) identified the following anxiety increasers in practicum students:

classroom management, disruptive students and misbehavior, lack of student motivation, unnotified visits, being evaluated, and putting theory into practice. Anxiety is also often caused by a perceived idea of what teaching looks like to pre-service teachers. When teacher candidates arrive in the field, they are often overwhelmed by the gap between what they thought to be accurate and the totality of what the teaching profession truly encompasses (Akinsola, 2014; Daniels et al., 2006; Daniels et al. 2011; Eksi & Yakisik, 2016; Nahal, 2010; Ozen & Ozturk, 2016). Early perceptions of pre-service teachers' career competency and certainty may directly affect immediate achievement, motivation, long-term commitment, and attrition. Anxiety negatively impacts both competence and certainty (Daniels et al., 2006).

Resilience, Grit, and Self-Care/Compassion

Three additional themes were evident in the literature: resilience, grit, and self-compassion. Dweck and Legget identify these (as cited by Porter, Catalan Molina, Blackwell, Roberts, Quirk, Duckworth, and Trzesniewski, 2020, p. 5) as mastery-oriented behaviors that include the "seeking of challenging tasks and the maintenance of effective striving under failure." The literature indicates strong ties between teaching success and longevity to the presence of resilience (and perseverance), grit, and the ability to implement mental well-being self-care practices (Damico, 2020; Eskreis-Winkler, Shulman, Beal, & Duckworth, 2014; Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015; Ozen & Ozturk, 2016; Perkins-Gough, D., 2013; Usher, 2019). Cultivating a climate that models and supports dispositions of resilience, grit, and self-care promotes lasting impacts on teacher longevity and affirmation of career choice.

Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore themes that emerged from pre-service teachers' self-perceptions of efficacy and determine disparities between their program experiences and the realities they face when they begin their field experiences. Pre-service teacher confidence levels were also explored.

Study Design

Semi-structured interviews were utilized to collect data from a sample of pre-service teachers. A phenomenological lens was used to analyze the data from the lived experiences of the participants. This ensured that biases and judgments about the data were removed (Finlay, 2009) allowing the meaning to emerge in the stories of the pre-service teachers. Phenomenology is both a philosophy and a method of inquiry (Qutoshi, 2018). Lester (1999) posits that the phenomenological approach gathers experiences through first-person perspectives based on personal knowledge and subjectivity. Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) provided the framework that defined phenomenology as a science of consciousness where the first-person viewpoint was the essence of the phenomenon and central to understanding personal realities.

Participants

This study utilized the method of purposive sampling to obtain its data for the interviews. Merriam (2009) posits that a typical sample "reflects the average person, situation, or instance of the phenomenon of interest" (p. 78). Participants represented elementary pre-service teachers enrolled and accepted in an accredited educator preparation program completing their last

semester of coursework before the final student teaching experience. The purposive sample was drawn from a pre-service teacher population who belong to or are connected to a professional student educator organization in one upper Midwestern state. This selection process helped gain access to a set of pre-service teachers from various geographical locations across the state. Using a professional student educator organization provided access to the gatekeeper of the listserv for the organization to call for voluntary participants in this study. Additionally, snowball sampling was used to identify additional participants to complete the research pool of candidates. Snowball sampling is a nonprobability sample that supports exploratory research of a specific group of individuals during qualitative research (DeCarlo, n.d.). Snowball sampling allowed me to gather individuals as recommended by participants that meet the needed sampling criteria.

This qualitative study involved eight elementary education pre-service teachers that were representative of a broader population from one upper Midwestern state. Six of the participants were female and two were male. Five of the participants were noted as on-campus students and the other three categorized themselves as online-distance learners.

Data Sources and Analysis

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews to elicit the first-person perspective needed in this phenomenological study. Interviews are a valuable data collection method to gain access to rich descriptions of the lived experience. Weiss (as cited in Maxwell, 2013, p. 103) states, "Interviewing gives us access to the observations of others. Through interviews, we can learn about places we have not been and about settings in which we have not lived." Interviews were conducted virtually. All participant identifiers were removed to ensure anonymity.

Interviews were transcribed and given a participant number to report any research findings. To further maintain the confidentiality of the participants, participant names and coordinating numbers were stored in separate locations.

The interview process was guided by a set of primary questions with a list of secondary topics and follow-up questions that were implemented based on the flow of the individual interviews. The interview process was grounded in the techniques developed by Seidman (2006), who suggests implementing a set of three interviews to help reach the depth and breadth needed to elicit rich data. Although Seidman (2006) deems it necessary to adhere to the structure of three separate interviews, interviews one and two (life history and experience details) were combined as the first interview and followed up with the "reflection and meaning" interview as the second interview to be respectful of the participants' time as well as keeping motivation and engagement in the study. The questions were developed across the constructs of student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management and then aligned with the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards (See Article #3 Appendix A) to allow participants' lived experiences of confidence and self-efficacy levels to emerge.

Table 7. Alignment of Interview Questions to InTASC Standards

InTASC Standard	Interview Questions
#1 Learner Development	2, 5, 6
#2 Learning Differences	6, 7, 8
#3 Learning Environments	2, 3, 4, 6, 9
#4 Content Knowledge	6, 8, 10
#5 Application of Content	7, 8, 10
#6 Assessment	6, 8, 10
#7 Planning for Instruction	7, 8, 10
#8 Instructional Strategies	7, 8, 10
#9 Professional Learning and Ethical Practice	2, 5, 8
#10 Leadership and Collaboration	4, 8

Interviews were transcribed by a transcription service. The full verbatim transcripts were initially coded using Saldaña's (2016, p. 14) "streamlined codes-to-theory model for qualitative inquiry." This method leads from the real/particular to the abstract/general. The data was first coded, then categorized, then merged for themes and concepts, and finally, assertions and theory were developed (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994; Saldaña, 2016). Srivastava & Hopwood (2009, p. 76) speak of the iterative approach in qualitative data analysis as a "reflexive process." The reflexive analysis provided me with three questions to use as reference points to frame the iterative process of making meaning and gaining insights from the interviews:

1. What is it I want to know?
2. What is the data telling me?
3. What is the dialectical relationship between what the data are telling me and what I want to know? (p. 78)

Qualitative analysis offers several opportunities to listen to or read the data multiple times to tune into the phenomena and develop categories and themes. Strauss and Corbin (as cited in Srivasta & Hopwood, 2009) explain that qualitative analysis is inductive. Patterns and themes "emerge from the data rather than being imposed on them prior to collection and analysis" (p. 77). The analysis process provides transparency for the audience regarding how the findings and theories were developed in the audit trail according to initial coding and categorizing.

Cresswell and Guetterman (2019) discuss that it is necessary to "take the data apart" to make sense of the responses and then "put it back together" to provide a summary of the findings (p. 10). In vivo coding was used to "prioritize and honor the participant's voice" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 106) as a first cycle approach to analyze the transcripts followed by process coding to further understand the data. Data analysis included coding the transcripts, a detailed audit trail, memoing, bracketing, and interpretations.

Findings

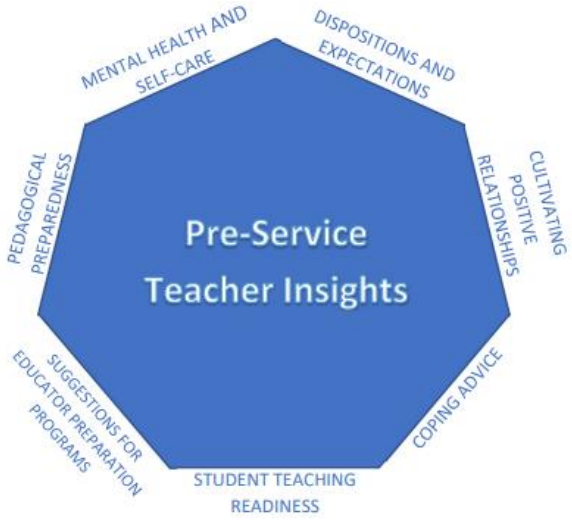
The themes that emerged in this study offer insights into the lived experience of the pre-service teacher in the semester prior to student teaching. The focus on this semester is important because introductory and field experiences are completed, and pre-service teachers are preparing for full-time classroom practice as they wrap up their final coursework requirements.

Themes were developed by closely examining the written transcripts from the interviews and aligning those with the survey data allowing for rich descriptions to emerge that accurately portray the complexities of transitioning from theory to practice from the lens of the pre-service teacher. Findings from this research indicate the importance of self-perceptions of efficacy and

confidence levels as essential to success in field experiences. The following insights were determined from the identified themes. These insights may provide reflective opportunities to share with pre-service teachers that may support their transition from coursework to fieldwork.

Figure 11

Pre-Service Teacher Reflective Insights



Note. This model shows the insights that emerged from the pre-service teacher interviews (Cannon, 2022).

Insight One: Teaching Dispositions and Expectations

EPPs implement InTASC standards within coursework to graduate teachers who demonstrate teaching dispositions and expectations favorable to the profession. Professional behaviors that participants identified included: positive image and appearance; appropriate communication skills; punctuality; flexibility; collaborative skills; respect for others; teaching to individual differences; attention to diverse groups; high levels of prioritizing and organizing;

self-reflection and self-regulation. Five participants chose the behavior of professionalism and looking professional as one of their top three teaching expectations. Creating an image that projects positivity brings in the disposition of self-regulation. Interviewee #2 explains how reputation is linked to the school community:

> But the teachers' lounge is a place for you to go and just to hang out with your other teachers and to talk, but you shouldn't use it as a negative type of place. And then another thing is the face that you have for your community, especially in this town, a small town. If you go out to the bar and you do something you shouldn't do, everybody's going to know about it. You [pre-service teacher] are leading the future people [students] of this community and if you're out doing things that are making you look bad, that makes your whole school look bad.

Self-reflection about how the community perceives teachers is directly connected to choices made by self-regulation. Participants indicated that negative actions by teachers elicit negative responses. Interviewee #7 discusses how teacher behaviors affect student perceptions of teachers:

> The first major one that comes to mind is to be a positive role model in front of the students just because you don't want to be doing things that you shouldn't be doing. So being a positive role model and maintaining professionalism would take care of a lot of the expectations that are instilled upon you.

Finally, mentor teachers can demonstrate appropriate dispositions and teacher expectations both through actions and words. Interviewee #1 reflected, "My field mentor really showed me that you have to be disciplined. You need to stick to that structure, have a positive

attitude, and learn to understand your emotions, and what your strengths are." As participants talked about what they observed in the classroom there was no connection in the discussion to what they learned in their coursework. There were no indications that teaching expectations bridged from theory to practice even though pre-service teachers are measured by growth in dispositions as laid out by InTASC standards embedded in coursework. Interviewee #3 indicated that she was scared. "More so because, like I said, I don't know what it looks like. I don't know how to do it."

Feeling afraid of the unknown before coming into the field can put pre-service teachers on high alert, create feelings of anxiety, and lower confidence levels. University supervisors work closely with mentor teachers to help students transition to teaching with positive dispositions. The role of the university supervisor is essential in beginning field experiences and acts as a critical point of contact as the pre-service teacher begins a dual role as both university student and pre-service teacher. The interviewees indicated that they felt more secure if the supervisor was available for immediate feedback and was a visible presence during their introductory and practicum hours.

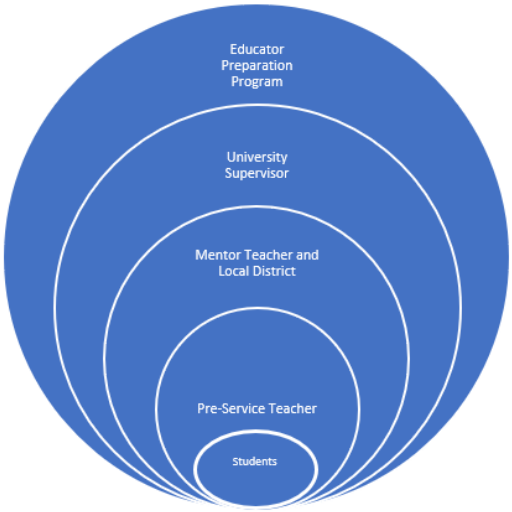
Insight Two: Cultivating Positive Relationships

Numerous participants identified multiple stakeholder relationships as central to their success in fieldwork. While each group had varying purposes, it is the pre-service teacher with the support of the mentor teacher and university supervisor that work most closely together to increase the confidence in the application of KSDs in the transition from coursework to

fieldwork. The classroom students that the pre-service teachers oversaw emerged as the focus of the pre-service teachers' learning and growth.

Figure 12

Collaborative Supports for the Pre-service Teacher



Note. This model illustrates the relationships of multiple stakeholders central to the success of the pre-service teacher (Cannon, 2022).

Student Relationships. The pre-service teacher study participants indicated the importance of their relationships with their students in their introductory and practicum experiences to their learning and preparation. Participant descriptions included building positive connections as the center of their students' successes. Trust emerged as an essential factor in two areas: learning and behavior management. Pre-service teachers indicated that in order for learning to take place, trust needed to be central to the relationship between teacher and student. Participants stated that this was integrated tightly between coursework, feedback from mentor

teachers, and modeled by mentor teachers. Interviewee #7 confirms the importance of trust to help manage behaviors:

> I guess I like to try to build relationships with students just because it's super important in the educational process because if they don't know who you are, they aren't going to respect you, and also because they are more likely to listen to you.

Interviewee #2 provides a self-reflective stance in connections with students rooted in trust:

> It's got to be very difficult because it's harder for the kids to understand what you're doing when they don't trust you, and they don't feel like you care about them. And that's one thing that I don't know. It's something that I've realized is helping me out because the kids trust me.

Classroom management and student engagement were two items that led back to trust. Interviewee #1 states, "…that it goes back to building my relationships with them. You've got to get to know each student…in order for them to learn and comprehend." Building trust with students emerged as an essential skill. Interviewees indicated that the relationship was at the root of student learning and that trust between pre-service teacher and student gave them the ability to focus more on academics and less on attending to unwanted behaviors.

Mentor Teacher Relationships. Pre-service teachers indicated that their relationships with their mentor teachers helped them feel a sense of belonging and created an environment that fostered risk-taking. Mentor teachers who were highly rated had the qualities of strong collaboration skills, opportunities for observations, real-time feedback, and providing time to

work with students in small groups. The importance of these qualities is provided in the following by interviewee #2:

> And they're not afraid to tell me, "Hey, they didn't quite do this to how it would work for these students." And that happens because we know each other well enough, where I know they're not saying it in a negative way. They know I'm not taking it in a negative way; And so, the relationship that I have with them and just picking their brain at little things.

This perception also exhibits the qualities of a reciprocal relationship. The mentor teacher provides constructive feedback, and the pre-service teacher is able to take that feedback and ask questions to refine skills.

Pre-service teachers identified their mentor teachers as the key support in beginning to transition from theory to practice. Working with students is a new experience for pre-service teachers that may disrupt the continuum of what they perceive teaching to be from their own expectations and experiences to what they actually will experience in real-time. The mentor teacher models academic and behavioral strategies as well as organization of the schedule and materials. The mentor teacher and pre-service teacher's collaborative effort help pre-service teachers navigate through academic, organizational, and behavioral scenarios, and increases confidence levels that may affirm teaching as their career choice.

University Supervisor Relationships. The relationship with the university supervisor is at the root of the support system. The university supervisor acts as the facilitator between the university and the cooperating district as well as the pre-service teacher to the mentor teacher. As

pre-service teachers begin practicum experiences, they exhibit feelings of excitement but also of disequilibrium as they process new information from the practicum to fit into their current schema (D'Mello, Lehman, Pekrun, & Graesser, 2014). Study participants noted the following favorable characteristics of university supervisors: flexibility, availability, timely feedback, opportunities to reflect through debriefing, ability to communicate with mentor teachers, supports with problem-solving, advocates for pre-service teachers, and have easily approachable personalities. These qualities are outlined in the statement by interviewee #8:

> The university supervisor needs to be there, making sure that the students [pre-service teachers] are doing what they're supposed to be doing, like in an appropriate way teaching all that kind of stuff. But then also being there, interacting with the staff members, creating those relationships so that we can have field experience opportunities in the future with those schools.

This perspective shows the importance of the university supervisor as a point of contact for both pre-service and mentor teachers, acting as the intermediary to help clarify questions or expectations. Interviewee #1 provides this lens:

> Being flexible to work with and understanding when it came time to…Hey, like this happened or this happened. They worked with us. If we came to a roadblock, they helped us get a solution. I think it was the flexibility and accountability.

Interviewee #4 stated that every university supervisor "has made me feel like I can come and talk to them if I needed help." Another statement comes from interviewee #7 about debriefing, "I guess it just allows you to gain more perspectives about it as well as get another

opinion…rather than just one teacher and your own." Taking the time to elicit feedback and communicate concerns with the university supervisor can help build trust and allow supervisors to implement actions steps to assist in the transition from coursework to fieldwork.

Feedback is an essential component in pre-service teacher's progress towards mastery of skills and dispositions. If strengths and concerns are not communicated in a timely manner, valuable opportunities to catch areas of need are lost. Observations with immediate feedback from the university supervisor with collaborative efforts to bring in the feedback from the mentor teacher give the pre-service teacher a better sense to correct deficiencies and offer opportunities to further refine teaching competencies.

Community and Sense of Belonging. Positive school climate and inclusion were identified by all participants as a major factor of confidence in their transition to field experiences. Feeling a sense of belonging limits feelings of isolation and enhances risk-taking. The following groups were noted as part of creating a sense of community from the interviews: mentor teachers, other teachers, administrators, and class peers. Class peers were important to the participants because they allowed them to share their feelings and compare experiences from a pre-service teacher's perspective. This helped break down feelings of isolation and provided an assurance that they were not alone in what they were experiencing.

Class peers were important to compare experiences, share feelings, and provide support from a pre-service teacher perspective. Some participants indicated that they had been reaching out to peers that were currently student teaching. Interviewee #1 stated that discussions with class peers would help her "realize that, hey, maybe I'm not the only one that goes through this

stuff. Support from my peers was a big help to bounce ideas off of each other." Other teachers in the building allowed the pre-service teacher to observe interactions between faculty members. As identified by interviewee #7, "…it seems like they all come into my mentor teacher's room at the end of the day and have a debriefing…it creates a positive community." Interviewee #6 shared her feelings of inclusion by other teachers:

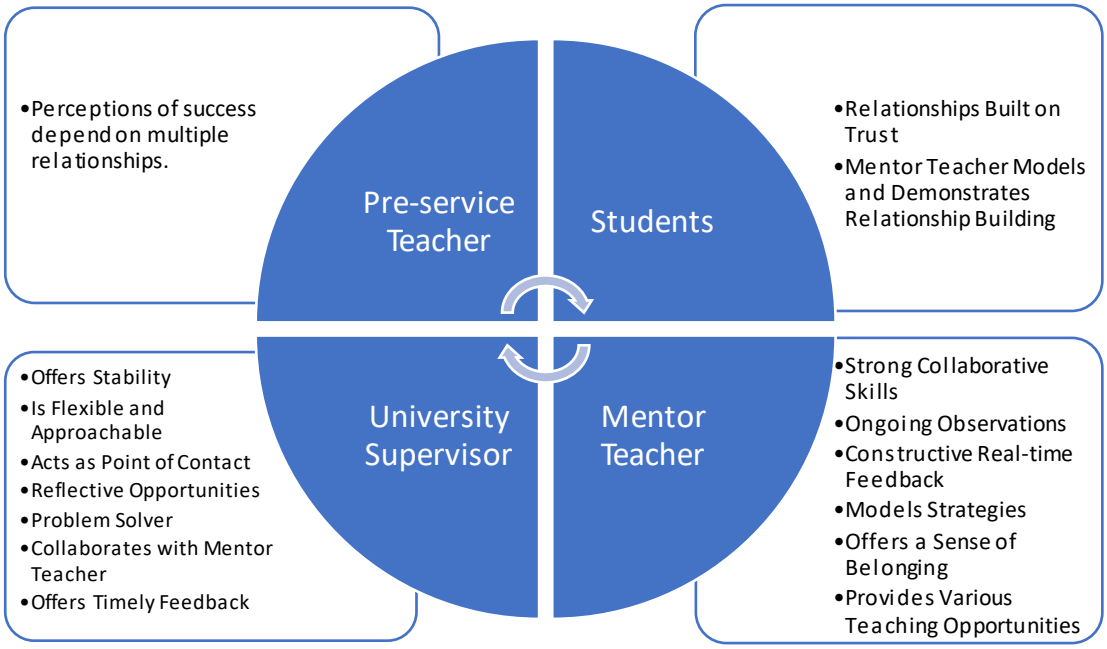
> And so, at that school, we [teachers] ate lunch with the students. And the teachers sat at a teacher's table, and they would all just talk to me [pre-service teacher] and ask me questions. And they were all super welcoming. And I felt really welcomed at that school as a whole. They would talk to me about college, or about what my future plans were, and my life itself, and it was really great!

Nahal (2010, p. 7) states, "Building positive relationships with colleagues will help create a coalition that will provide emotional support and influence first-year teacher retention, job satisfaction, and good teaching." Numerous participants voiced the realization of the importance of relationships at the core of their students' successes and that there were multiple stakeholders to collaborate with. While each group has varying purposes, it is the pre-service teacher with the help of the mentor teacher and university supervisor that work most closely together to increase the confidence of KSDs in the transition from coursework to fieldwork.

Relationships built on trust within a community of teachers can help the pre-service teacher negate feelings of isolation and provide authentic opportunities for real-time feedback. Interviewees indicated greater levels of confidence when they felt strong relationships with their mentor teachers, university supervisors, and students.

Figure 13

Pre-Service Teacher Relationship Roles



Note. This model illustrates the roles of multiple stakeholders' relationships central to the perceptions of the success of the pre-service teacher (Cannon, 2022).

Insight Three: Mental Health and Self-Care

A primary theme that emerged from pre-service teacher responses was a concern for personal mental health. Some participants were balancing school and family life while others indicated they were also working full-time. Various student scenarios related to these balances indicated a wide range of feelings that added to levels of stress and anxiety. Emotional maturity may have added to the degree to which pre-service teachers self-assess their abilities to handle the daily intricacies and deal with individual pressures. As noted in the literature, the traits of

resilience and grit have positive correlations with handling adverse situations to accomplish long-term goals (Perkins-Gough, 2013; Whitfield & Wilby, 2021).

Study participants (100%) used descriptors that indicated an association with social-emotional well-being: stress, anxiety, nervousness, overwhelmed, hopelessness, fatigue, and worry. Pre-service teachers spoke directly about their feelings regarding the realities of the profession as they began to transition to introductory and practicum field experiences. The participants talked about how they personally identified with various types of stress and anxiety. According to the American Psychological Association (2022), both are emotional responses, but stress is usually caused by an external trigger that eventually goes away, and anxiety is defined by ongoing worries, dread, or fear even after the stressor has passed.

The interview data revealed that the number one response was feeling overwhelmed. This reaction can fit into the categories of either stress or anxiety Several of the participants indicated triggers of stress or anxiety with the following: unfamiliar with the school and materials, felt unprepared to handle situations in the spur of the moment, felt unsure about planning and implementing lessons, needed more time for mental preparation, were not comfortable with the assigned level of responsibility, and noted a shift in work-life balance. Interviewee #3 gives her perspective of the shift she experienced:

> From the beginning looking in, I felt very overwhelmed. I'm not going to lie. I was like Holy cow! How am I going to do this and also work my job and do homework? It was very overwhelming outside looking in.

Venturing into the unknown is also stressful. Interviewee #6 reveals the disparity between what the mentor teacher thought she would be able to do and what her actual teaching abilities were:

> And I was just so overwhelmed. I had no idea if my lesson, like, reflected the standard well. And I didn't know, like, I'd never worked with 6th graders. I had no idea if the information I was presenting them with was stuff that they were going to understand if they had any background knowledge of it or anything like that. So that's overwhelming to me.

Several pre-service teachers indicated that teaching is emotional and that they carried a mental load of worry around with them. They worried about inequities between students and student resources and were concerned about some students after the school day was over. Interviewee #2 details this kind of worry over a student he interacted with during his practicum experience and reveals how reflective opportunities are a valuable aspect of working with students:

> I said, "I just want to bring this one kid home because I know he's going to go home for two weeks, and I don't know if he's going to eat for more than half of those days."
>
> There's a big emotional side that goes into teaching that people don't understand when they're [people] not in the school because they don't see it.

Another example was described by Interviewee #6 in her narrative of a scenario dealing with a student presenting challenging behaviors:

> And this kid yelled at the kid on the spectrum, and he was bawling. He was so distressed that he was going to get in trouble for saying something he didn't say. And I felt overwhelmed in that moment because I didn't know what the correct way was to handle the situation.

Students with academic needs also caused feelings of stress for the study participants. This narrative depicts an inner struggle created from reflecting on the core issue of why a student may not be understanding concepts. Many participants talked about self-reflective practices as a way to navigate their individual teaching challenges, whether academic or behavioral. Interviewee #2 provides this explanation of working with a student struggling academically:

> Frustration. I feel like that's something every teacher feels, especially when you're teaching something, and kids just aren't figuring it out. And then it hits you that it might be me that's causing the kids not to be able to learn. And it's frustrating when you just want to tell them to, "Just write the word. It's right in front of you. Just write it down. Why can't you just copy it down?"

Study participants indicated an expectation from the university supervisors and mentor teachers to provide ongoing real-time support that would help them ease into their new roles as pre-service teachers during their transition to fieldwork. The experience of veteran teachers and supervisors is crucial to help the dual role of the pre-service teacher as both student at a university and teacher in a classroom.

Insight Four: Pedagogical Preparedness

Another area of discussion in the study was to understand pre-service teacher perceptions of preparedness in the areas of student engagement, classroom management, and instructional strategies. The survey responses from the TSES indicated moderately low levels of confidence across all three constructs. Participants reported that they learned very few student engagement techniques in their coursework besides meeting various learning styles, implementing hands-on activities, and presenting hook and holds or other attention-getting applications at the beginning of lessons. Interviewee #8 connected the power of brain breaks that she learned about in her methods courses to what she observed in her practicum:

> Through the University we'd call them like brain breaks, but they did, I don't remember what they called them, but they did little breaks where they would pull up. It was on Go Noodle, I want to say. And they did yoga, or they did these... they were like these little music videos, and it would say, now sing it in a parrot's voice or sing it like you're sleepy type of thing like that and they loved it. Or they have, like, different dance videos where they get up and spread out throughout the class and dance and just give them a break.

Other participants observed that small-group work, flexible seating, and finding students' interests helped immensely with student engagement. The mentor teacher modeled different strategies and the pre-service teachers used those procedures to help hone their own skills. All eight participants indicated that relationships with students and connecting to student interests were important to keeping students on-task. Interviewee #1 stated, "… that providing students

opportunities to share what they already know about a topic and making connections to real-life experiences is necessary for a student to learn and comprehend."

Participants reported many connections between instructional strategies learned in their courses to what they tried or observed in their introductory and practicum field experiences. Instructional strategies included small group work, think-pair-shares, jig-sawing, learning centers, gradual release teaching methods, explicit instruction, and providing hands-on connections to teach concepts. There were definite challenges that emerged from trying to transition these strategies for implementation with real students. Mentor teachers had lesson plans completed in advance which sometimes did not follow the teacher manual. Participants mentioned that sometimes, they were unsure how to follow and execute lesson plans because the mentor teacher created variations that did not align with what they were following in the manuals. Interviewee #8 reflects:

> And so that was challenging for me because I'm doing what the book says, but she would just slightly change something to make it work better in her classroom, which totally I get it. But then I didn't know that change.

Interviewee #5 thought about her experience with lesson plans. Before the field experience, she felt confident about her abilities to create them, but had a different view when trying to execute them in the classroom:

> I've written a lot of lesson plans for different classes, so I feel like I've gotten pretty good and pretty comfortable. However, as far as implementing lessons, though, I haven't had as much experience doing that. It's not something we really focused on. But it taught me

> that even if you think it's going to go well and you have the details you need, something can go wrong. It's frustrating and it's intimidating. Especially being on the spot and trying to figure out, "Okay, what can I do now?" But that's the reality.

From the interviews, classroom management seemed to be the area that most participants discussed as an area needing attention. Participants seemed comfortable and confident in discussing logistical management such as labeling, scheduling, preparing seating charts, and organizing systems for classroom chores. Interviewee #1 stated that talking about classroom management was difficult because "it's hard to get to know what type of classroom management you're going to employ before actually getting out into the field and doing it. That's something I've always been unsure of." However, other participants spoke to what they observed their mentor teachers doing. A common thread in the responses indicated that behavior management was the most difficult to predict and handle. They noted plans were ineffective if the teacher was not consistent with following the parameters throughout the day and week. Interviewee #7 comments:

> She writes Q-U-I-E-T on the board, and the students, they'd get extra recess of something if they kept all the letters on the board. But that grew ineffective, so she just switched it up. They never really achieved the goal for one. And then just because it was used for an extended period of time, I guess, it just didn't agree with the students. Probably they never really felt like they were getting anything out of it. So, what was the point of doing it, maybe?

Some participants noted behavior systems that were individual as well. These included the use of charts and stickers to help motivate students. Interviewees #3 and #4 both commented on the power of positive reinforcement without the use of rewards. Interviewee #3 talked about breaking work down into smaller chunks to help students from being overwhelmed with work:

> I'm, oh, but look, you did this one so great! And then in 20 minutes we have a recess break, and then we're going to come back and we're going to look at these ones. So, let's do three more, and then we're going to come back to it.

Interviewee #4 shared her personal experience of watching her mentor teacher have individual conversations that helped students de-escalate and talk through behaviors:

> I thought that asking them about their own behaviors was really effective because it made them think about what they were doing. I guess, rather than me just yelling at them or something like that.

Overall, there were many varied behavior management systems that participants observed. Interviewee #6 noted a change in behaviors when the mentor teacher stepped out of the room:

> But when she would leave, some of that stuff would go out the window. And the kids would think, "Oh there's a sub in here now so I can do different things," or "Ms. #6 is up there teaching so I can get away with different things." And at times, I struggled with figuring out a way to get them back on task and then also be able to still finish my lesson and keep all the other students engaged while another student might be acting out.

The area of managing behaviors surfaced as a major concern in within the construct of classroom management. Pre-service teachers definitely noted a need for dealing with various scenarios ranging from mild to severe behaviors so they would feel prepared when they began their first field experiences. Finding opportunities to implement behavior management into coursework prior to beginning field experiences is necessary to help prepare pre-service teachers for the complexities they will encounter and support feelings of confidence in mitigating difficult situations.

Insight Five: Student Teaching Readiness

Participants were asked to provide their perspectives on their readiness for student teaching. Since all participants were pre-service teachers engaged in their last semester of coursework before completing their student teaching experience, it was important to capture their self-perceptions of efficacy in order to identify emerging disparities between theory and practice. Responses indicated a wide range of confidence levels. Many had questions as to the specifics of the experience such as the total number of weeks, the process of taking over the classroom, and the type of support provided. Some participants attained their substitute teaching licenses and felt a little more comfortable moving forward to student teaching. Their confidence levels were enhanced by already knowing the school, the staff, the students, and the procedures. Interviewee #5 indicated readiness since she had already worked with her assigned mentor teacher before:

> I feel pretty ready and, I think again, that comes from being able to be working with a teacher I've worked with in the past. I think if I had to meet a new teacher that I had never worked with before, I'd be much more nervous about it. I maybe wouldn't feel like

> I'm ready. Overall, I do feel like I am ready, though, just because I've had experiences in classrooms. I've seen different things I like and what I don't like.

Interviewee #8 indicates low confidence in readiness moving into the student teaching experience:

> I have absolutely no idea what to expect, and I don't know if it's more like, I think it's more just like the whole student teaching in general. Maybe I feel like I'm actually prepared to plan the lessons and teach the lessons, but it's like the…I don't know. I just feel not ready. I don't know what to expect, but I haven't had any of the pre-student teaching seminar stuff information yet. Pretty much any information at this point would be helpful because I feel so unprepared like I know absolutely nothing about what student teaching is going to look like. And I wish that we maybe talked about it more and learned about it earlier in the program because now this semester I feel like I'm slammed with just my regular courses and then to figure out all the student teaching stuff on top of it.

The unknown aspects of student teaching seemed to reach many of the participants. Interviewee #6 states she is "nervous about the unknown that comes with student teaching. I don't know what's expected… or where I'm student teaching yet," and Interviewee #4 shares her feelings of nervousness about grade placement:

> But I think the only thing I would be nervous about for student teaching is if I got placed in a lower grade, lower than the third grade because I haven't ever been exposed to younger kids. I kind of wish that I got a lower field experience so that I could have been more ready in case I do get placed in a primary grade because it kind of worries me if I

were to have to teach those concepts like reading and phonics. I've never even observed how that concept is taught.

Interviewee #4 indicated readiness based on the field experiences embedded throughout the EPP she is enrolled in. "Honestly, I'm very confident about my readiness for student teaching…I think after all of these field experiences to have all these interactions with kids that I'm ready to student teach." She also indicated that she has had communications with other students who had completed their student teaching experiences the prior semester. She had indicated her biggest worry is how well she will get along with her mentor teacher since her communications with others indicated that can be a major challenge.

Student teaching readiness varied between interviewees. Those that already were working in schools as support staff had greater confidence in their abilities for student teaching readiness as they already had been involved in student meetings, could observe course strategies in action, and had experienced various student academic and behavioral situations. Pre-service teachers who indicated they felt less prepared discussed the unknowns of student teaching as a major factor in lowered perceptions of self-efficacy. Because of the wide range of responses regarding student teaching readiness, it may be pragmatic to differentiate EPPs learning tracks to accommodate those learners who have classroom experience versus those who do not.

Insight #6: Coping Advice

Perceptions of stress and the ability to cope with stress is unique to each pre-service teacher. Because of the dual role as both university student and pre-service teacher, it was difficult to maintain an emotional balance between the expectations of the two institutions.

Interviewee #5 felt like she was in "limbo between my responsibilities as a student and as a teacher." Interviewee #6 indicated that she "uses a planner to write down all due dates so that I can feel prepared and can delegate what needs to be focused on first." Interviewee #1 had the following advice:

> When going from the last semester of coursework to student teaching, make sure that all of your ducks are in a row or close to in a row as you can. Take your field experiences seriously, because they are really what gives you insight into the classroom and how to build relationships with your mentor. As far as coping strategies, take time for yourself…Our mental health needs to come first as mental health is in the spotlight lately. We need to prioritize it. We can't take care of others if we can't effectively take care of ourselves.

Interviewee #4 stresses not to overthink things:

> I wasted a lot of energy overstressing about things that were handled by a simple conversation with a professor or just simply trusting my ability to perform within the class. Some of my coping strategies included talking ideas over with other education majors to make sure I was on the right track and asking questions to my professors when things seemed unclear. I also think it was helpful to talk to people that are not part of the education program so that they can help give advice from an outside perspective.

Interviewee #3 talked about reflective practices as helping her cope with the stresses of the day during field experiences. She thinks about the "good, hard, and fun things that happen during the day. I felt when I was reflecting, I was able to think about the whole day instead of

how I felt at the end of the day." Interviewee #4 said that reflecting helped her to "develop my philosophy…think about what I liked, what I didn't like, and to see other people's perspectives. I think the purpose of reflecting is to organize your thoughts and see what works for you." Being able to reflect is not just for identifying strengths and weaknesses but is a tool that can help sort through various feelings that arise in a more logical and rational manner.

According to the interviewees, the dual role as university student and as pre-service teacher can cause strain in trying to meet both sets of expectations and requirements. Many participants indicated difficulties in taking risks during their field experiences knowing that they were still learners and had standards and dispositions they needed to meet. Feelings of stress and anxiety were evident themes in trying to merge the two roles. On the one hand, they had guidance and expectations from the mentor teacher; conversely, they had to attend to the EPPs criteria. Collaboration between supervisor and mentor teacher should be strongly encouraged to help articulate and merge the expectations of each institution to eliminate confusion and address misconceptions. Various coping strategies can be addressed based on student need and attended to throughout teacher preparation courses.

Insight #7: Suggestion Box

Interviewee #8 had indicated that they had felt "slammed" with regular coursework and then had to figure out preparations for student teaching on "top of it all." Interviewee #6 had the following suggestion for EPPs to consider helping make the transition from theory to practice smoother, "I would suggest for my teaching program to incorporate coursework that includes what will be experienced in the field…Not throughout the entire program, but right before…in

the weeks to come." Interviewee #3 talked about the challenges of making field experiences work as a distance student, "Offering flexibility to complete hours and submit assignments would be helpful. I work full-time and have to make adjustments in my schedule to complete my field hours for my classes. It's hard."

Interviewee #1 offers a different perspective as a distance student working full-time:

> Advice for some possible changes to make the transition from coursework to fieldwork smoother would be having the program be more flexible with us students. A lot of us are working full time and going to school full time. The majority of us [pre-service teachers] are working in schools and have a tough time making everything work. Being a little more relaxed on what can be counted as hours for fieldwork would be beneficial to all of us.

Interviewee #4, a self-identified on-campus student, offers the following perspective:

> I think it would be helpful to get clear expectations of tasks and assignments we will be doing within the field experience or do assignments that are similar to what we will be doing during field experience or student teaching. It would help if it was implemented slowly through the class or the few weeks before the field experience.

These suggestions align with a range of preparedness for field experiences. Flexibility of EPPs ranked high in importance in helping pre-service teachers navigate barriers to learning. Suggestions included flexibility of assigned hours within a timeline for introductory and practicum field experiences for completion, a range of dates rather than specific dates submission of assignments for field experiences, options for choosing placements, and consideration of

preferred grade levels. Interviewees also indicated that it would be helpful to have more modeling of strategies, practice creating condensed weekly plans, and unpacking the schedule of the school day. The pre-service teachers know what these are but would feel more confident if they had some experience of how to put those into practice.

Discussion

This study presented findings that indicated disparities between EPP coursework and what pre-service teachers experience in real-time during practicums and other introductory field experiences. Common insights emerged from the interviews that included the following categories: cultivating positive relationships, dispositions and expectations, pedagogical preparedness, mental health and self-care, suggestions for EPPs, coping advice, and student teaching readiness. In all cases, disequilibrium occurred as participants tried to make sense of the disconnect they experienced in the transition from theory to practice. Pre-service teachers indicated they had a picture of what they thought teaching was supposed to look like which was remarkably different from the actual reality they observed. This learning curve demonstrates the correlation between task proficiency and experience. Interviewee #8 illustrates this learning curve with the following:

> …she was super interested in what I was in her classroom for and had all questions for me and wanted to know more about why I was there and stuff. On the first day, she threw me into a small group, and she's like, you get to lead this. But also, along with that obviously freaking out, oh, my goodness, you're just going to throw me into it.

But she was prepared for me to do that and had notes for me to follow and everything. So, it made me feel comfortable in a crazy situation.

These findings are essential for EPPs in offering ongoing support and creating program changes to break down barriers and provide more transparency in the teaching profession in the time between coursework and student teaching. In turn, these types of changes may directly affect the retention of beginning-year teachers by improving teacher performance and raising confidence levels before graduating. This is important due to the current critical teacher shortage that notes "the steady loss of teachers who, after a relatively short time in the classroom, give up on the profession, opting instead for jobs that offer more financial reward or may simply appear less stressful," (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000).

All research participants expressed excitement and joy in working with students and in their initial introductory field experiences. The disparity emerged when they realized they needed more support. They reported needing more examples of student behavioral scenarios, more practice in executing lessons, more guidance in professional communications with mentor teachers, and more immediate feedback from university supervisors and mentor teachers to increase teaching and learning effectiveness. Participants reported moderate levels of confidence when discussing their readiness for student teaching. Many of their concerns surrounded the mystery of the process, where they might be placed, doubts about their abilities to effectively teach the grade level they may be assigned, anxiety about the relationship with their mentor teacher, workload, juggling university and district expectations, and questions about their abilities to handle difficult behavioral situations. Some of the participants were keenly aware that

the support they were used to getting from their university professors would be very limited. EPPs and districts can make a direct effort based on these findings in a collaborative effort to meet the current needs of the teaching profession while providing quality instruction and opportunities for pre-service teachers.

Implications

Findings from this study indicated that there is a disparity between theory and practice for pre-service teachers. The data revealed the following themes from the participant interviews: teaching dispositions and expectations, positive relationships, mental health and self-care, pedagogical preparedness, and student teaching readiness. This study provides additional context to the body of empirical data for EPPs to reframe current coursework and collaborative efforts to support the transition from coursework to fieldwork that may help raise perceptions of efficacy and levels of confidence.

Building Community. All participants stated in some form or another that relationships were the focus of their transition from theory to practice. Building a sense of belonging between the university and collaborating districts can offer ongoing stability with relationships, environment, and procedures. Pre-service teachers indicated that the ability to complete multiple introductory and practicum field experiences in the same schools strengthens perceptions of self-efficacy and confidence and builds trust. Pre-service teachers become familiar with navigating the building, understanding procedures and schedules, can form more meaningful relationships with mentor teachers and students, and feel a sense of support and belonging. The university

supervisor acts as the intermediary aiding both the mentor teacher and pre-service teacher as needed while offering feedback and monitoring pre-service teacher progress.

Feeling a sense of community offers the pre-service teacher opportunities to take risks, accept and act on constructive feedback, and foster a growth mindset. Inclusiveness provides a positive climate to work through challenges related to the realities of the profession that pre-service teachers encounter in their first field experiences. A sense of belonging may add to the pre-service teacher's affirmation of career choice and help with retention in the profession.

Building Self-Efficacy and Confidence. The survey data emerged as statistically significant and affirmed an association between pre-service teachers' confidence in content knowledge and their ability to apply it in practice. The survey also indicated moderately low confidence levels across the constructs of student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. Interviews confirmed this association with additional evidence illustrating a disconnect between what they thought they would be able to do and what they encountered in their introductory and practicum experiences in real-time.

The development of coursework related to the complexities of teaching and transparency of expectations can prepare pre-service teachers for the realities of the teaching profession (Akinsola, 2014; Daniels et al., 2006; Daniels et al. 2011; Eksi & Yakisik, 2016; Ozen & Ozturk, 2016;). Considerations of EPPs should include opportunities to connect coursework in meaningful ways to help prepare pre-service teachers for challenging situations such as complex student behaviors, differentiation for struggling students, communication with parents, standardized testing, and the basics of the teaching workload (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000).

Also, collaborating with local districts to have critical conversations about the application of strategies with licensed teachers can give a 'here and now' meaningful connection to ongoing coursework. Familiarity with current issues and transparency of the realities of the profession can help challenge misconceptions by pre-service teachers before the transition to fieldwork, thus raising confidence levels to handle varying situations and greater self-efficacy to encourage risk-taking.

Mental Health and Self-Care. Pre-service teachers experience various stressors that impact their mental health (Blazer, 2010; Hanson, 2013; Lever, Mathis, & Mayworm, 2017). Poor mental health generates perceptions of low self-efficacy, promotes a lack of confidence, impairs relationships with students, and negatively affects teacher performance and student academic success (Seton, 2019; Smiley, 2020). Considering ways to embed mental health and self-care issues into teacher preparation programming may assist pre-service teachers in the transition to fieldwork.

Study participants indicated being overwhelmed by workloads. These workloads included coursework, part-time or full-time employment, and balancing personal responsibilities. Creating awareness about emotional intelligence could offer a way to increase grit and resilience that would help with completing tasks and pushing through difficult situations. People who have a high degree of emotional intelligence are able to "…identify, assess, and manage the emotions of one's self, of others, and of groups," (Serrat, 2017 p. 329). Self-regulation of feelings proactively assists in the management of personal mental health and self-care. Having access to mental-health resources before the transition to fieldwork can help pre-service teachers be proactive in

navigating the challenges they may encounter in maintaining a positive work-life balance (Eksi and Yakisik, 2016).

Closing the Gap. There is a delicate balance between the responsibility of the EPP throughout coursework and the final culminating student teaching experience. Methods courses prepare pre-service teachers with KSD's related to InTASC standards to elicit specific learner outcomes. Closing the gap between pre-service teacher misconceptions of the teaching profession versus the reality needs to be considered as a recommendation for future program changes. The disparity includes areas of behavior management, classroom management, workload demands, record keeping, support, communication with parents, professional development, and student engagement. Nahal (2010) suggests an 'induction program' where these areas would be addressed by building onto existing EPPs. Due to the current critical teacher shortage, two goals would be to provide transparency of the profession throughout the program to increase career affirmation and enhance retention within the profession.

Also, matching the purpose and relevance of methods classes to current educational issues and trends can help with closing the gap. Working collaboratively with practicing teachers provides a bridge linking theory to practice and may help with the transition into the first introductory and practicum field experiences.

Conclusions

This study identified various issues related to perceptions of self-efficacy and confidence levels in pre-service teachers. The disparities that emerged may aid in EPP reform to minimize adverse effects of stress and anxiety to help maximize functioning in the transition of theory to

practice. Implementing program supports that directly scaffold skill sets and dispositions to increase perceptions of confidence and self-efficacy prior to student teaching experiences may better prepare pre-service teachers to meet the realities of the profession while affirming career choice and help support longevity in the profession.

The interview data brought forth the essence of the lived experiences of the pre-service teacher as they transition from theory to practice. Pre-service teachers experience stress and anxiety as they anticipate the relationships they need to develop with mentor teachers and students as well as with other important stakeholders. Collectively, their voices brought forth the importance of these relationships in offering various types of support as they navigate their dual roles as university student and pre-service teacher. These two sets of expectations are confusing for pre-service teachers as there are few opportunities before fieldwork that allowed them to practice and apply academic and behavioral strategies. Several pre-service teachers commented that they were aware of what teaching looks like on paper but felt that their coursework lacked in exposing the realities of what they truly encountered in their introductory and practicum experiences.

Progress towards mastery of professional dispositions and skills is managed with the supportive and collaborative relationship of the mentor teacher, university supervisor, and other school stakeholders. The school district student is kept at the center of the pre-service teacher focus as they learn to manage time, meet professional expectations, identify academic interventions, apply differentiated instruction, and navigate various student behaviors.

However, the participants indicated that there was more to teaching than simply the logistics of implementing and mastering teaching and learning standards. They talked about stressors and feelings of anxiety related to adding another layer of learning that disrupted their work-life balances and discussed concerns related to the emotional load of being a teacher. Participants identified being overwhelmed with the large number of responsibilities that come with teaching and the effects they feel when students within their placements do not have adequate resources to take care of basic human needs. Some interviewees observed various inequities among their students that they [pre-service] teachers felt were barriers to student learning. The interviewees questioned how to begin to mitigate these barriers to maximize student engagement and learning. Student learning is high stakes for teachers, as public perception infers that standardized test scores reflect directly on the abilities of the classroom teacher and not barriers that students experience. Not having a highly skilled and effective mentor teacher impacts the development of teaching competencies of the pre-service teacher that would ultimately affect their [the preservice teacher's] students' learning.

The themes that emerged in this study illustrate the current disparity in the pre-service teacher's transition from theory to practice. The perceptions of the pre-service teacher that were revealed indicate a need for more transparency of fieldwork expectations and explicit instruction related to the realities of the profession. The interviews revealed that self-perceptions of efficacy and confidence levels were strong when pre-service teachers indicated they felt they had access to supports, tools, and resources that would assist them in mastering various teaching skills.

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Article #3: Appendix A. Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium Model Core Teaching Standards

	Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium Standards (InTASC)
1	*Learner Development:* The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences.
2	*Learning Differences:* The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards
3	*Learning Environments:* The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
4	*Content Knowledge:* The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make these aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content
5	*Application of Content:* The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues
6	*Assessment:* The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher's and learner's decision making.
7	*Planning for Instruction:* The teacher plans instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learners and the community context.
8	*Instructional Strategies:* The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways
9	*Professional Learning and Ethical Practice:* The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner
10	*Leadership and Collaboration:* The teacher seeks appropriate leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility for student learning, to collaborate with learners, families, colleagues, other school professionals, and community members to ensure learner growth, and to advance the profession.

Council of Chief State School Officers. (2013)

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

This research is just beginning. Throughout this study, there have been many opportunities to keep asking new questions and reimagine frameworks for EPPs to improve supports for pre-service teachers. The disparities between theory and practice that were identified in this study are a basis for continued research into gaining further understanding of how to bridge the disconnect between perceptions and realities of the teaching profession. The data gathered from the pre-service teachers showed a clear association between pre-service teacher perceptions of self-efficacy to levels of confidence. These perceptions impact performance in initial field experiences as well as have a direct effect on the success of the students in the classrooms that pre-service teachers are placed with.

Ample evidence emerged from the data noting the importance of collaboration and the multiple stakeholders essential to pre-service teachers' successes as they transition from theory to practice. University supervisors played a key role as the point of contact for pre-service teachers acting as the intermediary between the university and cooperating district. University supervisors also provided valuable guidance in helping pre-service teachers navigate the dual role as both a student and a teacher. Mentor teachers provide ongoing feedback, modeling, and opportunities for growth to strengthen pedagogical practices for instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement. Providing multiple introductory field experiences with the same mentor teacher and university supervisor can help build trust and

allow for pre-service teachers to feel comfortable in taking risks and assuming professional responsibilities.

Finally, pre-service teachers should know that they are not alone. The thoughts and feelings that emerged from the research indicate these are not isolated incidents. Many pre-service teachers experience the same challenges and emotions as their peers. Relationships with their contemporaries can help them work through perceived barriers, talk through issues, and celebrate successes. Moving forward, strong attention should be given to creating a circle of support including the pre-service teacher, the mentor teacher, the university supervisor, and pre-service teacher peers. This support offers reciprocal relationships that provide multiple opportunities for the voices of pre-service teachers to be heard and acted upon while building self-efficacy to strengthen knowledge, skills, and dispositions to prepare for student teaching.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale

Teacher Beliefs - TSES

This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create challenges for teachers. Your answers are confidential.

Directions: Please indicate your opinion about each of the questions below by marking any one of the nine responses in the columns on the right side, ranging from (1) "None at all" to (9) "A Great Deal" as each represents a degree on the continuum.

Please respond to each of the questions by considering the combination of your *current* ability, resources, and opportunity to do each of the following in your present position.

	None at all		Very Little		Some Degree		Quite A Bit		A Great Deal
1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
3. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
7. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
8. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
9. How much can you do to help your students value learning?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
12. How much can you do to foster student creativity?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
13. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
15. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
16. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
17. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
19. How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
21. How well can you respond to defiant students?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
22. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨
24. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦	⑧	⑨

Appendix B. UND Qualtrics Survey

Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale

Start of Block: Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale

Q1 UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA
Institutional Review Board
Study Information Sheet
Title of Project: Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions of Self-Efficacy
Principal Investigator: Dr. Pamela K. Beck, 701.777.6173, pamela.beck@und.edu
Co-Investigator(s): Yvonne H. Cannon, 191lassr.cannon@ndus.edu
Advisor: Dr. Pamela K. Beck, 701.777.6173, pamela.beck@und.edu

Purpose of the Study:
The purpose of this research is to explore pre-service teachers' perceptions of confidence levels before the student teaching experience. This study will help Teacher Preparation Programs identify and implement supports needed for pre-service teachers transitioning from coursework to fieldwork.

Procedures to be followed:
Participants will be asked to fill out the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale in Qualtrics. This is a Likert scale survey of 24 questions that will collect quantitative data of self-perceptions of teaching efficacy. Those who fill out the survey are agreeing to take part in the survey portion of the research study. No personal identifiers are collected with the responses in Qualtrics.

Risks:
There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

Benefits:
It is not expected that you will personally benefit from this research.
Possible benefits to others include future knowledge gained from this research for teacher preparation programs, teacher candidates, and other stakeholders in the education profession.

Duration:
This survey will take about 10 minutes to complete.
Statement of Confidentiality:
The survey does not ask for any information that would identify who the responses belong to. Therefore, your responses are recorded anonymously. If this research is published, no information that would

identify you will be included since your name is in no way linked to your responses.
All survey responses that we receive will be treated confidentially and stored on a secure server. However, given that the surveys can be completed from any computer (e.g., personal, work, school), we are unable to guarantee the security of the computer on which you choose to enter your responses. As a participant in our study, we want you to be aware that certain "key logging" software programs exist that can be used to track or capture data that you enter and/or websites that you visit.

Right to Ask Questions:
The researchers conducting this study are Dr. Pamela Beck and Yvonne H. Cannon. you may ask any questions you have now. If you later have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research please contact Dr. Pamela Beck at 701.777.6173.
If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact The University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board at (701) 777-4279 or UND.irb@UND.edu. You may contact the UND IRB with problems, complaints, or concerns about the research. Please contact the UND IRB if you cannot reach research staff, or you wish to talk with someone who is an informed individual who is independent of the research team.
General information about being a research subject can be found on the Institutional Review Board website "Information for Research Participants" http://und.edu/research/resources/human-subjects/research-participants.html

Compensation:
There is no compensation for your participation in this survey.

Voluntary Participation:
You do not have to participate in this research. You can stop your participation at any time. You may refuse to participate or choose to discontinue participation at any time without losing any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.
You must be 18 years of age older to participate in this research study.
Completion and return of the survey imply that you have read the information in this form and consent to participate in the research.
Please keep this form for your records or future reference.

○ I Consent to Participate in the Survey (1)

○ I Do Not Consent to Participate in the Survey (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Please read the attached Survey Information Sheet. After reading the information sheet, please selec = I Do Not Consent to Participate in the Survey

Q2 Are you a pre-service teacher in the state of North Dakota completing their last semester of coursework prior to their student teaching experience?

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

Skip To: Q3 If Are you a pre-service teacher in the state of North Dakota completing their last semester of cour... = Yes

Skip To: End of Survey If Are you a pre-service teacher in the state of North Dakota completing their last semester of cour... = No

Q3 This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create challenges for teachers. Your answers are confidential.

Directions: Please indicate your opinion about each of the questions below by marking any one of the nine responses in the columns on the right side, ranging from (1) "None at All" to (9) "A Great Deal" as each represents a degree on the continuum.

Please respond to each of the questions by considering the combination of your *current* ability, resources, and opportunity to do each of the following in your present position.

	None at All Scale Point 1 (1)	Scale Point 2 (2)	Very Little Scale Point 3 (3)	Scale Point 4 (4)	Some Degree Scale Point 5 (5)	Scale Point 6 (6)	Quite a Bit Scale Point 7 (7)	Scale Point 8 (8)	A Great Deal Scale Point 9 (9)
1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students? (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
2. How much can you do to help your students think critically? (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
3. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom? (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work? (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior? (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work? (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

7. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students? (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
8. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly? (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
9. How much can you do to help your students value learning? (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught? (10)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students? (11)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
12. How much can you do to foster student creativity? (12)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
13. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules? (13)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing? (14)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
15. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy? (15)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
16. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students? (16)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
17. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students? (17)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies? (18)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
19. How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson? (19)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused? (20)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
21. How well can you respond to defiant students? (21)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
22. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school? (22)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom? (23)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
24. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students? (24)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale

Appendix C. Semi-Structured Interview Questions

The interview questions have been created to assist in exploring the primary research question:

1. How do pre-service teachers describe their lived experiences of their relationships between self-perceptions of teaching efficacy and functioning to stress and anxiety? (Qualitative)

Secondary Questions include:

1. How do pre-service teachers experience the transition from coursework to fieldwork relative to self-efficacy? (Qualitative)
2. What behaviors and symptoms emerge as co-morbid to stress and anxiety concerns? (Quantitative and Qualitative)
3. How do elementary pre-service teachers perceive self-efficacy of teacher performance related to levels of stress and anxiety? (Qualitative)
4. What is the prevalence of self-perceived stress and anxiety issues in a sample of North Dakota pre-service teachers? (Quantitative)
5. What perceived gaps in coursework do pre-service teachers identify prior to the student teaching experience? (Qualitative)

First Round of Interview Questions (Background and Experiences):

1. Talk to me about your overall teaching knowledge and abilities.
2. Describe your past teaching field experiences.
3. Write down 4-6 feelings you have experienced when you teach (on a notecard).
4. Explain a time during your teaching field experiences that you felt:

a. Feeling A from the notecard reflection
    i. Reflect on your reason for Feeling A in that scenario.
    ii. How frequently have you felt Feeling A in your field experiences?
    iii. Duration? Other?
b. Feeling B from the notecard reflection
    i. Reflect on your reason for Feeling B in that scenario.
    ii. How frequently have you felt Feeling B in your field experiences?
    iii. Duration? Other?
c. Feeling C from the notecard reflection
    i. Reflect on your reason for Feeling C in that scenario.
    ii. How frequently have you felt Feeling C in your field experiences?
    iii. Duration? Other
d. Feeling D from the notecard reflection
    i. Reflect on your reason for Feeling D in that scenario.
    ii. How frequently have you felt Feeling D in your field experiences?
    iii. Duration? Other?

5. Talk about the relationships you have had in your past field experiences:
    a. Co-operating Teachers
    b. University Supervisors
    c. Students

d. Others (special groups of people, such as parents or administrators) may emerge here

6. Tell me your feelings about teaching dispositions.
7. Discuss behaviors you feel are essential to the teaching profession. (Teaching Dispositions)
8. Describe your experiences with:
    a. Interacting with students (Student Engagement/Behaviors)
    b. Implementing Lessons (Instructional Strategies)
    c. Classroom Organization (Classroom Management)
9. Describe your readiness for student teaching
    a. Describe your beliefs in your teaching abilities.

<u>Second Round of Interviews (Reflection and Application):</u>

Instructional Strategies:

1. Talk about your perceptions relating to the implementation of technology for instruction and learning.
    i. Describe how you plan on applying technology in your future classroom.
    ii. Talk about why you would apply technology in the way you described.
2. Give examples of three effective instructional strategies.
    i. Reflect on why you chose instructional strategy A
    ii. Reflect on why you chose instructional strategy B
    iii. Reflect on why you chose instructional strategy C

iv. Add more if needed…

Student Engagement:

3. Describe your experiences with motivating students to learn.
4. Discuss your ideas for motivating and engaging students.
5. Talk about your thoughts on homework.

Classroom Management:

6. Discuss various classroom management strategies that you are aware of or have experienced.
    i. Tell me how you feel about Strategy A.
    ii. Tell me how you feel about Strategy B.
    iii. Tell me how you feel about Strategy C.
    iv. Add more if needed…
7. Talk about teaching behaviors that affect student behaviors.
8. Describe ideas you have for managing your future classroom
    i. Academic management
    ii. Behavioral management
    iii. Classroom Organization and Scheduling

Appendix D. Alignment of Questions to INTASC Standards and Survey

InTASC Standard	Interview Questions	Survey Questions
#1 Learner Development	2, 5, 6	1, 2, 3, 4, 20, 22, 23, 24
#2 Learning Differences	6, 7, 8	1, 2, 3, 4, 12, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 24
#3 Learning Environments	2, 3, 4, 6, 9	1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 12,13, 16, 21, 22, 23, 24
#4 Content Knowledge	6, 8, 10	7, 20, 23, 24
#5 Application of Content	7, 8, 10	7, 12, 20, 24
#6 Assessment	6, 8, 10	10, 11, 18, 20, 22, 24
#7 Planning for Instruction	7, 8, 10	1, 2, 8, 11, 12, 13, 19, 23, 24
#8 Instructional Strategies	7, 8, 10	1, 2, 3, 4, 11, 12, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24
#9 Professional Learning and Ethical Practice	2, 5, 8	14, 15, 22
#10 Leadership and Collaboration	4, 8	6, 8, 9, 12, 14, 15, 21, 22

Appendix E. Gatekeeper Informational Letter

November 9, 2021

Hello Ms. Augstadt,

My name is Yvonne Cannon, and I am a Ph.D. student at the University of North Dakota. I have 28 years of licensed teaching experience ranging from pre-k to grade 12. I have worked as an assistant professor in higher education, instructing elementary methods courses for the past five years. You currently know me as a co-advisor for Mayville State University's Student Education Association.

First and foremost, I would like to thank you for volunteering to be the gatekeeper of the Aspiring Educators listserv for my study, "Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions of Self-Efficacy: From Theory to Practice." The purpose of the study is to capture the pre-service teacher's perceptions of teaching abilities and functioning related to their lived experiences of stress and anxiety. The goals of the study are two-fold. The first is to identify emerging themes for Educator Preparation Programs to use to reflect and respond to pre-service teacher needs. Secondly, to share the findings with PreK-12 stakeholders as a collaborative effort to support pre-service teachers' transition from theory to practice in the districts where pre-service teachers complete their student teaching experiences.

The first part of the study is to complete the survey using the link included in this email. The Qualtrics interface will collect the survey responses. By completing the survey, listserv members agree to participate in this portion of the study. The second part of the study is to participate in two semi-structured interviews with myself. We will complete the interviews via Zoom, and the duration of the interviews will last anywhere from 1 to 1½ hours. Volunteers for this part of the study are directed in the research study invitation to email me directly, and I will send them the consent forms to fill out to participate.

Your role as the gatekeeper will be to send out my email to the listserv. The email will contain the research study information sheet and the link to the survey. If the survey does not reach my required range, I will have you send it out a second time. All responses in the survey are anonymous and collected by Qualtrics.

I appreciate your willingness to take on this role to help gather important data that can help identify needed support for pre-service teachers. Before the information is sent out to the listserv, I will be contacting you to set up a meeting to answer any questions you may have. I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely, Yvonne H. Cannon

Appendix F. Survey Letter

Hello Everyone,

My name is Yvonne Cannon, and I am a Ph.D. student at the University of North Dakota. I am currently looking for volunteers to take part in my dissertation study. The study is titled "Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions of Self-Efficacy: From Theory to Practice." The purpose of the study is to capture the pre-service teacher's perceptions of teaching abilities and functioning related to their lived experiences of stress and anxiety.

The goals of the study are two-fold. The first is to identify emerging themes for Educator Preparation Programs to use to reflect and respond to pre-service teacher needs. Secondly, to share the findings with PreK-12 stakeholders as a collaborative effort to support pre-service teachers' transition from theory to practice in the districts where pre-service teachers complete their student teaching experiences.

The first part of the study is to read the information sheet and complete the survey included in this e-mail. Both are provided with links. The Qualtrics interface is used to collect your responses. By completing the survey, you agree to participate in this portion of the study. T**he second part of the study is to conduct two semi-structured interviews with myself.** We will complete the interviews via Zoom, and the duration of the interviews will last anywhere from 1 to 1½ hours. **To volunteer for the interview part of the study, please e-mail me directly,** and I will send you the consent forms to fill out to participate. **My e-mail is: yvonne.cannon@ndus.edu**

As a current advisor for my local university's Student Education Association, I have had the pleasure to work alongside students committed to the teaching profession. I will share data and research collected from this study with pre-service teachers, Educator Preparation Programs, PreK-12 school districts, and other stakeholders to strengthen programs and enhance collaborative efforts for teacher candidates.

I appreciate your consideration to take part in this study.

Sincerely,
Yvonne H. Cannon
Ph. D. Candidate, University of North Dakota

Research Study Information Sheet
Link to the Qualtrics Survey:
https://und.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8BsP2xn4c7R1DW6

Appendix G. IRB Approval Letter

Gmail

Yvonne Cannon <ycannon1985@gmail.com>

UND IRB Approval Letter and Stamped Consent Form
1 message

no-reply@erac.und.edu <no-reply@erac.und.edu> Wed, Nov 17, 2021 at 7:43 PM
To: pamela.beck@und.edu
Cc: ycannon1985@gmail.com

Division of Research & Economic Development
Office of Research Compliance & Ethics

Principal Investigator: Pamela Kae Beck
Project Title: Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions of Self-Efficacy from Theory to Practice
IRB Project Number: IRB0004001
Project Review Level: Expedited 6, 7
Approval Date: 11/17/2021
Expiration Date: 11/16/2022
Consent Form Approval Date: 11/17/2021

The application form and all included documentation for the above-referenced project have been reviewed and approved via the procedures of the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board.

Attached is your original consent form that has been stamped with the UND IRB approval and expiration dates. Please maintain this original on file. ***You must use this original, stamped consent form to make copies for participant enrollment. No other consent form should be used.*** The consent form must be signed by each participant prior to initiation of any research procedures. In addition, each participant must be given a copy of the consent form.

Prior to implementation, submit any changes to or departures from the protocol or consent form to the IRB for approval. No changes to approved research may take place without prior IRB approval.

You have approval for this project through the above-listed expiration date. When this research is completed, please submit a termination form to the IRB. If the research will last longer than one year, an annual review and progress report must be submitted to the IRB prior to the submission deadline to ensure adequate time for IRB review.

Sincerely,

Michelle L. Bowles, M.P.A., CIP
she/her/hers
Director of Research Assurance & Ethics
Office of Research Compliance & Ethics
Division of Research & Economic Development
University of North Dakota
Technology Accelerator, Suite 2050
4201 James Ray Drive Stop 7134
Grand Forks, ND 58202-7134
O: 701.777.4279
D: 701.777.4079
F: 701.777.2193
Michelle.Bowles@UND.edu
https://und.edu/research/resources/index.html

The preceding e-mail message (including any attachments) contains information that may be confidential or constitute non-public information. It is intended to be conveyed only to the designated recipient(s). If you are not an intended recipient of this message, please notify the sender by replying to this message and then deleting it from your system.

Appendix H. IRB Approved Stamped Consent Form

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title:	Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions of Self-Efficacy
Principal Investigator:	Dr. Pamela K. Beck
Co-PI:	Yvonne H. Cannon
Phone/Email Address:	yvonne.cannon@ndus.edu
Department:	College of Teaching and Leadership
Research Advisor:	Dr. Pamela K. Beck
Research Advisor Phone/Email Address:	Office: 701.777.6173 Email: pamela.beck@UND.edu

What should I know about this research?

- Someone will explain this research to you.
- Taking part in this research is voluntary. Whether you take part is up to you.
- If you don't take part, it won't be held against you.
- You can take part now and later drop out, and it won't be held against you
- If you don't understand, ask questions.
- Ask all the questions you want before you decide.

How long will I be in this research?
We expect that your taking part in this research will take two one-hour sessions for individual interviews.

Why is this research being done?
The purpose of this research is to explore pre-service teachers' perceptions of confidence levels before the student teaching experience. This study will help Teacher Preparation Programs identify and implement supports needed for pre-service teachers transitioning from coursework to fieldwork.

What happens to me if I agree to take part in this research?
Should you volunteer for this study, you will be asked to participate in 2 separate one-hour interviews about the beliefs you have of your current teaching abilities. The interviews will be held via Zoom due to safety concerns related to COVID-19. The interviews will be recorded by Zoom to allow for transcription of the conversations. The subject is free to skip any questions that he/she would prefer not to answer.

Approval Date: 11/17/2021
Expiration Date: 11/16/2022
University of North Dakota IRB

Date: _____
Subject Initials: _____

Could being in this research hurt me?
There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

Will being in this research benefit me?
It is not expected that you will personally benefit from this research.

Possible benefits to others include future knowledge gained from this research for teacher preparation programs, teacher candidates, and other stakeholders in the education profession.

How many people will participate in this research?
Approximately 8-10 interviewees will take part in this study from various locations across the state of North Dakota.

Will it cost me money to take part in this research?
You will not have any costs for being in this research study.

Will I be paid for taking part in this research?
You will not be paid for being in this research study.

Who is funding this research?
The University of North Dakota and the research team are receiving no payments from other agencies, organizations, or companies to conduct this research study

What happens to information collected for this research?
Your private information may be shared with individuals and organizations that conduct or watch over this research, including:

- The Institutional Review Board (IRB) that reviewed this research
- The Research Advisor: Dr. Pamela Beck

We may publish the results of this research. However, we will keep your name and other identifying information confidential. We protect your information from disclosure to others to the extent required by law. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Data or specimens collected in this research will not be used or distributed for future research studies, even if identifiers are removed. You should know, however, that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court or to tell authorities if we believe you have abused a child or you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.
Participants have a right to review the Zoom interview recordings. The primary investigator and co-investigator will have access to these recordings to create transcripts of the interviews. The Zoom recordings will be deleted after one year.

What if I agree to be in the research and then change my mind?

Approval Date: 11/17/2021

Expiration Date: 11/16/2022

University of North Dakota IRB

Date: _____
Subject Initials: _____

If you decide to leave the study early, we ask you contact the study coordinator by email or phone call. The participant can withdraw from the study at any time with no consequences.

Who can answer my questions about this research?
If you have questions, concerns, or complaints or think this research has hurt you or made you sick, talk to the research team at the phone number listed above on the first page.

This research is being overseen by an Institutional Review Board ("IRB"). An IRB is a group of people who perform an independent review of research studies. You may talk to them at 701.777.4279 or UND.irb@UND.edu if:

- You have questions, concerns, or complaints that are not being answered by the research team.
- You are not getting answers from the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone else about the research.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You may also visit the UND IRB website for more information about being a research subject: http://und.edu/research/resources/human-subjects/research-participants.html

Your signature documents your consent to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Subject's Name: _____

_____ _____
Signature of Subject Date

I have discussed the above points with the subject or, where appropriate, with the subject's legally authorized representative.

_____ _____
Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent Date

Approval Date: 11/17/2021

Expiration Date: 11/16/2022

University of North Dakota IRB

Date: _____
Subject Initials: _____